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A literature review to inform the development of the new adult employability programme

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

Within this report the following terms are referred to often. We have used the definitions set out in the glossary for the Welsh Government's Skills That Work For Wales report (2008, pp. 87-94):

Basic Skills	The ability to read, write, or speak in English or Welsh and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function and progress both in work and in society.
Entry level literacy and numeracy	A level of literacy or numeracy below that required to achieve a formal qualification.
Essential Skills	A broad term that includes basic skills, employability skills, and the ability to learn.
Employability	The skills, knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes that help people to get a job. Note that the UK Commission for Employment (UKCES) provide a slightly different definition of 'the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job'. Both definitions are used in this report depending on context.
Literacy	Basic competence in grammar, spelling, and the spoken word.
Numeracy	Basic competence in using numbers.
Soft skills	Interpersonal and communication skills, or other personal attributes such as motivation or leadership, which employers often look for in addition to technical skills.
Vocational learning/ vocational courses	Learning related to a specific vocation, usually involving the development of specific technical or professional knowledge and skills.
Work-Based Learning (WBL)	Formal learning programmes that take place primarily in the workplace. Traditionally, the term applied to Modern Apprenticeships and related courses, but it can also refer to some forms of Higher Education.

1. Executive summary

Introduction to the review

- 1.1 Arad Research was commissioned by Welsh Government to undertake a literature review to inform the development of the new adult employability programme to be initially to be introduced in September 2015, but since revised to 2016. The study's aim is to review existing employability and essential skills support arrangements and provide evidence on their effectiveness to inform the development of the new programme, and inform wider essential skills policy.
- 1.2 Several Welsh Government strategies have focused on basic skills, with some groups receiving particular attention such as low skilled and adult learners. The upcoming adult employability programme aims to build upon existing strategies and prioritise the necessity of creating skills for jobs and growth.
- 1.3 This literature review provides an overview of the effectiveness of previous and existing employment and essential skills training from Wales and further afield.

Methodology and overview of the evidence base

- 1.4 The literature review has been undertaken in two phases with an initial list of documents provided by the Welsh Government for the first phase. They were reviewed in order to identify documents deemed suitable for inclusion and analysis. The analysis of these documents from the list informed an interim report.
- 1.5 The first phase of the review provided sufficient coverage of the research questions. For the second phase the Welsh Government requested additional focused research as the new employability programme focus has shifted to target low or no -skilled unemployed adults only. Other areas to be included at the second phase were practitioner qualifications; community learning and the costs and benefits of undertaking adult employability programmes.
- 1.6 Evidence has been drawn from policies and programmes delivered in Wales as presented in reports published by, among others, the Welsh Government and Estyn. Published evidence from across the UK and further afield has also been drawn upon.

Summary findings

Essential skills policies and programmes in Wales

- 1.7 A relatively small number of programmes and policy evaluations focus on adult essential skills in the Welsh context, and it is difficult to reach firm conclusions as to the wider relevance of these evaluations.
- 1.8 There was a focus in the literature on the softer impacts to result from essential skills training such as the improved confidence of employees, which resulted in improved communication and customer service skills, and reduced sick leave.
- 1.9 The awareness of the importance of essential skills generally increased the more employers and employees perceived there to be tangible outcomes to any training. These tangible outcomes could be material benefits such as promotion or wage increases, or softer outcomes such as improvements in confidence.
- 1.10 Effective partnerships and collaboration between training providers and other stakeholders were identified as significant in ensuring the long-term sustainability of programmes. Such collaborations proved successful in engaging employers, especially when employers were presented with how relevant the training would be to their business priorities and to their employees' job roles. Employers agreeing to time off for training has positive impacts on learner engagement.

Impact of essential skills programmes – Evidence from outside of Wales

- 1.11 Although There is little agreement in the literature on the impacts on the individual and on the wider economy to emerge as a result of essential skills programmes, the following wider benefits were identified:
 - improvements in self-esteem and confidence
 - Improvements in health and wellbeing
 - A few studies speculatively attempt to quantify returns on investment for adult basic training and suggested important financial gains linked to productivity. However, there is a lack of tangible longitudinal data to enable a robust exercise of this kind.

Design of essential skills programmes

- 1.12 In the Welsh literature, programme design and the method of delivery were recognised as being significant to successful participation of learners and to learner outcomes. The elements below were highlighted in the different reports as being successful, although it should be noted that programmes targeted different groups:
- taster sessions
 - one-to-one support
 - community-based provision
 - embedded work-based learning
 - qualifications offered at free of charge
 - personalised learning
 - clear monitoring and identification of learner progression routes.
- 1.13 Personalised support can prove significant when targeting longer -term unemployed adults and those on incapacity benefit.
- 1.14 There is a growing body of literature relating to adult employability programmes in the rest UK and further afield. The Skills for Life programme in the UK provided material for much of the research reviewed. Although many longitudinal impacts are not evident in most research, many interventions leading to more immediate impacts were presented in the literature.
- 1.15 Good practice in programme design and method of delivery identified in the literature include:
- effective collaboration
 - employer involvement
 - embedding training within vocational programmes
 - delivering programmes using a range of methods such as individualised learning, a blended approach and relating learning to real-world contexts
 - informal learning over shorter time periods
 - longer training courses provide strong outcomes regarding enjoyment and achievement for participants
 - delivery by qualified practitioners
 - regular assessment and the incorporation of ICT.

Basic skills for unemployed adults

- 1.16 When employability training is focused specifically on unemployed adults the importance of effective partnerships between referral organisation, training providers and other support agencies is identified as a key factor to successful training delivery. These learners also benefited from feeling supported and encouraged, and receiving practical help with CVs and interview techniques. There is no consensus on whether mandatory basic skills training is effective or not.
- 1.17 Flexibility to provide a choice of qualifications appropriate to individual needs and embedding basic skills within vocational courses were identified as significant features.
- 1.18 When compared to those in employment, unemployed adults often benefit from intense provision of basic skills as their needs require addressing quickly. Contextualising the learning can also benefit unemployed adults as it provides experience of using basic skills within a work environment, which contributes to their employability.
- 1.19 Offering a range of venues and delivery times provides flexibility and personalisation which was of benefit to unemployed learners. The literature focusing on basic skills for this group also recognises the importance of targeting the training towards local industry demands.
- 1.20 Payment by results for training providers led to continued support once the learner was in employment, with those who had been out of work for longer periods benefiting from the in-work support.
- 1.21 Unemployed adults face barriers in accessing basic skills training. These barriers include a higher incidence of specific learning difficulties, health issues, care responsibilities and a lack of accessible information.

Conclusion

- 1.22 The report concludes that there are interesting findings in the literature which point to how employability programmes could be best designed and delivered.
- 1.23 Recommendations for future employability programmes are made. These include ensuring that:
 - (1) Employability and basic skills are embedded as part of wider learning.
 - (2) The training is delivered by qualified teachers.
 - (3) The programme should use learner-centred approaches, including
 - individual learner plans,

- differentiated instruction,
 - mentoring and key worker support,
 - appropriate resources,
 - making available varied length of courses appropriate to the needs of the learner.
- (4) Personalised support is provided for learners.
 - (5) The learning is linked to real-world contexts.
 - (6) Clear progressions routes (to further training, or to other services or employment opportunities) are available and demonstrated to the learners.
 - (7) The programme incorporates awareness raising and targeted marketing to employers, which demonstrates the relevance and appropriateness of the training to business priorities.

1.24 There are however many issues regarding the availability and robustness of the evidence. The literature review has identified a number of important issues to consider in programme design and delivery (as noted above), Further to this the researchers propose three recommendations to address the availability of evidence.

- (8) Build-in evaluation capability into the design of the new adult employability programme.
- (9) Promote the linkage of administrative datasets (Lifelong Learning Wales Record and employment and earnings data held by HMRC and DWP) to facilitate detailed analyses of the employment and earnings gains made by programme participants.
- (10) Ensure that Wales takes part in the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills when the next full scale exercise is undertaken, or undertake its own essential skills survey, in order to track and benchmark performance.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Arad Research was commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake a literature review to inform the development of policy and programmes around adult essential skills. The study's objectives were to review existing employment and essential skills support arrangements and summarise evidence on their effectiveness. The research questions focused on essential skills at policy and programme level in Wales and good practice, lessons learnt and evidence of what works in Wales and beyond.
- 2.2 Within this report some terms are referred to often. For these terms we have used the definitions set out in the then Welsh Assembly Government's Skills that Work for Wales report (2008, pp. 87-94)¹ and these are defined in the glossary at the start of this paper.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the terms Essential Skills and Basic Skills are sometimes used interchangeably and also change in terms of what they cover (e.g. literacy, numeracy, ICT skills and English as a Second Language) over time and between organisations. For the purposes of this literature review the term Essential Skills or Basic Skills is used reflecting the term used in the report reviewed.

Methodology

- 2.4 The Welsh Government provided the researchers with a list of documents to be reviewed during the first phase of the literature review, which were then checked to ensure they were relevant and comprehensive.
- 2.5 Summary details on each relevant document in the initial list were collected on standard forms. The details on these were used to screen documents for inclusion in the literature review and to collate findings against the key research questions. Screening was based on a green (inclusion), amber (possible inclusion) and red (no inclusion) system, informed by quality criteria from the Maryland Scale for Scientific

¹ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/skillsthatforwales/?lang=en>

Methods (for quantitative literature)² and from the Quality in Qualitative Evaluation framework developed on behalf of the Cabinet Office (for qualitative literature)³.

2.6 Literature deemed suitable for inclusion was then analysed and informed an interim review.

2.7 Following interim discussions with the Welsh Government it was agreed that the first phase of the literature review using the list of documents had provided sufficient coverage of most of the research questions.

2.8 During the study period the latest proposals for the Welsh Government's new adult employability programme were shared with the researchers and it became apparent that there was a shift in focus towards supporting unemployed adults. The literature was consequently revisited to check for references to unemployed and low skilled adults.

2.9 Some areas for additional research were identified by the Welsh Government during the interim review stage and further searches were carried out in the previously-reviewed literature specifically on:

- training for unemployed adults (due to the shift in emphasis of the new employability programme to target low/no skilled unemployed only)
- qualifications held by practitioners
- community learning as opposed to work-based learning
- costs and benefits to include the Wider social benefits
- the contributions to the productivity of countries
- and social benefits to individuals.

² <http://whatworksgrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Scoring-Guide-final.pdf>

³ http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/a_quality_framework_tcm6-7314.pdf

Structure of this report

2.10 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 3 sets out the main Welsh Government essential skills policies and programmes over time, summarises evidence on their impacts and discusses evidence on Welsh language basic skills.
- Chapter 4 sets out evidence from the rest of the UK and internationally on the impacts of essential skills support.
- Chapter 5 sets out evidence from Wales and elsewhere on the key features of successful essential skills support.
- Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of this literature review.

3. Welsh Government essential skills policy and programmes

3.1 This chapter sets out the key Welsh Government essential skills policies and programmes and presents a summary of evidence relating to their impact. It provides evidence against the following research questions from the specification document:

- What are the cost/benefits of essential skills training?
- What are the outcomes of essential skills training?
- How do these differ across different groups?

3.2 Further evidence against these questions is also provided in chapter 4, as part of the review of the wider body of literature from elsewhere in the UK and further afield.

Welsh Government essential skills policy and programmes over time

3.3 The box below sets out key developments in Welsh Government essential skills policy over time.

2001 - Learning Country

The first strategic statement on education and lifelong learning in Wales. It stated that measures had been taken to:

- implement an all-age basic skills strategy to reduce the numbers of children, young people and adults with low literacy and numeracy

A number of quantitative results indicators were set out, including:

- increasing the proportion of working age adults with functional basic skills in literacy from: 8 in 10 in 1996; to at least 9 in 10 by 2002; and to above 9 in 10 by 2004 and to maintain this level thereafter
- increasing the proportion of adults with functional basic skills in numeracy from: over 5 in 10 in 1996; to 6 in 10 by 2002; and above 6 in 10 by 2004; to 8 in 10 by 2007; and to 9 in 10 by 2010.

2001 - National Basic Skills Strategy

The Strategy set out the vision that:

- fewer young people leave school still struggling with basic skills
- we decrease significantly the number of adults with poor basic skills.

The Strategy was based on partnership working focusing on four key measures:

- continuous promotion of the importance of basic skills now and in the future
- action plans locally and nationally
- effective improvement programmes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy and numeracy qualifications for young people and adults.
<p>2005 – Words Talk, Numbers Count</p> <p>This second Basic Skills Strategy had a number of important new features, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an all-age approach that concentrated on ten horizontal themes and ten priority groups • a requirement that all learning providers assess the basic skills needs of all learners and take follow-up action to support their needs • an expanded Employer Pledge⁴ scheme, plus more support for employers. • a fit-for-purpose suite of qualifications and associated assessment tools. • an integrated programme of basic skills support for offenders • a range of new targets. <p>By 2010, 80% of working-age adults to have at least Level 1 literacy skills, and 55% to have at least Level 1 numeracy skills</p>
<p>2008 - Skills That Work for Wales: A skills and employment strategy and action plan⁵</p> <p>This strategy and action plan built on a consultation published in January 2008 and drew on two independent reviews; Lord Leitch’s review of skills in the UK and Sir Adrian Webb’s review of the mission and purpose of further education in Wales. One of the priorities of the strategy and action plan was to improve the levels of basic literacy and numeracy skills in the workforce, noting that people without Level 1 Literacy and Numeracy ‘are at serious risk of exclusion in a changing economy’ (ibid: 34). It stated that WG would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reform GCSEs so they place a greater emphasis on securing the basics in English, Welsh, mathematics and ICT • deliver an entitlement for all learners to free basic skills learning, once accepted on a course • raise our capacity to respond to demand by investing in teachers, lecturers and trainers • promote the Basic Skills Employer Pledge and create incentives for businesses to address basic skills, by linking the Pledge to our other workforce development programmes.

⁴ An award is given to employers who show they are committed to supporting their employees with their essential skills.

⁵ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/skillsthatforwales/?lang=en>

2010 – Essential Skills Wales Qualifications

The introduction of Essential Skills Wales (ESW) in September 2010 aimed to bring clarity and consistency with the new standards, and the associated qualifications, providing, for the first time in Wales, a single ladder of progression through Entry Levels 1-3 to Levels 1-4 in the skills of Communication, Application of Number and Information and communication technology (ICT).

2014 – Policy Statement on Skills⁶ and Skills Implementation Plan⁷

In January 2014, the Welsh Government published a Policy Statement on Skills, which sets out policy actions based on creating skills for jobs and growth, skills that respond to local needs, skills that employers value and skills for employment. The statement includes a commitment to support individuals to improve essential skills in order to access or progress in the workplace. Specifically, the July 2014 Skills Implementation Plan includes a commitment to ‘expand the provision of Essential Skills support through the introduction of a new adult employability programme’. The new adult employability programme is due to commence in September 2015. The current programme, Work Ready, has been extended to August 2015, ensuring there is no gap in provision.

2015 – Essential Skills Wales qualifications and assessment tool - the 2012 Review of Qualifications recommended that the ‘Welsh Government should work with awarding organisations and stakeholders to update Wider Key Skills qualifications by reviewing the content, structure and assessment method’ (Welsh Government, 2012 p.52)⁸. In response, the Welsh Government adapted the Essential Skills Wales qualification system to include wider, softer skills. The new Essential Skills Wales and Wider Key Skills will be delivered from September 2015 and comprise themes such as; Communication, Application of Number, Digital Literacy, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Planning and Organisation, Creativity and Innovation, and Personal Effectiveness.

The Skills Implementation Plan also makes a commitment to ensure there is a consistent means of assessing essential skills needs through a standardised essential skills assessment

⁶ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/policy-statement-on-skills/?lang=en>

⁷ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/policy-statement-on-skills/skills-implementation-plan/?lang=en>

⁸ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/qualificationsinwales/revofqualen/?lang=en>

tool for Wales. This new tool is due to be rolled out to Welsh Government providers throughout 2015.

3.4 The box below sets out a number of key adult essential skills programmes that operated over this time.

Basic Skills in the Workplace (BSiW) started in 2010 and aimed to provide workers with the levels of basic skills needed to be part of a contemporary workforce and to support employers to identify and address literacy, numeracy and Information Communication Technology (ICT) needs within their workforce.

Essential Skills in the Workplace (ESiW) - is a development of Basic Skills in the Workplace. Started in 2012, it works in partnership with training providers and employers, identifies required essential skills and provides support to develop individuals' skills within the workforce. Key features of the programme include that:

- learners able to learn free of charge, across all areas of essential skills;
- learners able to undertake more than one qualification concurrently, including participating in qualifications at different levels at the same time;
- providers delivering taster packages to encourage learners to participate in learning;
- providers working on a one-to-one basis with learners;
- a wider range of provision, including Essential Skills Wales qualification in Communication, Application of Number, Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). (York Consulting, 2013a and 2014)

Skillbuild aimed to improve the employability of those having difficulty entering the labour market and was usually undertaken by those at lower skill levels. The programme was available to people of working age. Learners have access to several options including motivational, basic skills, and vocational courses. Since the programme normally included workplace experience with an employer – though not with employed status as with Apprenticeship – Skillbuild was considered as a strand of Work Based Learning.

Steps to Employment and Work Ready are two successor projects to Skillbuild but little evaluation evidence is available on these projects.

Evidence base relating to the impact of essential skills policy and programmes in Wales

3.5 There are a relatively small number of programme and policy evaluations that examine in detail the issues outlined in the research specification for this study in a Welsh context. Consequently, the evidence base is fairly limited. The research team has drawn on a number of key reports, principally:

- Miller Research (UK) Ltd (2011) Final Evaluation of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales 2007-2010: Final Report. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- BMG Research (2014) Evaluation of Work-Based Learning in Wales, 2007-2011. Social Research Report 23/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- York Consulting (2013b) Evaluation of Work-Based Learning Programme 2011-15: First report on contracting arrangements and traineeship delivery. Social Research Report 24/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- York Consulting (2013a) Interim Evaluation of the Delivery and Quality Assurance of Post-16 Basic Skills Provision in Wales. Social Research Report 51/2013. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- York Consulting (2014) Evaluation of Essential Skills in the Workplace 2013-2015. Unpublished internal report.: Welsh Government.
- Wavehill (2013a) Bridges into Work - Mid Term Evaluation: A report for Torfaen County Borough Council. Merthyr Tydfil: Wales European Funding Office.
- Estyn (2012) The impact of family learning programmes on raising the literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults.
- IFF Research (2014) Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors. Social Research Report 47/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Limitations in the evidence

3.6 It is important to note that some of the evidence presented is based on feedback obtained from participants and employers at a single point in time, and the challenges in interpreting the effectiveness or not of the interventions demonstrates the importance of undertaking longitudinal research to provide more robust findings. The reports also did not test for statistical significance, providing a further limitation of some of the data presented here.

Impact of basic skills policies in Wales

3.7 The Final Evaluation of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales 2007-2010 (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011) highlights that over the lifetime of the strategy basic skills had developed more prominence through a combination of awareness -raising and policy developments (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011 p.29). However, it acknowledges that an organisational commitment to basic skills can often depend on one senior figure with variations occurring across local authorities, depending on the attitude of senior management (ibid: 30). It reported the following progress against the aims of the strategy:

- **Aim 1: All young children should be prepared for learning when they begin school.** A majority of primary school teachers surveyed in 2008 felt that literacy levels of new school entrants had fallen over the previous three years.
- **Aim 2: The number of children leaving primary school struggling over reading, writing and the use of number should be further reduced.** Key Stage 1 assessment results for the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in the core subjects had remained broadly similar since 2002 – with 82% of pupils achieving level 2 or above in 2010. Key Stage 2 teacher assessments showed a clear increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in English and maths between 2002 and 2010.
- **Aim 3: Fewer young people should leave compulsory education still struggling with basic skills.** The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C at GCSE in core subjects rose from 36.9% in 2002 to 48.0% in 2010. In addition, the percentage of pupils achieving a Level 1 qualification rose from 85.1% to 89.7% over the period – suggesting that this aim is likely to have been achieved to some extent.
- **Aim 4: The number of adults with poor basic skills should be diminished significantly.** The 2004 National Survey of Adult Basic Skills showed that 25% of all working-age adults lacked level 1 literacy skills and 55% lacked level 1 numeracy skills. This survey was repeated during 2010 and results from this will provide a new benchmark for measuring progress amongst adults, when they become available later in 2011. The proportion of working age adults qualified to Level 2 or above rose from 63.3% in 2002/3 to 70.6% in the year ending December 2009. Mirroring this, there has been a steady decline in the

proportion of working age adults with no qualifications - from 18.5% in 2002 to 13.7% in 2009, suggesting that this aim will have been achieved.

- 3.8 The report provided mixed feedback from various stakeholders and the Welsh Government. Some regarded employers as not yet fully engaged with the basic skills agenda. Views of stakeholders regarding the Welsh Government's role suggested 'a sustained lack of innovative thinking on how to tackle this collaboratively' across Welsh Government departments' (ibid: 43). Whereas others saw basic skills as a policy area that had grown (ibid: 44).
- 3.9 The National Survey of Adult Skills in Wales 2010 assessed overall literacy and numeracy levels amongst adults in Wales⁹. Literacy levels had improved since the 2004 survey, exceeding the policy target of 80 per cent, with 88 per cent of adults assessed at Level 1 or above, an increase of 13 per cent since 2004. Numeracy levels had stayed fairly consistent, with 50 per cent of adults assessed to have Level 1 or above, three percentage points higher than in 2004, but five percentage points below the strategy target. Literacy and numeracy levels were higher amongst the employed, those with higher levels of household income, those with higher qualifications, and amongst the older age groups.
- 3.10 The key reports listed in 3.5 also provide examples of the impact of programmes on employer and learner engagement, the attainment of qualifications by learners and highlight positive changes in attitude.

Impact on employers

- 3.11 Evaluations of the Essential Skills in the Workplace programme (York Consulting, 2013a and 2014) outline impacts of the programme. One important caveat to note is that the impacts reported draw largely on self-reported data from employers and participants and so tends to exaggerate the impact of schemes (see Meadows and Metcalf, 2008). Nonetheless these data provide an indication of some of the perceived impacts and successes of ESiW to date and can be summarised as follows:

⁹ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey-adult-skills-wales/?lang=en>

- ESiW has increased awareness among employers of the importance of essential skills among their workforce.
- Less than a quarter of employers (22 per cent) commented that their organisation had been involved in (or provided) essential skills training to employees, prior to their involvement in the ESiW programme (York Consulting, 2014 p.63).
- The programme has resulted in increased engagement with three fifths of employers (60 per cent) reporting they would probably not or definitely not have delivered essential skills training anyway (York Consulting, 2014 p.78).
- Half of employers said that the qualifications gained as a result of ESiW were very valuable to their organisation (51 per cent); a third (a further 31 per cent) said fairly valuable, while 3.4 per cent said that they did not know (York Consulting, 2014 p.69).
- However, there was a difference between actual practice and what employers 'would like to do' around half of all employers said they were likely to provide further essential skills training in the next year (ibid: 7) but just under one in ten employers had delivered further essential skills training since ESiW.

3.12 Employer case studies formed part of the York Consulting evaluations. Management of one company recognised a range of benefits resulting from the essential skills training for them and the employees who received training:

- Increased productivity: filling out data more quickly so they can deliver on more jobs.
- Increased confidence in dealing with the administrative side of their roles.
- Less trepidation in filling in forms and attaching documents to e-mails.
- Improved numeracy skills allowing staff working out in the field to better understand the maths behind 'hydraulics' related calculations relating to their work. This essentially enables the company to delegate more skilled work to front-line staff, rather than referring quite so many matters to office based colleagues.
- Staff were better able to deal with change, automation and use of devices in the field.

- Improved job retention at company call centres, because being able to participate in ESiW ‘made them feel more part of the company.’ (York Consulting, 2014 p.83)

3.13 The Evaluation of Essential Skills in the Workplace 2013-2015 also reports that essential skills learning is becoming embedded into a training culture within participating companies, with over half of all employers reporting staff were given time off to undertake training (York Consulting, 2014 p.67).

Impact on learners/participants

3.14 Improvements in confidence and ability to cope with everyday tasks were cited by learners following their completion of basic skills training (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011 p. 94).

Employed Participants

3.15 Although findings from an evaluation of the impact of basic skills training in Wales on labour market outcomes undertaken in 2011 (McIntosh, 2011) lacked statistical significance, conclusions still suggested that learners who had undertaken basic skills training were more likely to be in employment on completion of the course, particularly those of lower ability, than an individual with the same characteristics and pre-course skills. The report employed propensity score matching to test impact.

3.16 The interim evaluation of Essential Skills in the Workplace (York Consulting, 2013a) also presents a positive picture in relation to the impact on learners. The evaluation found that learners are more confident in their basic skills (numeracy, communication and ICT) after the training than before.

‘Other impacts of the training reported by learners are (self) confidence, enthusiasm to learn, providing a better service to customers and taking on more responsibility at work. Job satisfaction also improved for more than half of all learners, as had the potential to earn a better salary for just under half’. (York Consulting, 2013a p.111).

3.17 Employers recognise the impact of the training on learners’ skills and confidence levels including improved communication, customer service skills and reduced sick leave. Employers report improved productivity. (York Consulting, 2014)

‘The most common areas cited by employers as improving as a result of the learning included: confidence (75 per cent); staff better able to undertake job (73 per cent); and, improved morale (69 per cent). Around half of employers said they observed their employees’ willingness to take part in company training activities (56 per cent) and willingness to take on responsibility (50 per cent)’ (ibid: 76).

- 3.18 Employers stated that learners were able to apply their new skills in the workplace, particularly communication, teamwork and ICT. (ibid: 8).
- 3.19 Material impacts of the ESiW programme also emerged as just under a quarter of employers (23 per cent) stated that some employees have been promoted, taken on different roles or increased pay as a result of training (ibid: 76).
- 3.20 The case study of the company discussed in 3.14 also includes personal benefits to learners:
- Applying the methods taught in maths to help daughter with elements of maths teaching required as part of her practitioner training.
 - Helping son ‘apply for jobs etc. ... some of the stuff he’s talking about, it makes sense now ... maybe a year ago it wouldn’t have.’
 - One learner was a member of a rugby team and said that the training had given him more confidence in his spelling when writing on a whiteboard to explain match tactics. He was also more confident in using ICT to show video-clips relating to the rugby.
 - Another said, “I can go to the shops now and work things out.” (York Consulting, 2014 p.83).
- 3.21 Current data suggests that the ESiW programme should achieve the target numbers of participants gaining qualifications and employers engaged by June 2015. The target for total numbers of qualifications has already been surpassed. (York Consulting, 2014 p.27).

Impact on unemployed adults

- 3.22 BMG Research (2014) notes that improvements in employment rates for Skillbuild were much lower than gains in attitude, employability or qualifications, but ‘still

showed significant gain on the rate of employment of participants before their participation’ (ibid: 8-9):

- An increase from 9 per cent (pre-training) to 31 per cent (post-training) of learners now in paid employment, with 34 per cent unemployed and looking for work. The report notes that 34 per cent is still much higher than for the workforce as a whole.

3.23 The report notes some outcomes and impact of Skillbuild for learners that can be evidenced through the 2009 ESF Leavers’ Survey. The report notes that Skillbuild ‘generated significant gains in participant attitudes, employability skills, and qualifications’ (BMG Research, 2014 p.6), for example:

- 82 per cent were more enthusiastic about learning
- 91 per cent were more confident about their own abilities
- 84 per cent were clearer about the range of opportunities available to them
- 83 per cent had gained team-working skills
- 85 per cent had gained communication skills
- 80 per cent had gained organisational skills
- 74 per cent had gained job-specific skills.

3.24 However, these are self-reported assessments of improvements, at a single point in time, after undergoing training. They may therefore be subject to over-estimation.

3.25 The evaluation of Bridges into Work¹⁰ (Wavehill, 2013a) found that the strongest impacts associated with that programme related to participants own perceived skill levels, self-confidence and aspirations. Although the evaluation provides an estimated financial impact in terms of a reduction in JSA benefits payments, it concedes that this estimate is based on a narrow analysis of programme output data. Those participants who did secure employment following their involvement with the programme were in positions ‘typically dominated by part time

¹⁰ Bridges into Work aimed to engage, support and prepare the economically inactive, including those who are unemployed or on incapacity benefit, in the most deprived areas, to acquire the appropriate skills to become job ready and to gain sustainable employment.

employment outcomes’ (p.49). Little explanation is offered as to why this appears to be the case.

- 3.26 We refer above to the impact of programmes on soft skills, including attitudes, aspirations and self-confidence. Evidence from other literature focusing on programmes in Wales also comes to the same conclusion. Wavehill’s evaluation of COASTAL found that a personal and social development dimension contributed to employability outcomes. COASTAL worked with client groups who were furthest from employment as a result of, for example, illness or disability but here the evaluators found a

‘strong suggestion that the employability dimension could not exist without the personal and social development dimension and that this dimension complements, or even is essential for employability outcomes. In other words, it would not be possible to achieve employment outcomes without also achieving social development outcomes’. (Wavehill, 2013b p. 8)

Family learning programmes

- 3.27 The 2012 Estyn report on the impact of family learning programmes on raising the literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults notes that there is a lack of data on learner achievement at a national level, partly because of inconsistencies in delivery models, but also because not enough providers collect data on learner progression. This lack of data restricts any robust evaluation. This makes it difficult to judge the overall national impact of family learning programmes on adult literacy and numeracy and supports our recommendations later in this report concerning the need to embed data collection and evaluation in essential skills training programmes. However, the report does note that ‘individual learning plans in the settings visited show that adult learners on long courses make good progress against literacy and numeracy targets’ and that ‘many achieve a useful certificate that helps to move into employment or onto other courses’ (Estyn, 2012 pp.5-6). The report also notes that there are good opportunities for learners to take relevant qualifications, mostly Agored Cymru units or credit for family learning programmes such as ‘Help a child with reading’.

- 3.28 Estyn’s 2012 report does not contain evidence on the impact of family learning programmes on adult literacy and numeracy, but does note that adult learners

provide good feedback to the family learning co-ordinators on the courses they followed. The report outlines the ways in which impact and outcomes are measured in family learning programmes:

‘Learners participate in end of year reviews, complete evaluation sheets and questionnaires, have tutorial reviews with teachers and join in structured group discussions on course content and relevance. Many learners who are on longer courses complete standard feedback forms through the further education college providers. Nearly all teachers and programme co-ordinators use this information well to improve the provision they offer’ (Estyn, 2012 p.14).

Engaging employers and individuals in Wales

Engaging employers

- 3.29 There is mixed feedback on employer engagement as part of programmes in Wales (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2010, York Consulting 2013a and 2014). Some stakeholders reported that employers were not yet fully engaged with the basic skills agenda. Under the original Basic Skills in the Workplace (BSiW) programme, described in paragraph 3.4, participants were recruited via employers. The Employer Pledge Award (EPA) – through which BSiW sought to engage employers – was designed to embed a long-term commitment from employers to support essential skills delivery in the workplace. However, by 2014 only a few employers had achieved the EPA and there was still a degree of disengagement on behalf of providers in terms of promoting the EPA to employers. This is no longer reported by the Welsh Government as a target (York Consulting, 2014 p.104).
- 3.30 Training providers working together to engage with employers had proved successful in encouraging employers to develop the skills of their workforce when engaging with Essential Skills in the Workplace (ESiW), the BSiW successor; with training providers working in a consortium helping to share ideas when targeting employers and some providers being sub-contracted to lead providers to ensure that capacity was maximised and expertise accessible (York Consulting, 2014 p.47).
- 3.31 By 2014 the number of employers participating in the programme had almost reached the overall target of 4,500 (ibid: 33).

- 3.32 This underlines the need for the processes involved, and benefits of activities to support essential skills, to be communicated to employers as clearly as possible in order to encourage good levels of engagement.
- 3.33 The original BSiW was 'not flexible and providers stated it was difficult to recruit sufficient learner numbers' (York Consulting, 2013a p.8). The transition to ESiW saw the inclusion of additional Level 2 qualifications, including ICT, which broadened the appeal of the programme to both employers and learners (ibid: 8) and as a result 'the volumes of learning delivery have increased considerably over the past two years. The inclusion of ICT and Level 2 learning was a key enabler in engaging employers and learners' (York Consulting, 2014 p.107).
- 3.34 Evidence suggests that employers are more likely to engage with essential skills provision where they see the relevance of activity to their wider business strategies and priorities. The ESiW programme has been delivered effectively where providers (particularly work-based learning providers) have presented/delivered it as part of a broader business development approach reflecting a good understanding of the nature of the employer's business and relevant job roles of learners (York Consulting, 2014 p.48).
- 3.35 Echoing the point above, BMG Research's 2014 evaluation of Work-based Learning in Wales emphasises that marketing and raising awareness of basic skills programmes among employers is vital. The report notes employers were generally not aware of Skillbuild; 80 per cent of employers had not heard of the programme and only 1 per cent described themselves as 'reasonably knowledgeable' about Skillbuild (ibid: 101).

'Respondents recognised that Skillbuild had virtually no profile amongst employers and reported further that many learners were not confident that Skillbuild was other than a low-grade experience, with low or undefined status when compared with Further Education, 6th Form, or increasingly with Apprenticeship' (ibid: 102).

Engaging learners

- 3.36 Revisions to the ESiW programme, such as the inclusion of additional qualifications, correlated with a larger numbers of learners becoming engaged in the programme.

- 3.37 Changes noted by York Consulting (2014) brought in during the delivery of the programme that impacted positively on learner engagement were:
- the inclusion of Essential Skills Wales (ESW) qualifications at Level 2, which ‘resulted in a wider pool from which potential learners can be drawn’ (York Consulting, 2013a p.74);
 - specifically, the inclusion of an ESW qualification in ICT at Level 2 was seen to have provided ‘an important hook for employers and learners into essential skills learning’ (ibid: 74);
 - ‘the extension of the learning offer included learners being able to take units of ESW qualifications, rather than commit to a whole ESW qualification’ (ibid: 74).
- 3.38 The literature reviewed in a Welsh context includes other examples of methods used to engage learners in essential skills training. These include:
- Introducing essential skills with a small number of learners to pilot delivery and stimulate future demand in businesses with little history of workplace learning activity (York Consulting, 2013a p.142);
 - Providing essential skills training as part of probationary period to new staff to address specific skills gaps (York Consulting, 2013a p.143);
 - Staff being given time off for learning, with the unions, in some cases, negotiating with employers to agree to this (York Consulting, 2014 p.61).
- 3.39 The literature outlines some of the challenges associated with engaging some sub-groups. The evaluation of the ESiW programme does not provide information as to whether particular engagement strategies were employed for different sub-groups and notes that older people, were slightly under-represented in the group of participants, as they are less inclined to participate in essential skills learning (York Consulting, 2014 p.39). The evaluation also notes that the target set for engaging disabled people was not met, however, this may have been the result of an unrealistic target set. The proportion of disabled people in the population is 3.4 per cent; the ESiW achieved 3 per cent participation yet its target had been 45 per cent (ibid: 27).
- 3.40 The mid-term evaluation of Bridges into Work (Wavehill, 2013a) refers to the approaches taken to engage those who are furthest from the labour market. Bridges into Work aims to engage, support and prepare the economically inactive, including

those who are unemployed or on incapacity benefit, in the most deprived areas in Wales, to acquire the appropriate skills to become job ready and to gain sustainable employment. Basic skills provision is one element of the support offered. The evaluation notes that outreach work in communities has brought the project into contact with significant numbers of 'hard to reach' groups. 'This personal touch undertaken by the support workers for this client group is often what encourages those individuals to engage and be retained by the project, and is highly valued by the clients' (Wavehill, 2013a p.26). While the report provides little detail of the links between support workers and basic skills provision, it notes that personalised support models can be critical to the successful engagement of learners, something that may have wider relevance to other target groups or those with protected characteristics.

3.41 The 2012 Estyn report on the impact of family learning programmes on raising the literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults also found that personalised models are critical to the successful engagement of learners. The report notes that most providers of family learning use innovative and effective means (as described below) of targeting specific families who would benefit most from literacy and numeracy support. This targeting is based on a wide range of information, such as free school meals data, Communities First data and their own understanding of the economic profile of the area.

3.42 To first engage the learners, the report notes that 'the most effective programmes use a facilitator from the school who has credibility with the parents, who knows the family circumstances and can build a good relationship with them' (Estyn, 2012 p.4). The report identifies this method as the most effective means of initial contact and that facilitators include practitioners, assistants and parent liaison co-ordinators. Initial engagement is followed up by a recruitment event, to welcome parents to the school and make them feel comfortable. This, the report explains, allows providers to understand and overcome the particular barriers to education faced by individual parents; 'a common obstacle arises from the fear of schools that parents face because of their previous experience of failure' (ibid: 4). One local authority has been able to identify an up to 75 per cent take-up rate of offers for literacy and numeracy tuition based on such methods (ibid: 9). The least effective methods are paper-based, which do not tend to appeal to parents with low literacy rates.

Welsh language skills and employability

- 3.43 A specific question was raised by the Welsh Government in relation to basic skills and the Welsh language.

Labour market advantage

- 3.44 The literature was reviewed for information or evidence about the Welsh language and the labour market generally. There is evidence that some Welsh speakers have an advantage in the labour market compared to non-Welsh speakers. For example, data from the 1991 Census revealed that Welsh speakers experience lower unemployment rates than those only able to speak English. Unemployment rates were 4.5 percentage points lower for males who can read, write and speak Welsh and 2.2 percentage points lower for females compared to those with no knowledge of Welsh, although it should be noted that these figures were not controlled for possible differences in characteristics across groups (Blackaby and Drinkwater 1996; Drinkwater and O’Leary 1997). There is evidence that fluent Welsh speakers are more likely than non-Welsh speakers to perceive opportunities for business starts (Jones-Evans et al., 2011) and to enjoy an earnings advantage (Henley and Jones 2005), albeit within the context of a ‘greater polarization among bilinguals into either well-paid or poor occupations’ (Henley and Jones, 2005 p.308).
- 3.45 To date there is little research to explore the reason for these advantages, although Mann (2011) suggests that a range of factors are at play including ‘different employment sectors having different valuations of Welsh speakers in terms of what they offer’. Mann goes on to explain that his qualitative research with employers and Welsh speakers revealed that ‘many young, first language, Welsh speakers were also described as lacking confidence in using Welsh in the workplace and this was related to education’ (Mann, 2001 p.12).

Employers’ Welsh language skills needs

- 3.46 IFF Research (2014) presented the results of a survey undertaken to provide information on the current and future Welsh language skills needs of employers in eight chosen sectors. Just over a third of employers in the eight sectors covered in the research regarded having staff with Welsh language skills at their establishment as very (18 per cent) or fairly important (17 per cent). This was higher among employers in Childcare, Agrifood and Social Care. In contrast around two-fifths felt it

not at all important to have staff with Welsh language skills at their site. Two-thirds of employers had staff with Welsh language skills, and just over a third said that Welsh is used in their workplace. Over a quarter of establishments believed that it would benefit them to have more staff able to communicate in Welsh, or more staff with a higher level of Welsh language skills (p.4).

- 3.47 The study does not explore employers' use of essential skills courses, but more generally presents findings on all Welsh language training provision. The research found that three main difficulties had been encountered by employers in finding appropriate Welsh language training provision; courses not being local enough, course start times not being convenient or not being flexible enough and courses being too expensive (IFF Research, 2014 p.108).
- 3.48 Essential skills training was available through the medium of Welsh for the ESiW programme, with only five employers facilitating training for employees through the medium of Welsh. The vast majority of employers (93 per cent) did not have any training delivered through the medium of Welsh. Nevertheless there were examples of demand for, and support delivered through the medium of Welsh, in one of the case studies included in the evaluation of the programme. Colleges also provided support through the medium of Welsh. 'If we didn't deliver in Welsh they [the learners] wouldn't have been able to do it, because their English was not good enough to teach it in English' (York Consulting, 2014 p.6).

Welsh language and essential skills support arrangements

- 3.49 The Welsh Government defines essential skills as the ability to read, write and speak in English or Welsh, and to use mathematics, at a level necessary to function and progress both in work and society. The literature was examined for information about how Welsh language skills relate to essential skills support arrangements but no evidence was found. It may be that the topic has received no research attention as the numbers involved are so small. In 2012/13 only 4 per cent of Essential Skills Wales qualifications were coded as Bilingual, with 0.8 per cent coded as Welsh medium.
- 3.50 The National Survey of Adult Skills in Wales report (Miller and Lewis 2010) provides some historical context and referring to the 2005 Basic Skills Strategy for Wales, Words Talk, Numbers Count, explains that 'it is acknowledged that support for Basic

Skills has been very much focused on English language literacy and numeracy, with less attention paid to those needs in Welsh' (ibid: 5).

- 3.51 Welsh literacy was championed as a theme within Words Talk, Numbers Count, and in April 2010 a Welsh Medium Education Strategy was published. The later acknowledged a need to enhance the understanding of, and the support for, addressing basic skills deficits in the medium of Welsh. Nevertheless basic skills were not given a high priority within the Welsh Medium Education Strategy, with only six references to the basic skills agenda within the document (Miller and Lewis, 2010 p.6).
- 3.52 In 2013, Estyn produced a guide on achieving excellence in the delivery of Welsh language training in work-based learning, based on Estyn's expectations for good practice. This guide does not focus specifically on essential skills training, but all types of work-based provision. However, the key features identified should still be of value while designing essential skills programmes. The guide notes that effective work-based learning providers:
- Create a Welsh ethos internally, ensuring that the provider's Welsh-language ethos is understood and committed to at all levels in the organisation.
 - Promote the use of the Welsh language effectively to learners, making the benefits of the Welsh-language and opportunities to study clear.
 - Match Welsh-language learners to the correct programme, to ensure learners are motivated, and offering taster sessions and ensuring training sessions match the needs of individuals and employers.
 - Have high expectations, both in setting learners' direction and monitoring learners' progress, ensuring initial assessment of their skills, evaluating opportunities for use of Welsh in the workplace and keeping an individual learner plan.
 - Deliver a coherent programme of learning rooted in current working practice, to ensure the correct balance of skills development in Welsh and ensure employability skills.
 - Ensure that barriers to learners' progress in Welsh are minimised, by identifying barriers early on and establishing a partnership of support agencies.

- 3.53 However as a whole the documents reviewed contain relatively little evidence to demonstrate the longer term impact of essential skills programmes in Wales on learners, including progression in employment, earnings and skill levels. Consequently, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the wider applicability of findings (and learning points for future programmes). Nonetheless, evidence from wider literature from across the UK and beyond (set out in Chapters 4 and 5) presents findings relating to the key features of successful interventions that have delivered longer term impacts, including on employment, progression and earnings.

Summary

- 3.54 A relatively small number of programme and policy evaluations focus on adult essential skills in the Welsh context. As a result it is difficult to draw firm conclusions as to their wider relevance for the development of future adult employability programmes in Wales.
- 3.55 For there to be long term sustainability for essential skills programmes there needs to be tangible outcomes for employers and learners. Of the Welsh programmes discussed, awareness of the importance of essential skills generally increased the more employers valued the qualifications delivered. Although some programmes delivered identified material benefits such as promotion, change in job role and wage increases, other evaluations comment that for the majority of learners there was no change in labour market status. Other softer impacts of completing learning include improved confidence of employees resulting in improved communication and customer service skills, and reduced sick leave.
- 3.56 Employability and Welsh language skills were also explored and although there is evidence that Welsh speakers are at an advantage in the labour market, little research exists to provide further detail. Furthermore no information is available about the delivery of courses with a Welsh language component.

4. The impact of essential skills programmes – evidence from outside of Wales

4.1 This chapter addresses the following key research questions from the Welsh Government's specification

- What are the cost/benefits of essential skills training?
- What are the outcomes of essential skills training?
- How do these differ across different groups?

4.2 The chapter draws on evidence from the rest of the UK and internationally and supplements the evidence on impacts in Wales.

Evidence base relating to the impact of essential skills programmes from outside of Wales

4.3 There are a large number of programme and policy evaluations from outside of Wales that examine the issues outlined in the research specification for this study. Two rounds of the Skills for Life surveys have taken place (2003 and 2011) as have evaluations of the impact of the Strategy on learners. Many sources linked to Skills for Life provide the evidence base, for example:

- National Audit Office (2008) Skills for Life: progress in improving adult literacy and numeracy. Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General. London: NAO.
- Meadows and Metcalf (2008) Does literacy and numeracy training for adults increase employment and employability? Evidence from the Skills for Life programme in England. *Industrial Relations Journal* 39:5, 354–369.
- Wolf et al., (2010) The rise and fall of workplace basic skills programmes: lessons for policy and practice, *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 36, No. 4.
- Vorhaus et al. (2011) Review of Research and Evaluation on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills, BIS Research Paper Number 61.
- MacLeod and Straw (2010) Adult Basic Skills, CfBT Education Trust.

4.4 Evaluations of programmes delivered in Scotland and of an international context were also reviewed including:

- Coben, D. (2005) Adult Numeracy: Shifting the focus. A Report and Recommendations on Adult Numeracy in Scotland.

- Carpentieri, et al. (2015) International Evidence Review of Basic Skills: Learning from High performing and Improving Countries BIS Research Paper No. 209. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- Cedefop. 2013. Return to work: work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Department of Labour, New Zealand (2010) Upskilling Partnership Programme: Evaluation report.
- Murray, S. and Shillington, R. (2012) Investing in Upskilling: Gains for individuals, employers and government. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN)

- 4.5 There is no clear consensus in the literature with regards to the impact that adult employability programmes can have on the individuals or the wider economy or society.

Impact on earnings and employment

- 4.6 There is clear evidence from the British Cohort Study that there is a wage return – meaning higher or better wages – to higher skills in literacy and numeracy (De Coulon et al., 2007 p.28). There is less evidence on links between taking part in training to increase those skills and higher earnings, although there are interesting findings, discussed below, that point towards benefits to the individual and wider benefits.
- 4.7 A report concentrating on the relationship between low skills and labour market engagement and productivity in England concluded that unemployed adults and disabled adults in England were more likely than across participating Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD countries to have low skills (Wheater and Worth 2014a). Low literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills were identified as being major barriers to finding work in certain sectors (finance and insurance, information and communication, and professional, scientific and technical industries) (ibid: 24). The report highlighted a need for the development and implementation of effective essential skills training programmes to address gaps and increase competitiveness.

- 4.8 Training had a positive impact on participants' employment or earnings in more than half the evaluations reviewed by What Works Centre for Economic Growth (2014).
- 4.9 The evidence from Skills for Life is mixed.
- 4.10 Patrignani and Conlon (2011) found that achieving qualifications in literacy or numeracy has a clear positive effect on earnings and employment. Their findings are based on an analysis of work-based learning in general from Individual Learner Record¹¹ data, matched against HMRC and DWP data, totalling 6.9 million records. Based on participants in the Skills for Life programme, they conclude that:
- With Level 1 qualifications, there is an earnings return [meaning an increase or improvement in earnings] of 7 per cent in the first three years for literacy and 3 per cent for numeracy, but returns for numeracy increase to about 12 per cent by year six. Regarding employment, numeracy provides a boost of 6.5 per cent by year seven and literacy provides a boost of 3.2 per cent by year seven.
- With Level 2 qualifications, earnings return rises to 13.7 per cent after seven years for numeracy and 8.8 per cent after seven years for literacy. Regarding employment, numeracy provides a 10 per cent impact by year seven and literacy provides a 4.8 per cent impact by year seven. (Patrignani and Conlon, 2011 pp.16-17)
- 4.11 The authors conclude that 'in general the results are unambiguous: education and skills acquisition result in improved labour market outcomes that persist for many years post attainment' (Ibid: 70).
- 4.12 However, Meadows and Metcalf's report on the employment and employability effects of the Skills for Life programme 'found no statistically significant difference in change in employment status, change in earnings or change in job satisfaction between the Skills for Life learners and non-learners' (Meadows and Metcalf, 2008 p.360). They conclude, however, that this may be because it takes longer than one year (the scope of their report) for employment benefits to appear.

¹¹ Similar to the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR).

- 4.13 Some evidence of increases in learner earnings is also available from international literature, including an analysis of the potential benefits of investing in upskilling in Canada (Murray and Shillington 2012). Based on matched data from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, they conclude that;

‘one-time investment of \$29.34 billion over 5 years needed to raise skills of all adults to Level 3. With that, earnings for adults who receive literacy upgrading estimated to rise by \$85.25 billion, or an average of \$3,244/worker annually’ (Murray and Shillington, 2012a p.1).

- 4.14 They note that returns do vary by age group, with returns highest for those aged 24-35, and by sector, with returns highest for those working in health and social care and sciences.
- 4.15 The style of delivery has been cited as having impact on earnings with one study highlighting that programmes encouraging participants to look for work, providing a variety of learning activities, had the biggest impact on resulting earnings of low qualified participants (Dench et al., 2006 p.37).

Impact on Employability

- 4.16 Although Meadows and Metcalf’s report on the Skills for Life programme found no statistically significant impact on earnings and employment, they did find improvement in a range of employability characteristics (Meadows and Metcalf 2008). These included the following soft outcomes:

- Employment commitment (meaning enthusiasm and commitment towards achieving or sustaining employment) - an additional 4.6 per cent of learners demonstrated increased employment commitment compared to non-learners, which the authors note as statistically significant.
- Commitment to education and training - a total of 43 per cent of learners increased their commitment compared to 31 per cent of non-learners.
- Self-esteem - learners had improvements in self-esteem 0.6 points (on a scale from -20 to 20) larger than non-learners on the self-esteem index.
- Health - learners were 4 per cent more likely than non-learners to report that they had lost a long-standing illness or disability. (Meadows and Metcalf, 2008 pp.364-365).

- 4.17 The authors concluded that ‘these changes may not result in employment gains in the short term, but may feed through to gains in the longer term: it takes time to gain a job, get a better job or to get a pay rise’ (Meadows and Metcalf, 2008 p.366).
- 4.18 Lord et al. (2010) report that impacts on individuals’ employability frequently include improvements in their job search skills and motivations, and in their actual job skills. They provide qualitative evidence of these types of benefits for individuals.
- 4.19 Job search impacts include:
- increased confidence to apply for jobs;
 - feeling more confident about actually getting a job and having greater aspirations for what that job might be;
 - increased motivation to actively look for a job (JSA claimants who had taken up training were more likely to be actively looking for a job compared with those in the non-training control group who were inactive in this regard, and some did not want a job);
 - and enhanced job search skills such as being able to prepare a CV.
- 4.20 Job skills impacts include:
- working with others, more appropriate behaviour at work, and being willing and able to take on more responsibility at work;
 - and better timekeeping, being able to use reading skills at work, and better stocktaking skills.

Impact on productivity

- 4.21 Some international studies have attempted to quantify the return on investment in adult literacy and have suggested that there would be significant financial gains linked to increased productivity (for example Murray and Shillington 2012; Carpentieri et al. 2015).
- 4.22 A few studies investigate the links between skills training and increases in productivity for the individual concerned or the country as a whole. A recent review of international evidence (Carpentieri et al. 2015) cited the example of courses for illiterate adults in the Netherlands which provided estimated potential returns to society of adult basic skills courses.

‘The study estimated that half-year literacy courses (69 hours) cost €2,000 to deliver ... and produce returns to society of €3,000 – a net return of €1,000 per student. These benefits were projected over a range of areas, including increased productivity in the workplace (higher wages), lower social support benefits, improved health and an increase in civic participation through volunteering. It is calculated from this that, with rates of 10,000 people embarking on with literacy courses annually, 6,000 completing the course, and an increase in literacy scores of 3.4%, the net benefit for the country as a whole would be €6 million. If all the 1.1 million illiterate people between 15 and 65 were to follow a course, this would generate a revenue of €700 million for society.’ (Carpentieri et al., 2015 p.90)

4.23 However, these were speculative estimates, and not based on longitudinal data on programme impact, concluding it is impossible to judge their accuracy (Ibid: 90).

4.24 Murray and Shillington’s 2012 Canadian study of large-scale national data examined the impact of investing in upskilling literacy to Level 3, an adequate level to cope with the demands of everyday life, and the resultant gains for individuals, employers and government.

‘The proposed investments would yield an estimated staggering rate of return of 1,396%. Rates of return would likely vary significantly across sub-groups of the population:

- The estimated rate of return would be highest for those aged 25 to 34: 2,275%.
- Investments in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry would yield the highest returns: 3173%.
- Investments in social science and education occupations would yield the highest returns: 3,166%.’ (Murray and Shillington, 2012 p. 89)

4.25 The authors acknowledge that their findings cannot provide definitive proof that an investment in raising adult literacy skills to Level 3 would yield positive returns. It is suggested that even if returns are half of those estimated, the government would ‘reap impressive returns through higher taxes and lower income support payments’ and have employment, income, health and social engagement outcomes (Murray and Shillington, 2012 pp.87-88).

- 4.26 An evaluation of nine English local authority programmes to support people back into work provided estimated cost per job outcome, for example programmes delivered by Liverpool (targeting residents), Haringey (targeting local residents), Bury (targeting young people) and Southampton (targeting offenders) Local Authorities estimated their cost per job outcome as £4,630, £5,000, £5,146 and £5,736 respectively (Rolfe et al. 2015, p. 26). The Southampton programme targeted ex-offenders and police data reflected a 62 per cent reduction in re offending for the year following completion, with an estimated cost saving of at least £24 million (Ibid: 27).

Impact of addressing the basic skills of unemployed adults

- 4.27 Dench et al.'s 2006 review of the impact of learning on unemployed, low-qualified adults concludes that several studies 'clearly show that basic skills and higher levels of basic skills are associated with greater probabilities of being employed' (Dench et al., 2006 p.9). Table 1 presents the findings from the 2005 Leitch Interim Review of Skills in the UK, showing 'the percentage point difference in the probability of being employed for those with different levels of basic skills' (Dench et al., 2006 p.9). As Table 1 illustrates all studies acknowledged an increase in the probability of being employed with an increase in basic skills achievement.

Table 4.1: Estimates of employment returns to basic skills (percentage point difference in probability of being employed for each qualification level)

	Numeracy		Literacy	
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2
McIntosh and Vignoles (2001), Natural Child Development Survey (NCDS)	2.9	4.0	0.2	1.0
McIntosh and Vignoles (2001), IALS	2.0	8.8	9.6	11.4
Bynner et al. (2001), NCDS	4.6		3.6	
Bynner et al. (2001), BCS70	1.2		5.9	
Dearden et al. (2000), IALS		9.0		11.0

Source: Leitch Review (2005), Table D.3, p 148.

4.28 Essential skills training can be delivered as part of the Work Programme¹² package of support. Reports examining the potential impact of the Work Programme were included in the review (see National Audit Office, 2014, Europe Economics 2014 and Foster et al 2014). The National Audit Office (2014) found that the programme has struggled to improve outcomes for harder-to-reach groups such as Employment and Support Allowance claimants and explains that improvements have been slow when compared to expectations.

‘Performance for harder-to-help groups is still below expectations and about the same as previous programmes, but improvements are expected. The Department designed the Work Programme to help participants who face significant barriers to employment. Performance for Employment and Support Allowance claimants who have completed the programme (11 per cent) is still below expectations (22 per cent) and previous programmes (12 per cent). But performance has improved from the very low levels at the start.’ (National Audit Office, 2014 p.7)

4.29 Economic impact has also been modelled albeit in a report commissioned by the sector body representing the provider organisations. The report finds a ‘positive impact on the number of long-term claimants finding work’ (Europe Economics, 2014 p.7) and concludes that the Work Programme ‘had been responsible for 10 per cent of all job starts for long term claimants between June 2011 and April 2014’ and that,

‘the present value (in 2014) of the wider benefits of those additional jobs starts, over the remaining working life of the claimants concerned, is around £18bn:

- Workers benefit by an average of £140m a year between 2011 and 2059, or £7bn in total.
- Government benefits by an average of £140m a year between 2011 and 2059, or £7bn in total.
- Capital benefits by an average of £80m a year between 2011 and 2059, or £4bn in total.’ (Europe Economics, 2014 p.1).’

¹² The Work Programme is a welfare-to-work programme across Great Britain whereby organisations are contracted (and paid by results) to support unemployed adults find work.

Wider benefits

- 4.30 Increased confidence in learners is a key impact of training programmes. As Waite et al. (2011) discuss with the outcomes of literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses for council employees.

‘The manager described the courses as being ‘very successful’ and highlighted a boost in learners’ confidence as being the most important impact: ‘increased levels of confidence have been reported by both learners and managers. This has been the first experience of any learning outside school for many people- it is empowering.’ (Waite et al., 2011 p.17).

- 4.31 Other projects report similar findings, with a National Audit Office 2009 report on ‘Train to Gain’ cited in Vorhaus et al. (2011) identifying benefits to include self-confidence and attitude. 86 per cent who completed their qualification felt they had developed skills which would assist them in obtaining a better job (Vorhaus, et al., 2011 p.36). The ‘Train to Gain’ participants were also found to have an improved sense of pride, fulfilment, increased motivation and self-esteem (Ofsted, 2008 as cited in Vorhaus et al., 2011 p.36).

- 4.32 Most adults develop a broader range of employee skills next to more confidence and satisfaction in their job and 60 per cent perform better on the labour market after participation in a literacy course (Tett et al. 2006; Department of Labour, New Zealand, 2010).

- 4.33 In their 2012 report on the contribution of basic skills to health outcomes, Sabates and Parsons demonstrate that a lack of basic skills amongst adults is associated with deteriorating self-rated health. They found that amongst those in the study cohort with ‘excellent health’, 71 per cent had Level 2 literacy, while amongst those with ‘poor health’, only 48 per cent had Level 2 literacy (Sabates and Parsons, 2012 p.13). They also found that cohort members in their evaluation with the lowest literacy skills (Entry Level 2) are ‘twice as likely to have deteriorating health limiting daily activities between ages 34 and 38 compared with cohort members with Level 2 literacy’ (Sabates and Parsons, 2012 p.21). However, they did not find strong evidence that basic skills levels are associated with the risk of depression or with health behaviours such as smoking.

- 4.34 Therefore Sabates and Parsons do not demonstrate that improved basic skills through tuition will lead to improved health outcomes, but they conclude that it is important to address adult skills as part of policy focus on adult disadvantage:

‘Research contains enough evidence to suggest that poor basic skills in adulthood are associated with multiple forms of earlier disadvantage and together these are related with poor health outcomes in adulthood. Therefore, different interventions should consider the acquisition skills in adulthood as an integral part of joined up initiatives to deal with the root causes and indeed the consequences of adult disadvantage’ (Sabates and Parsons, 2012 p.31).

Impact on basic skills levels

- 4.35 Meadows and Metcalf’s evaluation of the Skills for Life programme reports that learners are more likely than non-learners to self-report improvements in literacy and numeracy; ‘overall, 88 per cent of learners, compared with 53 per cent of non-learners, thought their literacy or numeracy (or both) had improved’ (Meadows and Metcalf 2008, p.365). A total of 59 per cent of learners, compared to 20 per cent of non-learners thought their numeracy had improved and 76 per cent of learners, compared to 42 per cent of non-learners, thought their literacy skills had improved. However, the authors stress that these are self-reported improvements and that no accurate tests were undertaken to enable a full assessment.

Summary

- 4.36 There are some interesting findings regarding engagement with employability and essential skills programmes with individual and wider benefits emerging.
- 4.37 The links are not clear between taking part in essential skills training and a change to earnings. Low literacy and numeracy is a barrier to finding work in many sectors and essential skills programmes did have a positive impact on employment and earnings according to some evaluations. With regards to Skills for Life one study found a positive effect on earnings while another found no statistically significant difference in earnings. In the international literature there is some evidence of increases in learner earnings.

- 4.38 There is stronger evidence of an impact on Employability characteristics such as commitment to employment, education and training. These were found to improve as a result of undertaking basic skills training, with improvements in self-esteem reported. It was also noted that these may contribute to longer term gains, as opposed to being instantly evident in employment straightaway. The limited numbers of studies speculatively attempting to quantify returns on investment for adult basic training suggest important financial gains linked to increased productivity. However, these are theoretical and lack tangible longitudinal data.
- 4.39 Wider benefits such as increased learner confidence is often suggested to be the most significant impact of training programmes. The potential contribution of improved basic skills to health and wellbeing emerges as an important factor. Even with slow improvements cited in helping harder-to-help groups into employment, several studies identify a greater probability of being employed as higher levels of basic skills are achieved.
- 4.40 Little evidence was found to provide robust, consistent insight into the relative value for money of different approaches. Most assessments of 'cost per outcome' fail to provide a control group for comparison. This is key to ensure a robust evaluation and necessary if policy is to be better informed with a good evidence base.

5. Design and delivery of essential skills programmes

5.1 This chapter presents the findings of the literature search drawing on published evidence from Wales, the rest of the UK and further afield. The following key research question from the Welsh Government's specification are addressed:

- What are the characteristics of programmes that are effective in improving individual's essential skills?
- What has worked in engaging individuals in essential skills training?
- What are the characteristics of programmes that are effective in improving individual's essential skills?
- What are the lessons learnt and what has worked well across the various types of provision?
- What does existing evidence on previous Welsh Government and ESF adult essential skills provision tell us, about what works well and under what circumstances?

5.2 In seeking to capture the wide range of issues presented in these questions, this chapter is structured according to the following sections:

- A note on the nature of the literature
- Summaries of what works according to UK-level reviews;
- Programme design: the key features of programmes and the models of provision that are effective in improving the essential skills of individuals;
- Basic skills for unemployed adults is given particular focus as the new adult employability programme is targeting the low skilled unemployed.

Evidence base and nature of the literature

5.3 There is a wide body of literature relating to adult employability programmes in the UK and internationally. Since the introduction of Skills for Life strategy in England in 2001 the evidence on adult literacy and numeracy skills has expanded considerably. Two rounds of Skills for Life surveys have taken place, in 2003 and 2011, as have evaluations of the impact of the Strategy on learners, longitudinal studies and associated literature and policy reviews.

- 5.4 Many of the sources linked to Skills for Life provide the evidence base for this chapter. The key documents include evaluations and a series of outputs from the ESRC-funded research project Enhancing 'Skills for Life': Adult Basic Skills and Workplace Learning, for example,
- National Audit Office (2008) Skills for Life: progress in improving adult literacy and numeracy. Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General. London: NAO.
 - Meadows and Metcalf (2008) Does literacy and numeracy training for adults increase employment and employability? Evidence from the Skills for Life programme in England. *Industrial Relations Journal* 39:5, 354–369.
 - Wolf et al., (2010) The rise and fall of workplace basic skills programmes: lessons for policy and practice, *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 36, No. 4.
- 5.5 This chapter draws on two literature reviews related to adult basic skills and employability programmes, again within the context of Skills for Life;
- Vorhaus et al. (2011) Review of Research and Evaluation on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills, BIS Research Paper Number 61.
 - MacLeod and Straw (2010) Adult Basic Skills, CfBT Education Trust.
- 5.6 Material from the literature relating to Wales is included:
- Miller Research (UK) Ltd (2011) Final Evaluation of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales 2007-2010: Final Report. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
 - BMG Research (2014) Evaluation of Work-Based Learning in Wales, 2007-2011. Social Research Report 23/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
 - York Consulting (2013a) Interim Evaluation of the Delivery and Quality Assurance of Post-16 Basic Skills Provision in Wales. Social Research Report 51/2013. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
 - York Consulting (2013b) Evaluation of Work-Based Learning Programme 2011-15: First report on contracting arrangements and traineeship delivery. Social Research Report 24/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
 - York Consulting (2014) Evaluation of Essential Skills in the Workplace 2013-2015. Unpublished internal report. Welsh Government.
 - Wavehill (2013a) Bridges into Work - Mid Term Evaluation: A report for Torfaen County Borough Council. Merthyr Tydfil: Wales European Funding Office.

- Estyn (2012) The impact of family learning programmes on raising the literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults.

5.7 Evaluations of programmes delivered in Scotland and of an international context were also reviewed including;

- Coben, D. (2005) Adult Numeracy: Shifting the focus. A Report and Recommendations on Adult Numeracy in Scotland.
- Carpentieri, et al. (2015) International Evidence Review of Basic Skills: Learning from High performing and Improving Countries BIS Research Paper No. 209. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- Cedefop. 2013. Return to work: work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Department of Labour, New Zealand (2010) Upskilling Partnership Programme: Evaluation report.
- Murray, S. and Shillington, R. (2012) Investing in Upskilling: Gains for individuals, employers and government. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN)

Limitations in evidence

5.8 Although there is a wealth of literature to draw upon, in-depth evaluations and particularly longitudinal studies analysing the impact of adult basic skills training are limited. Although a programme may suggest elements necessary for success, this may be influenced by the context of a particular training initiative and as a result difficult to replicate exactly.

5.9 Many evaluations focus on short term impacts, rather than longitudinal effects. It can also be difficult to separate each effect as cumulatively they can lead to/or influence further impacts. Nevertheless the wider literature provides many examples of the impact of programmes on employer and learner engagement, within the work place setting and community-based context. Key features of successful interventions that have delivered longer term impacts, including on employment and progression, and earnings provide significant evidence to consider.

Summaries of what works

5.10 Three of the sources are themselves reviews of the literature and offer summaries of what works in the context of adult basic skills and employability training.

Summary 1: Pathways to improvement: how to get the best effects in the future

In 2009, CfBT Education Trust commissioned a research programme to review the international evidence on a range of themes related to adult basic skills and their improvement. Bramley et al's (2010) contribution focused on reviewing potential improvements and good practices in relation to the delivery of employability skills training. Four characteristics were identified for improving the design, delivery and outcomes of employability skills training.

- Flexible training of employability skills responds to the needs of learners and employers.
- Development of inter-agency working means learners receive a seamless offer, which may also include wrap-around support enabling them to overcome barriers to developing employability skills and entry into employment.
- Employers' involvement engages them and results in their contribution to the design and delivery of employability training.
- Different routes by which adult learners can develop their employability skills, reflecting the fact the learners may prefer to learn in different contexts and at their own pace.

Source: Bramley et al., (2010) in MacLeod, S. and Straw, S. (Eds) Adult basic skills. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.

Summary 2: Review of Research and Evaluation on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Reporting to the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vorhaus et al. (2011) proposed the following strong or promising evidence to endorse particular features of Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN):

Strong evidence of good practice in teaching literacy and numeracy;

- The benefits of embedding ALN in vocational programmes;
- The positive impact on learners of working and qualified practitioners;
- The personal and social impact of ALN;
- The need for multiple ways of engaging in learning – in class, self-study, distance learning, ICT supported learning.

Promising evidence:

- Blended learning – combining face to face and technology based, formal and self-study methods;
- The significance of techno-mathematical literacies – a combination of ICT, literacy and numeracy skills;
- The time required to make significant learning progress – often in excess of 100 hours.

Source: Vorhaus et al., (2011)

Summary 3: The What Works Centre evaluation of employment and training: Main findings

A 'What Works Centre' has been established by the UK Government to promote evidence-based policy making and evaluation. Their first evidence review looked at evaluations of programmes aiming to improve adult skills and labour market outcomes. The study produced the following findings:

- Training has a positive impact on participants' employment or earnings in more than half the evaluations reviewed.
- Shorter programmes (below six months, and probably below four months) are more effective for less formal training activity. Longer programmes generate employment gains when the content is skill-intensive.
- In-firm / on the job training programmes outperform classroom-based training programmes. Employer co-design and activities that closely mirror actual jobs appear to be key design elements.
- The state of the economy is not a major factor in the performance of training programmes; programme design features appear to be more important than macroeconomic factors.

However, inconclusive evidence was also highlighted;

- Comparing different skill content training – such as 'basic' versus 'advanced' interventions – is extremely difficult: finding suitable comparators (i.e. policies that target similar groups using different types of training) is challenging, and skill content usually reflects real participant differences.
- Training programmes that respond to structural shocks in the local economy are usually highly tailored to a given local context. This means that extracting generalisable findings on impact is difficult.
- It is hard to reach any strong conclusions on private-led versus public-led delivery on the basis of the (limited) available evidence.
- The authors found no evidence that would suggest local delivery is more or less effective than national delivery.

Source: What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2014)

Programme design

5.11 Below we describe the features of the design of essential skills programmes, focusing particularly on those elements that are considered in the literature to be features of success. The section explores how provision is embedded and provides

clear progression routes, before summarising the literature on practitioner qualifications and the duration of courses.

Embed employability as part of wider learning

- 5.12 A key finding of evidence relating to the delivery of programmes is to ensure that employability and basic skills provision is embedded as part of wider learning. MacLeod and Straw (2010) emphasise ‘embedded provision tailored to meet individual need’ as a key principle of effective practice (p.5). The study notes that:

‘Embedded training integrates or links basic skills learning into a broader curriculum, making it relevant to participants’ everyday lives’ (p.5).

- 5.13 Some programmes may include basic skills development as a secondary learning impact, rather than the primary goal of the learning programme (Ibid: 159). Atkin et al. (2005) report that, for example, 64 out of 78 learning providers delivering programmes to address the deficit in adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland in 2000 employed integrated tuition with basic skills a secondary learning goal. Another project targeted basic skills directly: trainees on various community projects were asked whether they needed basic skills training on joining, many declined at first but if staff saw a need they approached the trainee again once they had settled in. One-to-one or group sessions were provided, embedding basic skills into the trainee’s vocational training.

- 5.14 In a similar vein, Coben (2005) writing about Scotland, also found that that numeracy training does not have to be ‘stand-alone’, it can be part of a wider learning programme, referring to examples such as ‘Build up your confidence’ or ‘Return to learning’. Basic skills can even be embedded in other training such as cookery or nursing (Coben, 2005 p.33). This links to findings in Evans and Waite (2008), who noted that learners can improve their basic skills ‘by stealth’ as a result of engaging in other wider programmes (ICT, informal learning activity).

- 5.15 Evidence from the English Skills for Life programme found that:

‘Many adults with poor basic skills are resistant to basic skills training, but they may be more willing to address these needs when literacy, numeracy or language skills are an integral part of the course of their choice’. (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2008 p.29).

- 5.16 The evaluation of the Bridges into Work programme (Wavehill, 2013a) found that the provision of a wide range of courses was a key success factor in the delivery of the programme, which reinforces some of the findings set out in York Consulting (2013a and 2014). Extending a wide choice of learning opportunities, coupled with the emphasis on community-based provision, was viewed as an effective approach to overcome 'existing, and perceived barriers to accessing training' (Wavehill, 2013a p.48).
- 5.17 It has been noted that basic skills tuition could be included in other qualifications, such as health and safety qualifications. However, it is important to be aware that the pursuing of such qualifications could result in constraints on the learning and teaching, for instance, 'the achievement of outcomes in terms of learners' qualifications and accreditation might become the primary aim, rather than understanding of numeracy' (Coben, 2005 p.37).

Mode of delivery

- 5.18 A variety of modes of delivery exist varying across sectors and service providers, with differing approaches adopted including work-based learning, one-to-one support, community based delivery, group activities or a combination of strategies to achieve successful outcomes for the learner.
- 5.19 The 2010 Evaluation of the Basic Skills Strategy highlights the important role of community-based learning in engaging the least confident learners. Although there had at the time been a shift towards this mode of delivery, it is still 'insufficient in scale and flexibility' (Miller Research UK) Ltd, 2010 p.58).
- 5.20 The Final Evaluation of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales 2007-2010 discusses further common methods of delivery; further education institutions (FEIs) using a Basic Skills Unit with group-based activities and one-to-one support.
- 5.21 Some providers focussed on embedding learning within other training, with other providers prioritising delivery by experienced tutors as opposed to an add-on to vocational tutoring work (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011 p.60).
- 5.22 The report also established that there is more variation in approaches to training within Work Based Learning, reflecting the evolvement of delivery methods by service providers and across different sectors with methods involving both one -to -

one support delivered by vocational tutors, group sessions and a more mixed approach (ibid: 60).

- 5.23 In workplace literacy programmes, effectiveness is associated with commitment from the employer, notably where classes and learning provision are scheduled during worktime (Benseman et al., 2005, cited in Vorhaus et al., 2011). A summary of literature focusing on successful learning in the workplace conducted by the Department of Labour in New Zealand (2010) highlighted the importance of assessing individual needs, including employees at all levels in the planning and design of programmes, contextualising course content to learners' jobs, providing tailored and flexible support during the delivery and following completion of the training and to recognise achievements (Department of Labour, New Zealand, 2010 p.5).

Progression routes

- 5.24 Clear progression routes were another feature of effective programmes (Coben 2005; Macleod and Straw 2010). Practitioners consulted by Coben (2005 p.32) noted that basic skills tuition can have more of an impact if the tuition sign-posts and links to further services, education and employment opportunities. This is a way of engaging and progressing learners as a follow-on step from basic skills tuition. Coben (2005) further emphasised that learners need to be clear about why they are studying. This means that measuring distance travelled and mapping goals and plans is important. Macleod and Straw (2010) note that:

‘progression routes need to be clearly signposted to learners and can be promoted through various channels. Employers, too, need to offer such opportunities following a work-based basic skills course. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services are critical, and the content of basic skills training should include opportunities to discuss next steps and have trainers facilitating access to further learning’ (p.6).

- 5.25 Training programmes with a practical, work-based focus were more appealing to low-qualified unemployed adults, with return to work programmes attracting adults who thought that gaining a qualification/certificate would stand them in good stead in the job market (Cedefop, 2013 p.66).

- 5.26 Estyn (2012) also note that learners should have a clear progression route; ‘too many learners remain on short course provision without progression’. (p.5)

Duration of courses

- 5.27 The literature reviewed includes findings in relation to the relative duration of courses and the number of learning hours in basic skills provision.

‘Better gains for learners seem to be associated with courses which allow for levels of participation in excess of 100 hours; learners require more time to make educationally significant progress than they generally spend in provision. For those who only need to ‘brush up’ existing skills, short courses are often adequate for learner gains; in contrast, learners working at a higher level may find it more difficult to achieve a qualification within the learning hours allocated to a single-year course.’ (Vorhaus et al., 2011 p.13)

- 5.28 Comings (2009) cited in Department of Labour, New Zealand (2010) supports this conclusion asserting that 100 hours serves as a benchmark when identifying an effective programme (that is, a programme likely to have a measurable effect on at least half of its participants) (ibid: 6). Data collected as part of a study of adult basic skills provision for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills in 2011 suggested that longer courses increase enjoyment of learning as learners both in employment and unemployed, build relationships with fellow students and their practitioners, which may increase enjoyment. Also learners have more time to become familiar with the learning environment and the college. (SQW, 2013 p.34). This is supported by the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2014) summarising that longer programmes can be more effective if the content of the learning is ‘skill-intensive’ (ibid: 28).

- 5.29 Alternatively, shorter programmes or interventions aimed at raising general employability had a strong effect when training was informal, whereas longer skill-intensive programmes benefit over the longer term. This re-emphasises the necessity to monitor participants longitudinally.

‘Overall, short programmes (below six months, and probably below four months) are more effective for less formal training activity. Longer programmes generate employment gains when the content is skill-intensive, but benefits to the

individual typically play out over a longer time frame'. (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2014 p. 28)

- 5.30 A report published by Estyn in 2012 examines the impact of family learning programmes on literacy and numeracy among children and adults. This report notes that developing a clear, formal structure for courses is important, noting that 'nearly all providers use effective delivery models for courses of over 12 hours' total duration. However, delivery models for short courses of 12 hours and under vary too much between authorities' (p.5). The report explains that this lack of consistency in delivery makes it difficult to judge the overall impact of family learning programmes on adult literacy and numeracy.

Developing the capacity and skills of providers to deliver essential skills

- 5.31 The evidence from Wales and the UK shows that increasing the quality and levels of participation in essential skills requires an appropriately skilled and qualified training provider workforce.
- 5.32 A Quality Mark was introduced in Wales in 1992 for Basic Skills Programmes for Adults, as an element of quality assurance for service providers in basic skills. It provided an award that promoted service provider strategies supporting the development of basic skills. In 2008 the Quality Standard was introduced as a way of improving the quality assurance of providers, with the newer Quality Standard evolving to link closely to the 2010 Estyn framework (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011 p.40-41).
- 5.33 The Quality Mark promoted strategies to support the development of basic skills and required providers to have a policy and action plan to identify and support basic skills of all individuals within the organisation. Practitioners in Further Education were positive about the benefits of the Quality Mark, with a general consensus that the 'mark' had been valuable in raising the profile of basic skills within organisations and ensuring that it was addressed at an organisation-wide level. There was some evidence that the Quality Mark provided a stronger focus on the quality of basic skills delivered and assessment criteria and that its guidelines encouraged a higher level of training and improved basic skills delivery. The Quality Mark was also viewed as being important in reducing basic skills class sizes, ensuring providers trained

tutors and that learners who required support could get access to accredited learning (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011 p.42).

- 5.34 Despite the support for the Quality Mark, it was acknowledged that it had reached maturity and the more demanding Post-16 Quality Standard, introduced in 2008 was viewed as a positive step forward, which aimed to be embedded better in local practice than the Quality Mark and required senior management involvement. (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011 p.103).
- 5.35 When reviewing the Post-16 Quality Standard there was agreement that the standard provided quality assurances, ensuring a benchmark for good quality basic skills delivery. However, concern was raised regarding duplication that could occur for assessment processes with the Estyn Common Inspection Framework, provider Self-Assessment Procedures (SARs) and the Quality and Curriculum Framework (QCF) (York Consulting, 2013a p.81).
- 5.36 The evaluation of Essential Skills in the Workplace (ESiW) from 2013-2015 highlights that providers were not taking up the opportunity to expand their Essential Skills practitioner workforce with the funding for the tutor training programme withdrawn in 2013 due to low levels of take-up (York Consulting, 2014 p.15).
- ‘This is an important point when considering that one of the benefits of the ESiW programme was to raise the capacity of the network of providers to address essential skills needs of the adult population’. (York Consulting, 2014 p.51).
- 5.37 Miller Research (UK) Ltd (2010 and 2011) report that the level of commitment to basic skills within Further Education Institutions (FEIs) had significantly increased, however the fact that almost all basic skills staff in FEIs were employed on part-time or sessional contracts, led to suggestions that FEIs had failed to recognise the need to invest in professional staff to address basic skills issues.
- 5.38 Practitioners also comment that they had not come across any new resources relating to basic skills (either good practice or teaching materials) produced over the last few years. Some practitioners stated that they would prefer to receive funding to create their own resources as they could be made more appropriate to their delivery context (Miller Research (UK) Ltd, 2011 p.41).

- 5.39 Estyn in 2012 noted that practitioners and assistants are normally well-qualified and experienced. Most are qualified practitioners, with additional qualifications in teaching essential skills (most of which are at level 3), and most attend a good number of training and development opportunities.
- 5.40 The clear message here is the need for programmes focusing on supporting essential skills to prioritise workforce development, work collaboratively and ensure that the supply of practitioner capacity is given sufficient attention.

Qualified practitioners

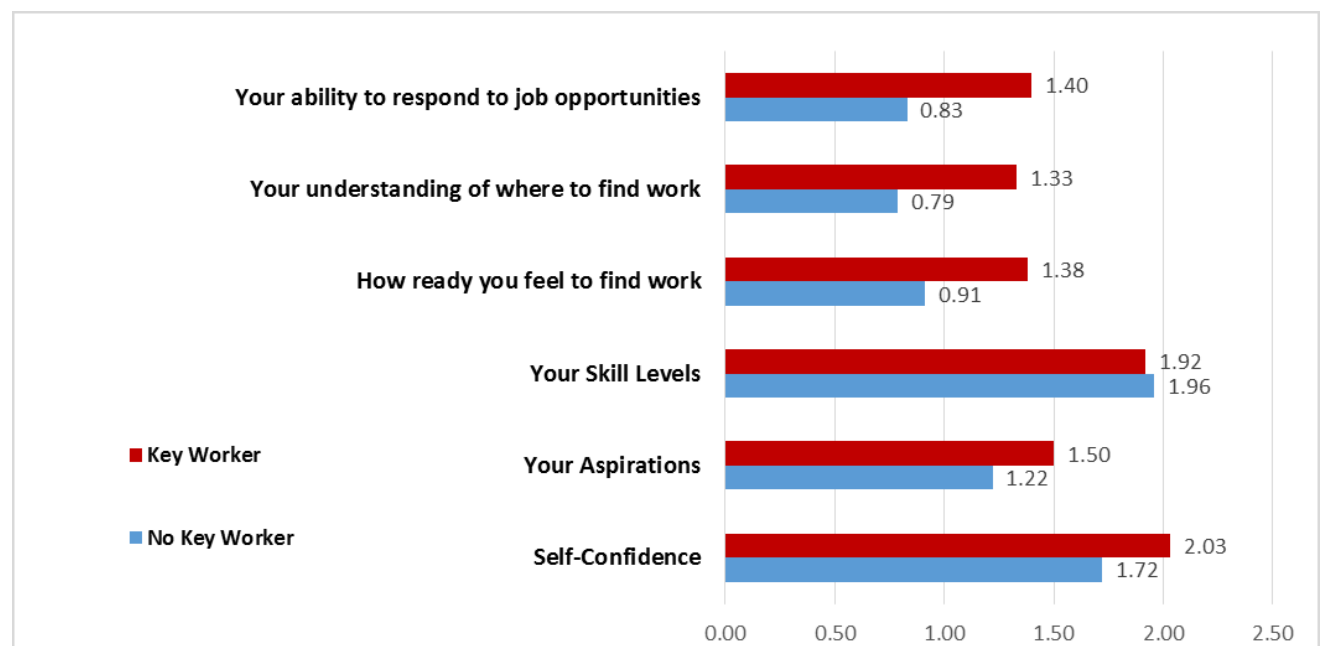
- 5.41 There is some discussion in the research on the impacts of practitioner qualifications. Cara and de Coulon (2008) report that there is 'clear evidence that learners of better qualified numeracy teachers made more progress between pre-course and post-course tests' (p.21) Learners' improvements in numeracy were mostly associated with practitioners who held qualifications in maths at Level 3 and above while the number of years of practitioner experience in numeracy was also found to have a positive effect on learners' progress. The authors also examined the relationship between practitioners' qualifications and changes in learners' attitudes and self-confidence and found the picture to be more complicated. On the one hand, learners have a greater positive change in their perception of maths when taught by practitioners holding first or postgraduate degrees in maths; on the other hand, learners have a smaller positive change in their perception of maths when taught by practitioners with more rather than less experience, suggesting that that higher qualifications amongst maths practitioners tends to inhibit the growth of learners' self-confidence.
- 5.42 Vorhaus (2011) draws on international research over the period 2000-2010 (including the Cara and De Coulon research) to conclude that, 'learner progress in literacy is greater where teachers have qualified teacher status and in numeracy where teachers are qualified in maths to Level 3 or above (irrespective of qualified teacher status)' (2011:12).

Key worker support

- 5.43 Key worker support was offered to participants as part of the Bridges into Work programme. Although the evaluation found that participants receiving key worker support reported greater overall impacts, when impacts on skill levels were

examined these were consistent for all participants whether they had key worker support or not. In the context of Bridges into Work, the added value of key worker support was in relation to confidence, aspirations and job related impacts, as demonstrated in Figure 1 below. The scores assigned to each area of impact are based on responses by participants by denoting whether the programme had ‘No impact’ (0); ‘Not very much impact’ (1); ‘Yes, some impact’ (2); or ‘Yes, a great deal of impact’ (3). However, it is important to note this is a bivariate comparison, meaning it looks only at the two variables of key worker support and response scores, which does not hold constant other variables which may influence outcomes i.e. key worker support may be more prevalent in better programmes, therefore the influence of key workers may be falsely inflated. Also there is an absence of significance tests to provide robustness to the data.

Figure 5.1: The relationship between reported impacts and key worker support



Source: Bridges into Work Participant Survey (n=599) (Wavehill, 2013a p.37)

Effective teaching methods

5.44 The literature identifies a number of effective teaching methods:

- A learning plan for each learner (Brooks et al., 2004 p.35)
- Regular assessment of learner progress (Brooks et al., 2004)

- Differentiated instruction, in which career orientation and/or job training can be provided to adults at a broad range of literacy and numeracy skills (Condelli et al., 2010, cited in Vorhaus et al., 2011)
- Focus on developing fluency in reading (Vorhaus et al., 2011)
- Active reading in class (Vorhaus et al., 2011)
- Effective practice in literacy development occurs where practitioners build on learners' experience (Vorhaus et al., 2011);
- Effective practice in numeracy focuses on the promotion of reasoning and problem solving rather than 'answer getting'. (Vorhaus et al., 2011)
- Creative use of ICT is an important feature in successful ALN interventions (Vorhaus et al., 2011)
- Needs to link with existing provision, rather than duplicate or deliver specialist services with generalist staff. And take full account of the needs of local employers (Rolfe et al., 2015 p.ix).

5.45 These methods recur in the literature where examples are given of effective teaching and learning methods used in successful programmes. Learner-centred teaching approaches are given particular prominence.

'There should be a focus on the needs of individual learners, preferred learning styles and goals (taking account of cultural backgrounds and expectations).

Courses should include individual learning plans, tailored support and mentoring so that those with varying needs can achieve the skills necessary to enter the labour market.' (MacLeod and Straw, 2010 p.5)

5.46 This echoes earlier findings from Coben (2005) who found that the learner should be at the heart of basic skills tuition, since each learner has particular motivations and ways of learning. It is important that learning goals and plans are learner-led (p.30). However, it is also necessary to tailor learning content to the workplace as well as towards the individual learner; which is possible via an 'Occupational Needs Analysis' (clarifying the literacy and numeracy requirements associated with the company's jobs) and a 'Training Needs Analysis' (Waite et al., 2011 p.25).

5.47 Learner-centred pedagogies and active learning approaches can provide learners with the opportunity to be responsible for their own learning. With such approaches

considered by some as particularly suited to low-qualified target groups (Cedefop, 2013 p.80).

5.48 The evidence underlines the importance of having resources and materials that are appropriate for adults and are based around topics to which they can relate (Coben, 2005). For example, the use of 'everyday' or real resources such as bills was recommended. This study found that practitioners often need time to plan and adapt materials to ensure that they can be used effectively in learning settings (ibid: 36).

5.49 Related to the point above Coben (2005) also stressed the need for written materials to be accessible to learners with literacy difficulties. There should be an emphasis therefore on clarity and accessibility: 'make them relevant and avoid patronising people' (Coben, 2005 p.36).

5.50 The evaluation of work-based learning in Wales 2007-2011 (BMG Research, 2014) mentions a number of factors that had supported improvements to work-based learning (WBL) provision.

- Better and closer monitoring of learners, their attendance, and their progress (p.97).
- Learner mentoring and support systems instituted by providers to back up the monitoring process with fast intervention, where risk to progress or completion was evident, offering additional, prioritised support (p.98).
- Better self-assessment of performance by providers and, where several institutions hold a WBL contract as a consortium, internal institution-by-institution peer review (p.98).

5.51 Estyn (2012) report on some key features of effectively-delivered courses, including that practitioners use individual learning plans effectively to monitor progress and that they use effective initial assessment tools to establish learning needs at the very start of the tuition (though there is an over-reliance on informal self-assessment on short courses).

Ensuring basic skills are linked to real-world contexts

5.52 Evidence suggests that learners should understand how classroom learning is applied in real-world contexts, for instance its use in the workplace, financial literacy

and undertaking realistic tasks during learning. The basic skills practitioners consulted by Coben (2005) noted that some learners may be able to 'do sums' but cannot necessarily use numeracy in real life examples. Other older research has also emphasised the effectiveness of using realistic learning contexts in basic skills tuition (Ginsburg and Gal, 2000; Segarra, 2002; Tomlin, 2002). Coben (2005) provides an example of using this approach with an individual learner:

'A fine example of this is a learner who spent most of his working life at sea from the age of 15. His numeracy skills, he thought, were very poor, however he played darts very well and he also loved cooking. We used the adding and subtracting that he uses in his darts game and the weighing and measuring in his cooking as a starting point. His confidence grew and his fear of numbers began to subside and he made some great progress'. (Coben, 2005 p.33)

- 5.53 This supports research completed by the Basic Skills Agency in 2000 (cited in Vorhaus et al., 2011) which noted that:

'factors thought to correlate with better progress for learners include: provision for skills to be acquired in a range of contexts; clearly structured teaching; a learning plan for each learner; teachers who regularly assess and review progress, and adjust the length of programme to the level of skills required'. (Vorhaus et al., 2011 p.52)

- 5.54 Training programmes closely linked to specific jobs, with high levels of employer contact, were perceived to be more successful in raising the probability of employment and that 'employer co-design and activities that closely mirror actual jobs appear to be key design elements'. However, 'where participants are among the 'hardest to help', however, classroom training may pay dividends e.g. covering basic skills' (What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2014 p.30).

- 5.55 The promotion of positive learning experiences is a key factor of successful delivery. The accessibility, convenience and familiarity of 'Skills for Life' workplace provision, compared to more formal educational institutions, has been effective in attracting learners who have had previously negative educational experiences (Waite et al., 2011 p.12). This is reinforced in Vorhaus et al., (2011) (citing Hannon et al., 2003) who note:

‘principal among the factors associated with successful community-focused ALN provision were: holistic approaches to learning, whereby learning was aligned with learners’ lives and interests; sensitivity to any prior negative experiences of education; a learning location that was fit for purpose; and having basic skills integrated into provision, without overtly labelling training as basic skills so as not to discourage potential learners.’ (Vorhaus et al., 2011 p.53)

- 5.56 Offering flexibility to learners is one way of offering a positive experience. McCrone et al. (2013) drew conclusions regarding the benefits to learners of being able to engage in learning in a flexible manner. They also noted the need to demonstrate positive results fairly quickly in order to help sustain learner motivation and support retention.

‘The successful engagement of learners on the programmes was characterised by flexibility (such as more use of roll on/roll off programmes and the facility to ensure the rapid achievement of an element of the course), short courses and personalised, individual support. Key to effective provision was enhancing learners’ confidence quickly.’ (McCrone et al., 2013 p.61)

Basic skills for unemployed adults

- 5.57 During the study period it became apparent that the Welsh Government’s new adult employability programme will focus on supporting unemployed adults. The literature was revisited to check for references to unemployed and low-skilled adults. This section summarises the evidence specifically relating to this group.

Targeting low-skilled unemployed adults

- 5.58 The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training has recognised basic skills training as one type of learning used across Europe as a means of re-integrating unemployed adults into the labour market (Cedefop, 2013).
- 5.59 The authors note that ‘policy-makers in nearly all countries reviewed confirm that the low-qualified are disproportionately affected by unemployment’ (Cedefop, 2013 p.53). Indeed in some countries, such as Ireland, basic skills tuition has been developed to specifically target low-qualified adults. Where provision is in place to specifically target very long-term, low-qualified unemployed adults, ‘pre-insertion’

programmes are common, for example in France and Italy, where the objective is to return to the labour market only in the medium or long term.

- 5.60 However, these programmes are usually open to both employed and unemployed adults, including work-based learning. Where unemployed adults are targeted, target groups tend to be broadly defined, with only long-term and short-term unemployed adults specifically differentiated.

‘A specific focus on the low-qualified unemployed is rare at policy level, and identifying different groups among the low-qualified rarer still: many policy-makers highlighted the danger of stigmatising this group by creating specific labelled provision. It is more common for programmes to identify groups such as migrants, people with disabilities, older people or specific ethnic minority communities than the low-qualified per se’ (Cedefop, 2013 p.54).

- 5.61 ‘The Work Programme’, delivered since 2011, is a recent example of a welfare to work programme across Great Britain, but not in Northern Ireland, established to provide support for up to two years to help longer-term unemployed into sustainable work. The programme built on previous approaches of welfare to work programmes delivered through private and voluntary sector contractors. The contracted providers paid for getting people into work were free to design their own support provision, with minimal intervention from the Department of Work and Pensions. (Foster et al., 2014 p.36).

- 5.62 The participants’ evaluation of the Work Programme concluded that the following factors contributed to improving confidence, motivation and optimism about finding work;

- feeling encouraged and supported by advisers;
 - increasing basic skills, or gaining new qualifications;
 - practical help, such as advisers submitting CVs and making telephone calls to prospective employers on the participant’s behalf;
 - training for employability skills, such as telephone and interview techniques.
- (Meager et al., 2014 p.184)

- 5.63 This reflects recognition that the delivery of basic skills needs to be complemented with other appropriate employability support to result in positive outcomes.

Mandating basic skills training

- 5.64 Jobcentre Plus is able to mandate basic skills training for individuals on jobseeker's allowance. The evaluation of the Jobseeker's Allowance Skills Conditionality Pilot (Dorsett et al., 2011), which was launched in April 2010, explains that mandating basic skills training was expected to provide positive labour market outcomes for unemployed adults.
- 5.65 The evaluation of the UK Skills Conditionality Pilot (Dorsett et al. 2011) and other literature convey mixed views about the impact of mandatory basic skills training. For instance, arguments 'in favour of mandation cited the benefits of training, expectations on jobseeker's allowance claimants and the need to deal with the minority of 'work-shy' claimants. Arguments against it included the view that training is of benefit where the individual is motivated and willing to take part, rather than compelled.' (Dorsett et al., 2011 p.3). Another report has noted that providers experienced lower levels of motivation amongst mandated participants, but that both retention rates and motivation were still better than expected and manageable (NIACE 2013). Newton et al. (2005) also noted the difficulty in measuring client satisfaction with provision, when that provision is mandatory.
- 5.66 O'Grady and Atkin (2006), in their evaluation of mandated training for Skills for Life learners, conclude that 'making attendance at training provision a 'conditionality' of receipt of welfare benefits is unlikely to result in active participation and engagement in Skills for Life training programmes' (O'Grady and Atkin, 2006 p.286). They differentiate between attending a training programme and engaging with training provision.
- 5.67 Despite these mixed views, the evaluation of the Skills Conditionality Pilot does discuss key features necessary for support agencies such as Jobcentre Plus to effectively mandate training (Dorsett et al. 2011).
- A key barrier to progressing claimants through training was 'the availability of training which could address skills barriers, with particular problems identified with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, long waiting times and uncertain start dates (Dorsett et al., 2011 p.2).

- A clear, simple and effective basic skills assessment system is also identified as a key feature. An example of this is a self-completed form design to test basic skills through a mock application process.
- Inconsistencies in mandating basic skills training can be caused by differing interpretations of eligibility between support agencies, a lack of suitable provision, different referral practices and varying capacity to undertake a thorough basic skills assessment.

Referrals and partnerships

5.68 Effective partnerships between referral organisations, training providers and other support agencies has been identified as a key factor in the success of basic skills training delivery (NIACE 2013). Training providers can receive referrals from a range of suitable partners who come into contact with unemployed adults, such as Jobcentre Plus, work programmes, housing associations and local authorities. A good awareness of what training providers can offer and, conversely, what support agencies require, is identified as a key feature to successful referral systems; in particular,

‘co-location enabled providers to raise awareness of both Jobcentre Plus advisers and unemployed adults of the positive impact of addressing English and maths needs. This built learners’ motivation to attend a subsequent first appointment at the provider venue’ (NIACE 2013, pp.17-18).

Key features of effective delivery

5.69 The NIACE report on the delivery of English and maths provision to unemployed adults discusses several key features of effective delivery (NIACE 2013).

- Having a choice of qualifications that could be suitable for basic skills training is noted as beneficial.
- Many providers find it effective to embed basic skills qualifications for unemployed adults within vocational courses. For instance, learners might undertake a maths or English unit within a vocational course on customer service, or a course focused on employability skills.
- The time needed to progress in basic skills varies considerably between individuals. Typically, 300 – 450 guided learning hours are needed to progress from Entry Level 1 to Level 2. NIACE (2013) notes that many providers felt that

the number of hours suggested for various courses were far below what learners actually needed. The key feature of effective provision is therefore a flexible provision timetable based on individual learner need.

- Unemployed adults often benefit from more intense provision than those in work-based or mainstream provision. Unemployed learners often need to address their basic skills needs faster than those in mainstream provision, in order to find employment. Mainstream provision, with two or three learning hours a week, might not be enough to progress unemployed adults into employment at the necessary pace.
- It is important to contextualise the training for unemployed learners. Mainstream provision can often provide good teaching and a qualification, but unemployed learners need experience in using their basic skills within a work environment, to increase their employability.

5.70 Flexibility and personalisation is key. This accommodates the different work-focused activities of unemployed adults and suit their own personal circumstances. Providers commonly do this by offering a range of venues and times. Using community based locations as delivery points was received positively by clients participating in local authority supported programmes (Rolfe et al. 2015 p.22).

5.71 It is important to assess and keep track of learners' progress. Regular assessment and the development of a learning plan with the learner ensures that the learner is aware of the progress they are making and supports their motivation to continue.

5.72 On a European level, programmes to develop basic skills leading to a recognised national qualification have been identified as a key type of learning to support re-integration of unemployed adults into the labour market (Cedefop 2013). Such programmes often provide unemployed adults with a second opportunity to achieve qualifications at lower or upper secondary level and are part of national provision, sometimes as provision to which they are legally entitled up to a certain age. The extent to which basic skills qualifications are provided as separate qualifications depends on the national curriculum; in some cases basic skills are included within other forms of national qualifications. Examples include the Spanish employment workshops programme, which provides a certificate of secondary education and the Danish basic education for adults (a national legal entitlement) programme.

5.73 Positive outcomes associated with personalising support were also identified during an interim evaluation of the Work Programme in 2012;

‘The tailoring of support to the individual rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach was seen to be potentially most beneficial to long-term unemployed people. This approach was viewed as useful in identifying and addressing barriers to employment, particularly those arising from low confidence and poor motivation.’ (Newton et al., 2012 p.155)

5.74 A later evaluation of this programme in 2014 also stated that the most common forms of support offered were support in personal effectiveness or confidence-building, job search skills and vocational training (Foster et al., 2014 p. 207). Other key findings were;

- the success of work-based training geared specifically towards the concentration of industries in the locality and matching participants to vacancies and offering training accordingly;
- the innovation of the programme’s support for participants once in employment, with the payment by result system incentivising job retention;
- in-work support was deemed to be more important for those who had been out of work for longer periods and younger participants. (Foster et al., 2014 p.235)

Common barriers to training amongst unemployed adults

5.75 The literature suggests that unemployed and economically inactive individuals face a range of particular barriers to accessing basic skills training. Newton et al. (2005) note some common barriers:

- Human capital barriers. These include a lack of basic skills, which make potential learners hard to engage and less likely to undertake training in general and low confidence, often caused by previous negative educational experience. The authors demonstrate that those with higher qualifications are more likely to engage in training even when unemployed.
- Work-related barriers. Including the length of time unemployed, since those furthest from the job market often see less benefit in training.
- Resource-related barriers. These include health issues and care responsibilities, as well as structural barriers such as a lack of funding or an information gap.

- 5.76 Other literature has reported that health issues and learning difficulties are a common barrier to training amongst unemployed adults. NIACE (2013) reported that, within unemployed cohorts, providers generally encountered more learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. The providers explained that:
- ‘Because many unemployed adults had not taken part in learning for some time, dyslexia, dyscalculia and other specific learning difficulties and disabilities were often undiagnosed before entry to provision. However, some providers said that waiting times for the arrangement of additional learning support made this difficult to organise within the often short courses undertaken by unemployed adults.’ (NIACE 2013, p.6)
- 5.77 Newton et al. (2005) also note that there is a certain social stigma attached to a lack of basic skills, with unemployed adults often having learned coping mechanisms. This makes it difficult to identify individuals for training as unemployed adults can feel embarrassed to admit they lack basic skills.

Summary

- 5.78 The evidence from Wales and further afield suggests that programme design and method of delivery is crucial to successful participation and outcomes for learners, with the following identified as contributing effectively to programme success: taster sessions; one-to-one support; community-based provision; embedded work-based learning; and a wide range of qualifications offered free of charge with the option to undertake more than one qualification at a time. It is also necessary to adapt learning to the differing needs of the participants. Attendance and monitoring of progress is also important, particularly with clear progression routes for learners identified. The programmes discussed were delivered by mostly qualified practitioners, using a range of approaches to motivate learners as well as some employing individual learning plans to monitor current progress and any future progression. However, the part-time/ sessional employment method used by some FEIs for tutors reflected a lack of investment in professional staff. Effective partnerships and collaboration between training providers and other stakeholders such as Careers Wales were also identified as necessary for long term sustainability of projects.

- 5.79 Engaging with employers proved successful when training providers worked together, especially when they could see the appropriateness of training to their business priorities and of relevance to employees' job roles. Raising awareness and targeted marketing of employers is significant in securing such engagement. When employers agree to time off for training this has positive impact on learner engagement.
- 5.80 Developing personalised support can prove crucial in overcoming challenges when engaging harder to reach groups of learners, such as the long term unemployed and those on incapacity benefit.
- 5.81 There is a growing body of literature relating to adult employability programmes in the rest of the UK and internationally. Much research looked at the Skills for Life Programme in the UK. Although many longitudinal impacts are not necessarily evident there are examples of many features of successful interventions leading to more immediate impacts and there is some evidence of progression into longer term employment.
- 5.82 Good practices identified include effective collaboration, employer involvement, embedding training within vocational programmes and delivering via a range of methods, such as a blended approach. There is evidence to encourage the inclusion of basic skills as a secondary learning goal, with informal learning proving successful. Clear progression routes for qualifications and onto employment. Short courses appear to have an impact when the training is less formal, with longer training courses providing strong outcomes regarding enjoyment and achievement for those unemployed and those in employment.
- 5.83 Some evidence exists to support the value of courses delivered by qualified practitioners.
- 5.84 Examples of successful delivery involve individualised learning plans, which by their nature result in differentiated delivery and learning techniques. Relating skills to real-world contexts, with training needs linked to specific jobs, regular assessment of learners and the incorporation of ICT are also important. The ability to provide a flexible approach relevant to the learners' experiences result in positive learning opportunities.

- 5.85 The literature focusing on training specifically for unemployed adults provided mixed feedback regarding the impact of mandatory basic skills training. Referrals are crucial for reaching unemployed adults for training, therefore the effective partnerships between referral organisations, training providers and other support agencies are a key factor in the success of basic skills training delivery. Learners also benefited from feeling supported and encouraged, and receiving practical help with CVs and interview techniques.
- 5.86 Key features identified as resulting in effective delivery of provision for unemployed adults include providing a choice of qualifications to ensure training is appropriate to respond to individual needs and embedding basic skills within vocational courses. Feedback regarding suitable length for courses varied, establishing that flexibility is necessary to cater for individual learner needs.
- 5.87 Compared to those in employment, the unemployed often benefit more from intense provision of basic skills as their needs require addressing quickly. Contextualising the learning can also benefit the unemployed as it provides experience of using basic skills within a work environment, which will contribute to their employability. Offering a range of venues and delivery times provides flexibility and personalisation found to benefit unemployed learners. The literature focusing on basic skills for the unemployed also recognises the importance of targeting training towards local industry demands. People who had been out of work for longer periods of time and younger participants benefit from in-work support. Payment by results for training providers incentivised job retention.
- 5.88 Some of the barriers preventing unemployed adults from accessing basic skills training include human capital; lack of basic skills, with a higher incidence of specific learning difficulties within this group, of which both can result in lower confidence levels. Those who have been unemployed for a longer period of time see less benefit in undertaking training and barriers such as health issues, care responsibilities and a lack of information and funding provide resource related barriers.

6. Conclusions

6.1 This chapter draws together the overarching findings from the literature review and makes recommendations for the design of future programmes and for future evidence gathering in this area. It is structured according to the following key research questions from the Welsh Government's specification before discussing gaps in the evidence:

- What are the characteristics of programmes that are effective in improving individual's essential skills?
- Is essential skills training effective in moving people into employment or progressing them within employment? Under what conditions and for which groups?
- What other outcomes/benefits are achieved by essential skills training?

The characteristics of programmes that are effective in improving individual's essential skills

6.2 This review reveals several interesting messages about the effective characteristics. The literature for Wales is limited but identified the following as contributing effectively to programme success: taster sessions; one-to-one support; community-based provision; embedded work-based learning; and a wide range of qualifications offered free of charge with the option to undertake more than one qualification at a time. Once learning has begun the evidence suggests that it is necessary to adapt to the differing needs of the participants, attendance and monitoring of progress is important as is identifying clear progression routes for learners.

6.3 Engaging with employers proved successful when training providers worked together, especially when they could see the appropriateness of training to their business priorities and the relevance to employees' job roles. Raising awareness and targeted marketing of employers is significant in securing such engagement. When employers agree to time off for training this has a positive impact on learner engagement. Developing personalised support can prove crucial in overcoming challenges when engaging harder to reach groups of learners, such as the long term

unemployed and those on incapacity benefit. Effective partnerships were also identified as necessary for long term sustainability of projects.

- 6.4 Further good practices were identified in the sources from outside Wales. They include effective collaboration, employer involvement, embedding training within vocational programmes and delivering via a range of methods, such as a blended approach. There is evidence that the inclusion of basic skills as a secondary learning goal, and as part of informal learning is successful as is providing clear progression routes for qualifications and into employment.
- 6.5 Short courses appear to have an impact when training is less formal, with longer training courses providing stronger outcomes regarding enjoyment and achievement for participants. Some evidence exists to support the value of courses delivered by qualified practitioners.
- 6.6 Content and methods of successful delivery involve individualised learning plans, which by their nature result in differentiated delivery and learning techniques. Relating skills to real-world contexts works best, with training needs linked to specific jobs, regular assessment of learners and the incorporation of ICT. Flexible approach relevant to the learners' experiences result in positive learning opportunities.
- 6.7 The literature focusing on training specifically for unemployed adults identified mixed results regarding the impact of mandatory basic skills training. Referrals are crucial for this cohort, therefore effective partnerships between referral organisations, training providers and other support agencies are a key factor in the success of basic skills training delivery. Learners also benefited from feeling supported and encouraged, and receiving practical help with CVs and interview techniques.
- 6.8 Key features identified as resulting in effective delivery of provision for unemployed adults include providing a choice of qualifications to ensure training is appropriate to respond to individual needs and embedding basic skills within vocational courses. Contextualising the learning can also benefit unemployed adults especially when it provides experience of using basic skills within a work environment. The literature focusing on basic skills for the unemployed also recognises the importance of targeting training towards local industry demands. Payment by results for training

providers led to continued support once the learner is in employment, with those who had been out of work for longer periods benefiting from the in-work support.

- 6.9 Compared to those in employment, the unemployed often benefit more from intense provision of basic skills as their needs require addressing quickly. Feedback regarding suitable length for courses varied however, establishing that flexibility is necessary to cater for individual learner needs. Offering a range of venues and delivery times provides flexibility and personalisation found to benefit unemployed learners.
- 6.10 Several barriers prevent unemployed adults from accessing basic skills training. Those who have been unemployed for a longer period of time see less benefit in undertaking training and barriers such as health issues, care responsibilities and a lack of information and funding can be difficult to overcome.

Effectiveness of essential skills training in moving people into employment or progressing them within employment?

- 6.11 There is a wide body of literature relating to adult employability programmes in the UK and internationally. Much research looked at the Skills for Life Programme in the UK. Although many longitudinal impacts are not necessarily evident, many features of successful interventions leading to more immediate impacts and some evidence of progression into longer term employment exist.
- 6.12 For there to be long term sustainability for essential skills programmes there needs to be tangible outcomes for employers and learners. Of the Welsh programmes discussed, awareness of the importance of essential skills generally increased the more employers valued the qualifications delivered. Although some of the programmes delivered identified material benefits such as promotion, change in job role and wage increases, there is a lack of robust data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the training. Other evaluations found that for the majority of learners there was no change in labour market status.
- 6.13 The literature is largely inconclusive regarding the impact of adult employability programmes on individuals and the wider economy. Although, on balance, the

research paints a positive picture with almost all studies identifying positive impacts for participants and employers (albeit not often backed by fully robust evidence).

- 6.14 There was some evidence of an impact on earnings from the English and the international literature and strong evidence of impact on soft outcomes such as commitment to education or self-esteem, which was believed to contribute to an individual's employability.
- 6.15 Attempts have been made in some international studies to quantify the return on investment of employability training, tending to show impressive returns. These studies are very speculative however and the methods used and estimates reached do not transfer to the Welsh context (for instance due to variance in benefits costs or a focus on slightly higher-level skills).

What other outcomes/benefits are achieved by essential skills training?

- 6.16 The Welsh evidence showed that there are a range of softer impacts of completing learning, including improved confidence of employees resulting in improved communication and customer service skills, and reduced sick leave.
- 6.17 Employability characteristics such as commitment to employment, education and training were found to improve as a result of undertaking basic skills training, with improvements in self-esteem also reported. It was suggested that these may contribute to longer term gains, as opposed to being instantly evident in employment straightaway.
- 6.18 Increased learner confidence is often suggested to be the most significant impact of training programmes. The potential contribution of improved basic skills to health and wellbeing emerges as an important factor. Even with slow improvements cited in helping harder-to-help groups into employment, several studies identify a greater probability of being employed as higher levels of basic skills are achieved.
- 6.19 This literature review has been prepared to inform the development of the new adult employability programme to be introduced by the Welsh Government. What follows is a list of recommendations for that programme that have emerged from the literature.

Recommendations for future employability programmes.

In designing and delivering future employability programmes the Welsh Government should ensure that,

Recommendation 1

Employability and basic skills are embedded as part of wider learning.

Recommendation 2

The training is delivered by qualified teachers.

Recommendation 3

The programme should use learner-centred approaches, including

- individual learner plans,
- differentiated instruction,
- mentoring and key worker support,
- appropriate resources,
- making available varied length of courses appropriate to the needs of the learner,

Recommendation 4

Personalised support is provided for learners.

Recommendation 5

The learning is linked to real-world contexts.

Recommendation 6

Clear progressions routes (to further training, or to other services or to employment opportunities) are available and are demonstrated to the learners.

Recommendation 7

The programme incorporates awareness raising and targeted marketing to employers, which demonstrates the relevance and appropriateness of the training to business priorities.

What are the key gaps in evidence that we have identified?

- 6.20 Two research questions proposed in the original tender specification were not fully addressed. The researchers were asked to identify ‘what, if anything, does evidence tell us about how the cycle of re-entry into essential skills training can be broken’ (tender specification). There was no discussion of the cycle of re-entry in the literature reviewed. Secondly, the researchers were asked to check the literature for the similarities and differences in the approaches to provision of adult essential skills in different parts of the UK. There is some discussion of the approaches in different parts of the UK in the body of this report but there were no studies which focus on detailing the approaches.
- 6.21 There are other gaps. As explained in the sections above, most of the research studies appraised for this review were from outside of Wales, in particular from England. Most of the evidence relates to outcomes for individuals in work. Less research has been concluded looking at what works and what the benefits are for unemployed low skilled individuals. The next section expands on how some of the evidence gaps could be addressed.

Recommendations for Evidence Gathering

- 6.22 This review has summarised a wide range of literature and evidence which focuses on the organisation and impact of essential skills programmes in Wales, the rest of the UK and overseas. Throughout the process we have been mindful of the need to ‘critically appraise existing evidence’ and provide an ‘assessment of its robustness’ (tender specification). We have addressed this issue throughout the report with periodic caveats about the robustness of some of the evidence presented. However, the overall weakness of the evidence base in terms of its robustness to measure impact merits further comment since it provides the basis for our recommendations for future evidence gathering.
- 6.23 Demonstrating economic impact is a major challenge to all policy evaluation. It is no surprise, therefore, that this review has also been hampered by the lack of robust data which can measure the economic impact of essential skills interventions outcomes such as participants’ future employment and earnings.
- 6.24 Most, if not all, of the Welsh evaluations reviewed in this report, for example, rely on participants’ views of the effects of the programme. These results are liable to

overestimate the effects with causality attributed to a sequence of events which may or may not be connected. So, participants who attended a literacy course are likely to report that their written English improved as a result. They may, then, go on to connect the fact that they successfully applied for a job, and since the application procedure involved filling in forms, they may also report that the literacy course helped them get jobs. However, we have no way of telling from these data whether the literacy course really made the difference or whether other intervening factors were the key.

- 6.25 One approach to this issue is to compare the responses of participants with those of a control group; that is, a group of people who are similar to programme participants, but who did not take part in the programme. This approach to evaluation relies on collecting data from programme respondents before and after the programme as well as from a 'similar' group of non-participants. This has been done in some studies reviewed here (e.g., Meadows and Metcalf, 2008), but not in a Welsh context.
- 6.26 Our first data recommendation, therefore, is that the new employability programme to be launched in September 2015 has evaluation built into its design. This would entail – as in the Skills for Life evaluation – a longitudinal survey of participants and non-participants conducted at two points in time, approximately one year apart. This would allow aggregate differences in changed outcomes of the two groups to be taken as evidence of the effect of policy intervention. Even if data from a control group are not collected, the second best solution would be to collect evidence from participants before and after intervention. While not the most robust method of evaluation, this approach would nevertheless represent a step forward.
- 6.27 Since employment and earnings effects take time to develop, we also recommend collecting data on factors which influence employability such as work commitment, self-esteem, attitudes to education and training, and health. These data can also yield useful results for policy makers seeking evidence based guidance on what works well and for whom.
- 6.28 Our second recommendation is that in order to track longer term employment and earnings impacts, datasets which integrate administrative information need to be created in Wales. These would provide a robust and cost effective evidence base for

policy evaluation across large parts of the post-compulsory education and training sector (including but going beyond essential skills). Several linked datasets are now available for analysis in England. For example, Individualised Learner Records have been linked to data on employment and earnings taken from administrative data held by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Based on these data, robust before and after comparisons have been made of the employment and earnings gains made by essential skills participants (through the Skills for Life programme) (Frontier Economics and the Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2011: 16-17).

- 6.29 Furthermore, the resulting dataset is very large indeed – around 7-8 million records are held per academic year. It therefore permits analysis at a fine level of detail, allowing outcomes to be disaggregated by type of provision, gender, age, location, and ethnicity. Such variations in outcomes are of particular interest to policy makers in evaluating where scarce available resources might be best directed. Linking administrative data, then, would allow such questions to be addressed in the future.
- 6.30 We recommend that similar data linkage exercises are mounted in Wales, so that the Life Long Wales Record (LLWR) is matched into employment and earnings data held by HMRC and DWP. This has been achieved in England with good effect. There is no reason why a similar exercise could not be undertaken here in Wales.
- 6.31 In accordance with the tender specification, the report examines the delivery of essential skills training in the rest of the UK as well as overseas. This prompts our third recommendation for evidence gathering and one which is in line with the Welsh Government's aim to internationally benchmark Wales against similar nations in the OECD (Welsh Government, 2014c)
- 6.32 The OECD's Survey of Adult Skills was carried out in 24 countries in 2012 with England and Northern Ireland taking part (Carpentieri et al., 2015). The resulting dataset is beginning to produce results which would have been useful for this review and the new adult employability programme which the review is intended to inform. Some of this research discusses the consequences of poor numeracy and literacy skills as well as comparing the experience of different nations (Wheater and Worth, 2014a and 2014b). However, Wales did not participate in the first round of data collection and so a Welsh focus to these data cannot be supplied.

6.33 Other rounds of data collection are now in progress as the OECD aims to establish the Survey of Adult Skills as a regular feature of the international landscape like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which is carried out every three years. Rather than repeat the survey with those already involved, the OECD is still seeking first time entrants. The second round of data collection for first time entrants is currently taking place with a further nine countries involved. A third round of data collection with newcomers is now being planned as the OECD continues to expand the number of countries involved. However, it is unclear when the whole exercise will be repeated. Only at this stage will Wales' participation allow comparisons to be made with competing countries such as the US, Germany, France, Italy and Japan as well as with other parts of the UK. These countries were involved in the first round of data collection in 2012 but have not subsequently been involved. Our recommendation, therefore, is that Wales becomes involved once the exercise is repeated with the countries which participated in the first round of data collection since they are Wales' most likely international competitors. However, the result of this data collection exercise is yet to be announced.

Recommendations for Evidence Gathering

To conclude, our data recommendations are threefold. The Welsh Government should,

Recommendation 8

Build in evaluation capability into the design of the new adult employability programme, preferably involving before and after surveys.

Recommendation 9

Promote the linkage of administrative datasets to facilitate detailed analyses of the employment and earnings gains made by programme participants; and

Recommendation 10

Arrange for Wales to take part in the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills when the next full scale exercise is undertaken in order to track and benchmark performance.

Annex 1: References

Wales

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Annex 2: Criteria for assessing quality of literature

A list of potential literature was provided by the Welsh Government. These documents were initially screened for relevance to the research question based on the abstract or the executive summary.

The full reports were then obtained and reviewed with the key information from each study recorded on a standard form. At this stage the quality of the studies was assessed and each was assigned a Red / Amber / Green status.

In order to assign a RAG status to studies, Arad drew on the Quality in Evaluation Framework developed on behalf of the Cabinet Office, which assesses the quality of qualitative evaluations concerned with social policy, programmes and practice¹³, the GSR Rapid Assessment Toolkit¹⁴ and for the small number of more qualitative studies, the Maryland Scale for Scientific Methods (MSSM)¹⁵ the Three key criteria were selected focusing on robustness of research design and data collection, the process of drawing conclusions, and applicability to wider contexts.

These criteria were used to RAG the study as follows:

- Red (will not be included in the review): no criteria achieved.
- Amber (may be included in the review): one criteria achieved.
- Green (will be included in the review): two or more criteria achieved.

¹³ http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/a_quality_framework_tcm6-38740.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/networks/gsr/resources-and-guidance/rapid-evidence-assessment/how-to-do-a-rea>

¹⁵ As summarised in <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/networks/gsr/resources-and-guidance/rapid-evidence-assessment/how-to-do-a-rea>

Criteria

- The research design is robust and defensible – methodology, sample sizes and rationale are well defended, with discussion of any limitations.
- Findings/conclusions are clearly supported by the data/study evidence and demonstrate a coherent logic.
- Study includes detailed description of the study context to allow applicability to other settings/contexts to be assessed.

It should be noted that the Quality in Qualitative Evaluation Framework emphasises the need for (and value of) professional judgement when assessing qualitative inquiries and studies. This is true in the context of this study and in considering the above criteria.

The following list presents the RAG status of literature contained within the review.

Wales

Blackaby, D. and Drinkwater, S.J. (1996) 'Welsh-speakers and the Labour Market' Contemporary Wales Vol. 9 pp 158-170.	Amber
BMG Research (2014) Evaluation of Work-Based Learning in Wales, 2007-2011. Social Research Report 23/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.	Amber
Drinkwater, S.J. and O'Leary, N.C. (1997) 'Unemployment in Wales: Does language matter?' Regional Studies Vol. 31:6 pp 583-591.	Amber
Estyn (2012) The impact of family learning programmes on raising the literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults.	Green
Henley, A. and Jones, R.E. (2005) 'Earnings and Linguistic Proficiency in a Bilingual Economy' The Manchester School Vol. 73:3 pp. 1463-6786.	Amber
Jones-Evans, D., Thompson, P. and Kwong, C. (2011) Entrepreneurship amongst minority language speakers: The case of Wales. Regional Studies, 45 (2). pp. 219-238. ISSN 0034-3404	Green
Mann, R. (2011) 'Welsh speakers and Welsh Language provision within the public sector', WISERD/RRS/004. Cardiff: WISERD.	Green
McIntosh, S. (2006) Literature Review of the Effects of Improvements in Adult Basic Skills. Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales.	Amber
McIntosh, S. (2011) Evaluating the Impact of Basic Skills Training on Labour Market Outcomes. Unpublished internal report. Welsh Government.	Amber
Miller, N. and Lewis, K. (2010) National Survey of Adult Skills in Wales. Cardiff: Welsh Government.	Amber
Miller Research (UK) Ltd (2010) Evaluation of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales, 2010 Strategic Evaluation Report. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. (Embargoed doc)	Amber
Miller Research (UK) Ltd (2011) Final Evaluation of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales 2007-2010: Final Report. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. (Embargoed doc)	Green

IFF Research (2014) Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors. Social Research Report 47/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.	Amber
Wavehill (2013a) Bridges into Work - Mid Term Evaluation: A report for Torfaen County Borough Council. Merthyr Tydfil: Wales European Funding Office.	Amber
Wavehill (2013b) Ongoing evaluation of the COASTAL project. Merthyr Tydfil: Wales European Funding Office.	Amber
Welsh Assembly Government (2005) Words Talk – Numbers Count. The Welsh Assembly Government’s Strategy to Improve Basic Literacy and Numeracy in Wales. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.	Green
Welsh Assembly Government (2008) Skills that Work for Wales: A skills and employment strategy and action plan. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.	Green
Welsh Government (2012) Review of Qualifications 14-19. Cardiff: Welsh Government.	Green
York Consulting (2013a) Interim evaluation of the Delivery and Quality Assurance of Post-16 Basic Skills Provision in Wales. Social Research Report 51/2013. Cardiff: Welsh Government.	Amber
York Consulting (2013b) Evaluation of Work-Based Learning Programme 2011-15: First report on contracting arrangements and traineeship delivery. Social Research Report 24/2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.	Amber
York Consulting (2014) Evaluation of Essential Skills in the Workplace 2013-2015. Unpublished internal report. Welsh Government.	Amber

Outside Wales

Ananiadou, K., Jenkins, A. and Wolf, A. (2004) ‘Basic Skills and Workplace Learning: What do we actually know about their benefits?’ Studies in Continuing Education Vol. 26:2 pp. 289-308.	Amber
Atkin, C., Rose, A. and Shier, R. (2005). Provision of, and Learner Engagement with, Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Support in Rural England: a Comparative Case Study. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.	Amber
Bivand, P., Bell, L., Vaid, L., Whitehurst, D and Wan, K. (2010) The Impact of Devolution: Employment and employability. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation	Amber

Bramley, G., Kinder, K., and Passey, R. (2010) 'The development of employability skills for adults' in MacLeod, S. and Straw, S. (eds.) Adult basic skills. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.	Green
Brooks, G., Giles, K., Harman, S., Rees, and Whittaker, S. (2001) Assembling the Fragments: A review of research on adult basic skills, Research Report Number 220. London: Department for Education and Employment.	Green
Cara, O. and de Coulon, A. (2009) Skills for Life Teachers' Qualifications and their Learners' Progress in Adult Numeracy: Results from the Teacher and Learning Studies. National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.	Green
Cara, O., Litster, J., Swain, J. and Vorhaus, J. (2010) The Teacher Study: The impact of the Skills for Life strategy on teachers. National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.	Green
Carpentieri, J. D., Litster, J., Mallows, D. and Johnson, C. (2015) International Evidence Review of Basic Skills: Learning from High performing and Improving Countries BIS Research Paper No. 209. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Green
Cedefop. 2013. Return to work: work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.	Green
Coben, D. (2005) Adult Numeracy: Shifting the focus. A Report and Recommendations on Adult Numeracy in Scotland.	Amber
Comptroller and Auditor General (2008) Skills for Life: Progress in improving adult literacy and numeracy. London: National Audit Office.	Green
De Coulon, A., Oscar Marcenaro-Gutierrez, O. and Anna Vignoles, A. (2007) The Value of basic Skills in the British Labour market. London: Centre for the Economics of Education	Amber
Dench, S., Hillage, J. and Coare, P. (2006) The Impact of Learning on Unemployed, Low-Qualified Adults: A systematic review. London: Department for Work and Pensions.	Green
Department of Labour, New Zealand (2010) Upskilling Partnership Programme: Evaluation report.	Green
Dorsett, R., Rolfe, H. and George, A. (2011) The Jobseeker's Allowance Skills Conditionality Pilot, Research Report No 768. United Kingdom: Department for Work and Pensions.	Green
Europe Economics. (2014) The Economic Impact of the Work Programme. United Kingdom: Europe Economics.	Green
Foster, S., Metcalf, H., Purvis, A., Lanceley, L., Foster, R., Lane, L., Tufekci, L., Rolfe, H.,	Green

Newton, B., Bertram, C. and Garlick, M. (2014) Work Programme Evaluation: Operation of the commissioning model, finance and programme delivery. London: Department for Work and Pensions.	
Harding, C., Romanou, E., Williams, J., Peters, M., Winkley, P., Burke, P., Hamer, J., Jeram, K., Nelson, N., Rainbow, B., Bond, B. and Shay, M. (2012) The 2011 Skills for Life Survey: a Survey of Literacy, Numeracy, and ICT Levels in England, Research Paper 81. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	Green
MacLeod, S. and Straw, S. (eds.) (2010). Adult basic skills. Reading: CfBT Education Trust.	Green
McCrone, T., Southcott, C., Featherstone, G., Macleod, S. and Dawson, A. (2013) Research into Training for Young Adults aged 19 to 24 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), Research Paper Number 95. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Green
Meadows, P. and Metcalf, H. (2008) 'Does literacy and numeracy training for adults increase employment and employability? Evidence from the Skills for Life programme in England', Industrial Relations Journal 39:5, 354–369.	Green
Meager, N., Newton, B., Sainsbury, R., Corden, A. and Irvine, A. (2014) Work Programme Evaluation: the participant experience report, Research report No 892. London: Department for Work and Pensions.	Amber
Murray, S. and Shillington, R. (2012a) Investing in Upskilling: Gains for individuals, employers and government – Summary. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN).	Green
Murray, S. and Shillington, R. (2012) Investing in Upskilling: Gains for individuals, employers and government. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN).	Green
National Audit Office. (2014) The Work Programme. United Kingdom: National Audit Office.	Green
Newton, B., Hurstfield, J., Miller, L., Akroyd, K. and Gifford, J. (2005) Training participation by age amongst unemployed and inactive people, Research Report No 291. London: Department for Work and Pensions.	Green
Newton, B., Meager, N., Bertram, C., Corden, A., George, A., Lalani, M., Metcalf, H., Rolfe, H., Sainsbury, R. and Weston, K. (2012) Work Programme evaluation: Findings from the first phase of qualitative research on programme delivery Research Report No 821. London: Department for Work and Pensions.	Amber
NIACE. (2013) Helpful approaches to the delivery of English and maths provision for unemployed adults. Report to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Green
O'Grady, A and Atkin, C. (2006) Choosing to learn or chosen to learn: the experience of Skills for Life learners, Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 11:3, 277-287.	Amber

Patrignani, P. and Conlon, G. (2011) The Long Term Effect of Vocational Qualifications on Labour Market Outcomes, Research Paper Number 47. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Green
Reder, S. and Bynner, J. (eds.) (2008) Tackling Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills. Routledge.	Green
Rolfe, H., Portes, J. and Hudson-Sharp, N. (2015) Local authority schemes supporting people towards work: An independent report for the Local Government Association. London: National Institute of Economic and Social Research.	Green
Sabates, R. and Parsons, S. (2012) The Contribution of Basic Skills to Health Related Outcomes During Adulthood: Evidence from the BCS, Research Paper Number 91. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Green
SQW Limited et al (2013) Investigating the Benefits of English and Maths Provision for Adult Learners: Part 1 Quantitative Assessment, Research Paper Number 129a. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Amber
Vorhaus, J., Litster, J., Frearson, M. and Johnson, S. (2011) Review of Research and Evaluation on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills, Research Paper No. 61. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Green
Waite, E., Evans, K. and Kersh, N. (2011) Is Workplace 'Skills for Life' Provision Sustainable in the UK? Research Paper 23. London: Centre for Learning and Life Changes in Knowledge Economies and Societies (LLAKES)	Amber
What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2014) Evidence Review: Employment Training. London: What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth.	Green
Wheater, R. and Worth, J. (2014a) The impact of low skills on labour market engagement in the International Survey of Adult Skills 2012 Research Paper No. 183 London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Amber
Wheater, R. and Worth, J. (2014b) Young Adults' Skills Gain in the International Survey of Adult Skills 2012 Research Paper No. 182 London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.	Amber
Wolf, A., Aspin, L., Waite, E. and Ananiadou, K. (2010) 'The rise and fall of workplace basic skills programmes: lessons for policy and practice' Oxford Review of Education Vol. 36 No. 4.	Green