

Research report

Evaluation of the European Social Fund Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming projects

by Peter Dickinson and Richard Lloyd



DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

Department for Work and Pensions

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Each member of the study team also contributed to the production of the final report, namely **Stephanie Charalambous**, **Oliver Jackson**, **Heather Rose**, **Dr David Scott** and **Naomi Williamson**.

Abbreviations

BASE	British Association of Supported Employment
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DAIN	Digital Activist Inclusion Network
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EC	European Commission
ECAM	Every Child a Musician
EET	In employment, education or training
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HA	Housing Association
HE	Higher Education
HEBO	Host Borough Employment Offer
HR	Human resources
IAG	Information, advice and guidance
ICT	Information and communication technologies
ILM	Intermediate labour market
ITM	Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming
LANTRA	Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries.
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnerships
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
OCN	Open College Network
QCF	Qualifications and Curriculum Framework
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SELP	Social Enterprise Leadership Programme
SME	Small to medium sized enterprise

Summary

Introduction

ICF GHK Consulting was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to undertake the evaluation of the Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand of the current European Social Fund (ESF) programme. The aims of the study were to examine the impacts of the ITM projects, see what works in terms of moving people closer to the labour market and identify whether this is influencing future mainstream policy and policymakers. Key areas for investigation included how the ITM strand is being delivered, whether ITM has been effective in generating new ideas to influence policy and delivery, and the key lessons for future transnational activities in the next round of ESF.

The study approach included a telephone survey of 20 ITM projects; case study research with 12 projects, and attendance at thematic events and interviews with 17 ‘policy influencers’ to explore potential mainstreaming impacts.

The ITM strand

The ITM strand seeks to develop and trial innovative approaches to moving individuals towards the labour market, sharing lessons with transnational partners and seeking to inform policy development and delivery through mainstreaming. Some £23 million of ESF funding supports 32 ITM projects, with key features of the strand including:

- the structuring of the projects funded around six themes – developed on the basis of consultation between government and external partners, and including active inclusion; engaging with employers; Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the digital divide; demographic change; skills for climate change and sustainable development, and social enterprise;
- projects based on partnerships, including at least one transnational partner – although unlike previous transnational ESF innovation programmes no specific parallel funding was available in most other Member States to support transnational activities; and
- a central support body, the ITM Unit hosted by Birmingham City Council – whose responsibilities included helping projects understand the requirements of the strand, providing support throughout the delivery period and supporting mainstreaming efforts through the provision of thematic events and identifying suitable policy contacts.

At the time of study all but three of the 32 ITM projects were still in operation, with many being granted extensions of time and in some cases funding to complete or extend their activities. Consequently, it was too early for the study to provide a final assessment of impact across the strand, although, as described below, several examples of successful mainstreaming were identified at the local and national levels.

Study findings

The study found that the projects overall had made good progress towards the achievement of their individual aims and objectives, and in some cases had already achieved success in mainstreaming the outcomes of their work, mainly at the local level but also nationally. The findings in terms of innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming are summarised below.

Innovation

The ITM projects were found to have developed and implemented a range of innovative approaches across the six thematic areas. They have a strong focus on new approaches to policy implementation, most commonly featuring process (the development of new methods, content or approaches) or goal innovation (working with different groups, sectors and types of qualifications) oriented. Context oriented innovation was identified less frequently.

Common areas of 'process' innovation focused on the development of whole person/employer approaches (providing holistic, integrated solutions for target groups with multiple and complex needs); the use of ICTs to enhance delivery (for example, by bringing job vacancies together at a single point or in the assessment and delivery of learning); social enterprises as a mechanism for generating new employment opportunities and as a focus for leadership development services; and new delivery mechanisms.

Examples of 'goal' innovation included working with new target groups (including individuals with mental health problems, disabilities, ex-offenders and young people not in employment, education and training (NEET)); and developing new qualifications and training outcomes – in a range of areas including increasing employability amongst challenging-to-reach groups to low carbon and sustainable development training for employers.

Examples of context innovation focused mainly on the creation of new networks.

Across the projects, several elements emerged as having worked well in implementing their innovations, including the role of partnerships, development of whole person/employer approaches, and the use of ICTs in working with learners and delivering new provision.

Challenges were experienced in terms of working with difficult-to-engage groups and as a result of changes in the national policy agenda, which also meant that projects had to review both their activities and their potential audiences for mainstreaming.

The study concluded that the ITM strand is distinct from mainstream ESF as a vehicle for the development, trialling and mainstreaming of innovative approaches. Although mainstream ESF is not without innovation, the specific aims, objectives and key programme features of ITM offers both clarity in terms of focus and the freedom to trial innovative approaches, with their potential failure being part of the learning process.

Transnationality

The majority of the projects had embraced the transnational element of ITM, with almost two-thirds of projects engaging with two or more transnational partners. In many cases the composition of transnational partnerships changed over time – as either partnerships broke down or, more commonly, new partners were identified whose interests and activities more closely matched those of the English projects.

Transnational partnerships were developed through a range of routes, most commonly following previous contacts or joint working, in some cases through the earlier Equal programme. Finding transnational partners was a challenge for some projects, with a partnership broking event organised by the ITM Unit leading to new partners being identified.

Transnational activities commonly focused on visits to other Member States with the aim of sharing practice and observing different provision directly. Parallel development and the import of innovative practice were also key objectives for transnational activities – with projects both learning and providing lessons for their transnational partners.

The projects were at different stages of their transnational work – in some cases activities had been limited, while in others transnationality had been a strong feature from the outset. The majority of projects cited a range of benefits from their transnational activities so far, including:

- learning from the experience of others across a range of interests;
- observing similar approaches being delivered on the ground – showing what could be achieved and providing lessons for delivery; and
- gaining confidence that their innovative approaches could work (accounting for political, structural and cultural differences).

A less tangible, but nonetheless valued, benefit was the sharing of experience amongst the project team (and participants if included in transnational work) to enhance partnership cohesion and shared purpose. However, in some cases, learning from transnational partners was limited, with practice in England being found to be more advanced than that of the transnational partner. In some cases this led to projects seeking out new transnational partners, in which they could be more specific in their search having established the type of activities they wished to explore.

Overall, the projects considered that the benefits of their transnational work were worth the resources expended on them – with only a couple reporting otherwise. The majority considered that their transnational learning complemented, rather than underpinned, their approaches – although a significant minority reported more direct influences. In these cases the projects were clear that the transnational inputs had been key in taking their approaches forward.

The main challenge to transnational working under ITM was the lack of reciprocal funding for transnational activities across Member States. Although less of an issue with Swedish, German or Polish partners, where funding was available for transnational work, differences in programme timings also caused difficulties.

Dissemination and mainstreaming

Although the projects were at different stages of their mainstreaming plans, all had been involved in some form of dissemination activity to promote and share the lessons from their work. The most common dissemination routes were via the thematic events and through meetings, conferences and presentations locally and nationally. Projects also reported making contacts with policy influencers through a range of routes – via the thematic events, via contacts brokered by the ITM Unit, and through their own efforts.

The thematic events were viewed positively by both the projects and the policy influencers attending them – particularly the cross-thematic events in 2011 which introduced an element of cross-thematic learning and a more current policy focus. However, several projects commented that the representation of policy influencers across the events was disappointing and others would have preferred more formalised follow-up to capitalise on awareness raised and contacts made.

Projects' dissemination and mainstreaming activities had most commonly been locally focused, with lessons being shared with partners and others to continuing the activities trialled. Others reported many of the challenges of making links with national policy influencers – exacerbated by changes in the public sector infrastructure resulting from measures to address the deficit and the accompanying restructuring. Many projects had worked hard to establish contacts with national policy influencers, which had resulted in the successful mainstreaming of approaches trialled.

Although too early to provide a comprehensive record of mainstreaming outcomes, examples identified in the study included:

- informing local employment, health, social enterprise and skills development strategies;
- developing new training courses, materials and delivery approaches – with mainstream impacts being primarily local but with examples at the national level;
- the introduction of new services, through local arms of national agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus, with the potential for adoption more widely; and
- the development of models of supported employment for a range of target groups, again adopted at a local level, but with examples showing the potential to be upscaled.

Overall conclusions

The study concluded that the ITM strand has been effective in generating and testing new ideas with the potential to influence the delivery of policy locally and nationally. The mainstream impacts identified showed that many projects have the potential to be influential, with the challenge for the remainder of the programme being to bring these outcomes to the attention of relevant policy influencers.

The delivery of, and the structures developed for, the ITM strand have been shown to work well, again in the face of challenges not envisaged at the outset. The thematic approach has worked well in terms of providing clear distinctions around project activities, and the stakeholders and other consultees considered that the themes selected were appropriate at the time they were developed. However, changes in policy over multi-year programme periods are inevitable and in this case compounded by a change of Government in 2010 and resulting measures in the Coalition Agreement to address the public sector deficit.

Finally, the study has shown that when transnational partnership works well it can produce real benefits for projects, in the case of ITM even with the additional challenges of reciprocal funding only being available in three Member States. Challenges also exist around identifying appropriate transnational partners and while the majority of projects considered that the benefits resulting for them were worth the resources invested, it was apparent that for some the ‘return on their investment’ was greater than for others.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the remainder of the strand

Our recommendations focus on supporting further mainstreaming at the national level, and are directed primarily towards the Managing Authority and the ITM Unit:

- The expectation that projects will share their outcomes with a view to mainstreaming at the national level should continue to be emphasised.
- Plans should be put in place to capture the outcomes of projects, including extending the programme of the thematic events to provide the opportunity for learning to be shared.
- Continue to provide support to projects in identifying potential policy influencers – recognising that the thematic events are not the sole route to mainstreaming.

Recommendations for future innovation and transnational programmes

The evaluation of the ITM strand has provided a series of lessons for future innovation and transnational programming, both in terms of challenges and successes. Overall we recommend that innovative programming, such as ITM, should be continued under ESF, where it offers a distinctiveness and added value over mainstream programming.

Programme delivery model

Areas which we recommend are considered for inclusion in future programmes include:

- the provision of project support through a dedicated support unit – in recognition of the support requirements of such programmes compared to mainstream delivery;
- combining project support with wider programme management roles;
- replicating a programme of events and other mechanisms to allow greater initial project awareness, sharing emerging and final lessons and issues; and
- taking steps to ensure that policy inputs continue to influence the initial scoping of project activity as well as project implementation.

Transnationality

Consideration should be given to whether the transnational component of future innovation programmes should continue to be **mandatory**, or be more of an ‘option’ which projects can include in their project applications and for which additional funding would be received. We also recommend that:

- issues around parallel funding of activities by other Member States be considered, with lobbying at Commission level to ensure funding is available for transnational work; and
- a transnational partner brokerage service is included.

Mainstreaming

The effective mainstreaming of the outcomes from innovation projects is known to be particularly challenging and the ITM strand has faced a series of exceptional challenges in this regard. Consequently our recommendations are to:

- continue to follow the current model of support for mainstreaming applied under ITM – again to reflect the specific needs of innovative programmes, particularly around developing and sustaining links with policy influencers;
- ensure that projects’ ambitions are set high at the start of any new programme, while at programme level being realistic about the challenges and what can be expected;
- ensure that projects are well briefed on how best to present themselves;
- recognise that the thematic events are not the sole route to mainstreaming – and that support continues to be offered to identify and engage with potential policy influencers, perhaps through establishing ‘policy ambassadors’ to represent departmental interests;
- seek to establish a greater level of project-to-project networking;
- continue to follow, and expand or provide a specific website for, projects to describe themselves and their learning; and

The Managing Authority may wish to consider whether a series of short-duration, tightly focused projects may help address some of the barriers faced by innovation projects seeking to address specific policy areas.

1 Introduction

ICF GHK Consulting was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to undertake the evaluation of the Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand of the current European Social Fund (ESF) programme. The aims of the study were to examine the impacts of the ITM projects, to see what works in terms of moving people closer to the labour market, and whether this is influencing future mainstream policy and policymakers. Within this overall aim, key areas for investigation included:

- how the ITM strand is being delivered – identifying what works well and potential areas for improvement;
- whether the ITM has been effective in generating new ideas to influence policy and delivery; and
- what are the key lessons for future transnational activities in the next round of ESF?

This report presents the findings of the study, with a view to informing both the latter stages of the ITM strand and future activities to promote innovative approaches to labour market challenges in future programming rounds.

The project fieldwork took place between February and June 2012, at a time when many were still trialling their interventions and at different stages of disseminating the learning from them. As many of the projects had also received extensions (of time and/or funding) to continue their activities into 2013, the findings of this report regarding mainstreaming and other impacts should be considered formative and representing progress to date.

1.1 Overview of the ITM strand

1.1.1 The ESF programme

The ESF was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union (EU) and so help raise standards of living. It aims to help people fulfil their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects.

As one of the EU's Structural Funds, ESF seeks to reduce differences in prosperity across the EU and enhance economic and social cohesion. So although ESF funding is spread across the EU, most money goes to those countries and regions where economic development is less advanced.

The ESF is a key part of the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It supports the EU's goal of increasing employment by giving unemployed and disadvantaged people the training and support they need to enter jobs. ESF also equips the workforce with the skills needed by business in a competitive global economy.

The current ESF programme was launched in 2007, and will invest £2.5 billion of European funding between 2007 and 2013. The programme provides greater flexibility than previous rounds, with two main objectives with broad priorities within each:

- the regional competitiveness and employment objective – covering all areas of England except Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Allocations are based on those out of work and those with low or no qualifications; and
- the Convergence objective – targeted at areas where Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is less than 75 per cent of the EU average, superseding the former Objective 1 programme. The only part of England which qualifies for Convergence funding is Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

In addition to the specific priorities under each programme, projects must also address two cross-cutting themes, namely gender equality and equal opportunities, and sustainable development.

1.1.2 ITM within the ESF programme

Innovation has long been a central element of ESF programming, with at least part of the added value offered by ESF funding being to support the development of new and innovative approaches to achieving its primary objectives. While this is reflected in the ‘mainstream’ ESF programmes, specific programmes and initiatives have concentrated on promoting innovation to influence policy development – initially through the Adapt and Employment Community Initiatives, the successor Equal programme, and the current ITM projects supported under ESF.

The ITM strand of the programme began with a regional call for proposals in October 2008, with £23 million of ESF funding supporting 32 projects with the common objectives of trialling new and innovative approaches to inform policy development and implementation, with an emphasis on implementation, both locally and nationally. Key features of the strand include the:

- structuring of the projects around six themes – the nature and focus of which are described below, and which were developed following consultation between government and external partners, and which formed the basis of the initial call for project proposals;
- requirement for projects to be based on partnerships, including the requirement for at least one transnational partner recruited from a second Member State. However, unlike previous transnational ESF innovation programmes, no specific parallel funding was available in other Member States to support transnational activities – causing a range of issues as described later;
- inclusion of a central support body, the ITM Unit hosted by Birmingham City Council, whose responsibilities included helping potential projects and partners understand the requirements of the strand at the outset, providing support throughout the delivery period (including helping identify transnational partners where required), and supporting projects’ mainstreaming efforts through the provision of thematic events and assisting identifying suitable policy contacts. However, changes to the regional infrastructure and the abolition of the Government Offices meant that the ITM Unit took a greater role in performance managing and delivering Article 13 visits.

1.1.3 Key features of the ITM projects

As described above, each of the ITM projects sit under one of six themes, namely:

- Active Inclusion – five projects aiming to test new active inclusion measures to integrate disadvantaged groups into the labour market;
- Engaging with Employers – seven projects intended to test new ways of engaging with employers to address their skills needs and enable ESF target groups to improve their skills, employability and progress towards and into employment;
- ICT and the Digital Divide – three projects to test approaches to help widen participation in employment and learning through improved quality, relevance and access to ICT-based approaches;
- Demographic Change – seven projects intended to trial new ways of addressing the challenges of demographic change from an employment and skills perspective, with a focus on age management and older workers and On migration and integration;

- Skills for Climate Change and Sustainable Development – six projects to test new ways of addressing skills for climate change and sustainable development; and
- Social Enterprise – four projects to test new measures to stimulate enterprise, and support skills and employment objectives, through the vehicle of social enterprises.

As Chapter 2 will describe, the projects vary in terms of scale and schedule and are based on largely regional partnerships, but including at least one transnational partner with common interests with whom to exchange experience and learning.

Previous ESF activities to support innovation have shown that influencing policy development can be particularly challenging. For example, GHK's evaluation of the Adapt and Employment Community Initiatives showed that support is essential to help projects make the right contacts if they are to influence policy at the national level, which is itself a challenge in terms of predicting the direction of policy in advance. Our report made a series of recommendations, which were adopted in the subsequent Equal programme, around:

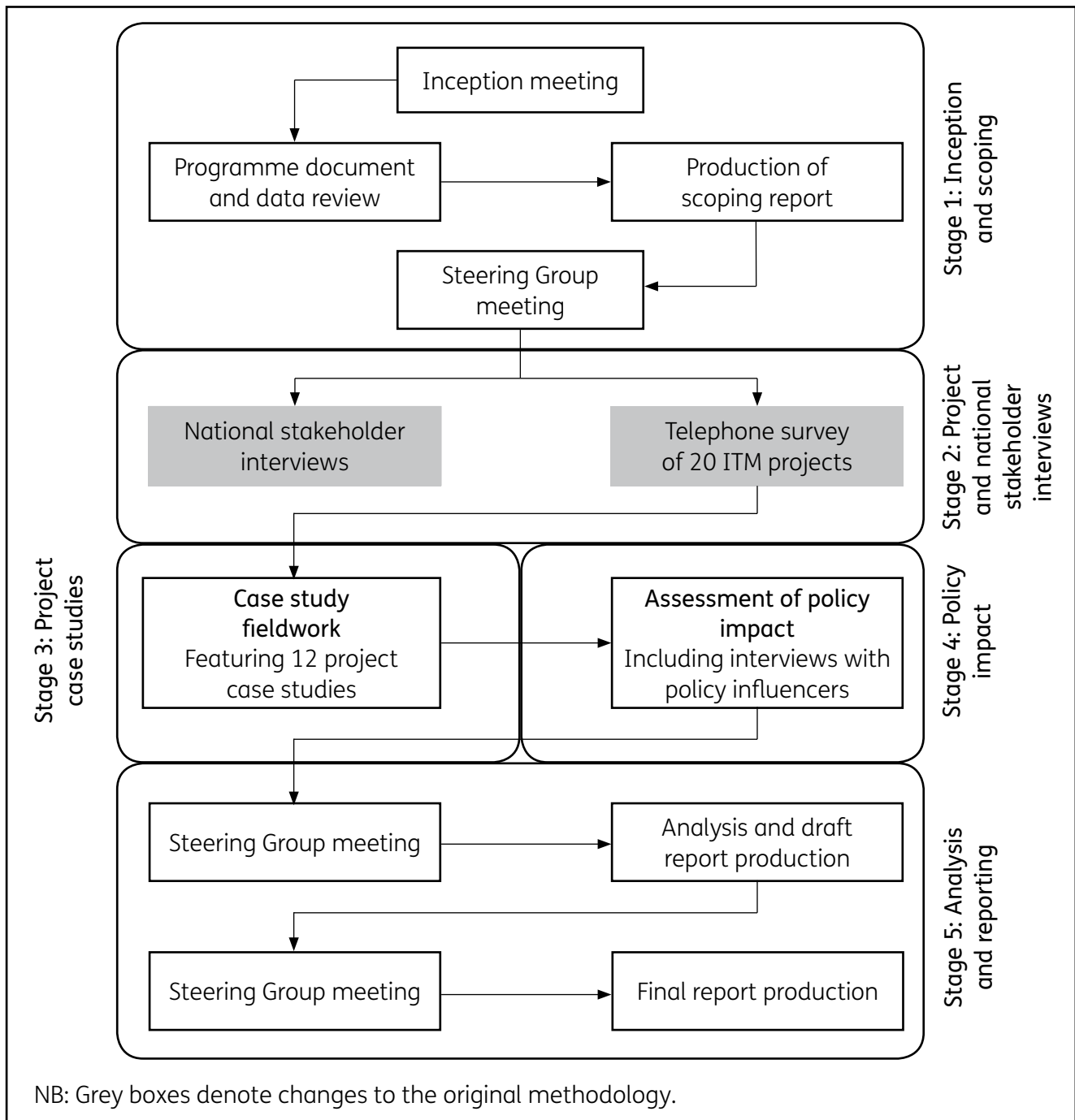
- the grouping of project activity into specific 'policy themes' – to enhance focus and aid the communication of learning; and
- the establishment of thematic groupings, involving policy makers and influencers, to both set the parameters for innovation at the outset and to form active groups throughout the life of the projects to support dissemination, influence and adoption.

These principles also apply to the ITM projects, where thematic groupings have been established to support the effective dissemination and the active sharing of lessons.

1.2 Study methodology

The study featured five discrete stages of activity, as summarised in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Summary of the study methodology



- **Stage 1: Inception and Scoping** – featuring an Inception Meeting, the review of documentation and other information, and the production of a Scoping Report, which set out several changes to the proposed methodology, namely:
 - introducing a telephone survey of projects in place of the original document review;
 - re-scheduling the interviews with national stakeholders into Stage 2; and
 - re-scheduling attendance at ITM thematic events from spring/summer 2012 to autumn 2011, to allow events to be observed as part of the study.
- **Stage 2: Project Telephone Survey and National Stakeholder Interviews** – interviews were undertaken with the 20 projects not featuring as case studies (see Stage 3 below). These interviews were undertaken with the project lead partner and covered: progress to date; the main innovative features of the project; partnership working; views of the ITM strand as a whole; successes to date; and benefits and impacts. A copy of the questionnaire used in these interviews is included in Section A1.1.
- **Stage 3: Project Case Studies** – comprising the in-depth review of 12 ITM projects across the six themes on a case study basis. The interviews were undertaken on a face-to-face basis with project leads and key partners and, where possible, project participants were also consulted. Finally, one transnational partner was also interviewed in the majority of the projects. Copies of the questionnaires used are included in Section A1.2.
- **Stage 4: Assessment of Policy Impact** – this task comprised telephone interviews with a sample of what were termed ‘policy influencers’¹ who had either attended thematic events or engaged with individual projects, to explore the benefits resulting in terms of potential mainstreaming impacts. The sample was developed from attendance lists at thematic events and from contacts reported by the individual projects. While targets were set to interview a total of 27 individuals, considerable difficulties were experienced and only 17 interviews were achieved. Reasons for not achieving the interview target included the relevant individuals no longer being in post/seconded and others contacted feeling they were unable to contribute on the basis of their involvement to date. Copies of the questionnaires used in the interviews are included in Section A1.3.
- **Stage 5: Analysis and Reporting** – featuring the analysis of the information collected across the different study tasks and the production of the final study report.

1.3 Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the strand in terms of its management structure and the role of the ITM Unit, and provides an introduction to the 32 ITM projects – setting out their characteristics, key features and aims and objectives, before briefly reviewing their performance in terms of spend and outputs achieved.

¹ The term ‘policy influencer’ is used throughout this report to refer to individuals with responsibility for policy development and delivery, either locally, regionally or nationally, and who have either attended thematic events or received materials, briefings and other information from individual ITM projects.

- Chapter 3 reviews and characterises the innovative approaches being trialled at the strand and single project levels, providing examples of approaches considered to be effective and reviewing wider successes and challenges.
- Chapter 4 explores the transnational partnership element of ITM, reviewing the range and nature of partners involved, approaches to identify transnational partners and the associated benefits and challenges experienced.
- Chapter 5 provides the findings of the study in terms of mainstreaming – including reviewing dissemination activities from project and ‘policy influencer’ perspectives and providing examples of mainstreaming successes to date.
- Chapter 6 provides the study conclusions and recommendations, structured to address the study objectives and key areas of interest.

The report also contains two appendices, the first of which provides the interview checklists used in the main stages of the study, and the second participation and achievement data for all 32 ITM projects.

2 Overview of the ITM strand – management, the ITM Unit and the ITM projects

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief review of the strand management structure, the role of the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) Unit and projects' experiences of working with it, before introducing the 32 projects which comprise the ITM strand. This forms the bulk of this section, setting out their distribution by a range of characteristics including: the theme they are operating under; the region within which they are based; the sector of the lead partner; and their scale in terms of the level of European Social Fund (ESF) funding allocated. The aims and objectives of the projects, and their performance in terms of output and expenditure targets against profile to date are also summarised.

2.2 The management of the strand and the role of the ITM Unit

2.2.1 Management overview

The ITM strand was initially developed as a national initiative with regional projects, with each region being expected to host up to three innovative projects administered through the Government Offices for the Regions. The Government Offices were responsible for the bidding process for funding, the appraisal and approval of the final 32 projects, and managing their delivery, including the Article 13 monitoring visits.

In recognition of the challenges innovative projects face in developing and trialling their approaches and disseminating their results to potential policy influencers, Birmingham City Council were contracted to provide a support function. The ITM Unit was initially charged with providing support to the projects, although the abolition of the Government Offices following the Coalition Government's Spending Review meant that the Government Offices no longer existed to administer the strand.

Consequently, the ITM Unit was contracted to include the delivery of Article 13 visits and advice on financial and expenditure matters, alongside their support function.

2.2.2 The role of the ITM Unit

As described above, the ITM Unit was initially intended to provide support to the projects in terms of their learning, dissemination and mainstreaming activities, facilitating the thematic events, providing updates on policy and offering support on a one-to-one basis to individual projects. However, with the abolition of the Government Offices the Unit also took on the delivery of the Article 13 monitoring visits and the provision of advice on financial issues such as eligible expenditure.

Previous support to innovative programmes, such as under the Equal programme, also followed a model where support for projects was combined with ESF monitoring functions. Our previous evaluations in this area showed that in some cases, projects could be reluctant to share the details of their work, particularly where things had not gone as well as planned, with the same body

which is responsible for programme management. Discussions with the projects suggest this is not the case with the ITM Unit – perhaps because their remit was initially supportive, which allowed relationships to be developed within that context.

While some of the projects described being confused at the early handover stages, where they felt it was not clear what could be asked of whom, the majority described understanding the role of the Unit from both support and management perspectives. Indeed, for some the extension of the ITM Unit role provided clarity – as one described *‘I wasn’t clear about the different roles of the Unit, the Government Offices and DWP – especially at the beginning. However, this became clearer over time, and the ITM Unit have been very helpful to us’*. However, by the time of interview the majority of the projects understood what one described as their ‘cops and coaches’ role.

2.2.3 Project experiences of the ITM Unit

The vast majority of the projects reported being highly satisfied with the role played by the ITM Unit and their interactions with it. The Unit and its staff were commonly regarded as approachable, helpful, and widely experienced in ESF matters, and extremely well connected. As two projects described:

‘I thought the ITM Unit was incredibly helpful. Lloyd or someone in his team was always available to answer your question or to help you. They really helped with some specific things, like how to present things in reports and presentations, and got me in touch with some relevant people.’

‘They were very supportive, very enthusiastic on our behalf, great torchbearers for our projects. Very supportive basically sums them up.’

Projects also welcomed the Unit’s stance and openness, particularly around the Article 13 visits – often in stark contrast to experiences elsewhere. Many projects welcomed their ‘critical friend’ role in this regard, as one described:

‘You always feel that you can have an open conversation about the issues and challenges you are facing; what you are thinking of doing; what they are looking for; making sure you have understood what they are looking for from you.’

The projects described a wide range of benefits resulting from the role of the ITM Unit – many of which are described in subsequent sections of this report, but including:

- helping identify transnational partners – where the Unit helped projects to identify potential transnational partners through both individual contacts and the holding of the partnership conference in Poland, in both cases leading to new contacts being made;
- delivering the Article 13 process – while the inevitable complaints were raised about the level of bureaucracy around the ESF monitoring process, several of the projects made positive comments on how the Article 13 visits had been helpful to them. For example, one project described how they struggled to understand how they should document their activities to ensure transparency and the Unit provided guidance on how to document what they were doing in a clear and consistent format. Elsewhere, the delivery of the visits in a ‘supportive’ manner was appreciated by many projects – as one described *‘Going to those meetings without that feeling of dread was good’* – while also emphasising that the process was no less rigorous than they have experienced previously.
- providing policy updates – these were also commonly reported as being useful, as one project described the updates *‘...really contextualised what we were doing. It was supportive to know that it all fitted in’*.

- helping review progress and recognise achievement – in several cases, discussions with the Unit staff had helped projects tease out their own achievements, as well as helping them present themselves effectively to policy influencers and others; and
- supporting the mainstreaming process through invitations to conferences, collecting mainstreaming messages from projects, introducing projects to policy influencers and other interested parties, and communicating across a range of statutory bodies.

2.2.4 Areas for improvement

Despite the overall satisfaction with the role of the ITM Unit and the effectiveness of the management approach, several areas for improvement were identified:

- Identifying transnational partners – while the efforts of the Unit were praised, several projects considered that some form of database of potential transnational partners would have been useful. However, it is not clear how this would have operated given the absence of matching transnational innovation programmes in the other Member States.
- Initial guidance materials could be improved – in terms of financial issues, evaluation and, for some, what is expected of the projects in terms of mainstreaming. In terms of evaluation, issues reported by the projects included what was expected of evaluations of innovation programmes, and what more specific issues level of resources should be directed towards evaluation. Another project considered that some one-to-one support may have been helpful to them.
- Setting expectations for mainstreaming – several projects described being unclear on what was expected of them in terms of mainstreaming, while others struggled to develop mainstreaming plans at the start when it was not clear how their projects would develop.
- Perhaps more clarity on what the ITM Unit could approve directly and what had to be referred to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- Introducing policy influencers at an earlier stage – several projects considered that more direct contact in the early stages of the programme may have helped their engagement with national policy influencers.

2.3 The ITM projects

Table 2.2 lists the 32 ITM projects by theme. It provides summary detail of each project, including the region in which they are based; the sector of the lead partner/accountable body with responsibility for the project; the project start and end dates; and the level of ESF funding.

In each case, the most up to date data was provided by the ITM Unit to include revised ESF budgets or timetables where extensions had been awarded. At the time of study, three-quarters of the projects had been granted an extension to their delivery timetables, with 12 also receiving additional funding to complete or extend their work.

2.3.1 Project distribution by theme

The thematic distribution of the 32 ITM projects is shown in Table 2.1, with Demographic Change (seven projects) and Engaging with Employers (seven projects) being the most populous thematic groups, with ICT and the Digital Divide (three projects) registering fewest projects.

Table 2.1 ITM projects by theme

Theme	Number of projects
Active Inclusion	5
Demographic Change	7
Engaging with Employers	7
ICT and the Digital Divide	3
Skills for Climate Change	6
Social Enterprise	4

Source: GHK.

2.3.2 Geographical distribution

As Table 2.2 shows, ITM projects operate in each of the English Standard Regions, plus the Cornwall Convergence area and the two ‘phasing-in’ areas of Merseyside and South Yorkshire.²

The stakeholder interviews established the initial intention to have three ITM projects in each region, which was achieved with the exception of the East of England (with two projects) and the North West (which has six projects when the Merseyside phasing in area is included).

² Cornwall is the sole Convergence area in England in the ESF 2007–13 programme. Merseyside and South Yorkshire (along with Cornwall) were Objective 1 areas in the 2000–06 ESF programme, but did not qualify for Convergence status in the current programme and instead became ‘phasing in’ areas within the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective.

Table 2.2 ITM projects – characteristics and key features

Theme	Project title	Region	Lead partner	Start and end dates*	ESF funding (£)**	Summary
Active Inclusion (AI)	The Social Activation Model (SAM)	East of England	Third Sector	April 2009 – March 2013	£391,400	Working with mental health service users to help them progress towards employment, volunteering and education/training.
	New Pathways to Work in West London	London	Local Authority	April 2009 – March 2013	£1,040,000	Moving people towards work by working with partners to engage in training/employment support, linking services and exploring social enterprise to provide employment.
	Working Better (Merseyside)	North West	Third Sector	April 2009 – March 2013	£998,400	Providing holistic and tailored support to help disadvantaged groups and those with health problems secure employment.
Demographic Change (DC)	What Works	South East	Third Sector	June 2009 – June 2012	£608,800	Identifying the key factors in the delivery of personalised support to disadvantaged individuals, and encouraging employers to adopt more flexible human resources (HR) practices.
	The Aim Partnership	West Midlands	Third Sector	April 2009 – April 2013	£1,533,700	Working with offenders, their families and those at risk of offending to address barriers to employment.
	Cornwall Works 50+ Cares	Cornwall	Local Authority	April 2009 – September 2012	£645,600	Piloting new ideas to raise the profile of the social care sector in the county and developing the skills needed to care for an ageing population.
	Cornwall Works 50+	Cornwall	Local Authority	April 2009 – September 2012	£199,999	Testing new ideas to address barriers faced by older workers entering, remaining or progressing within the workforce.
	Changing People	North East	Higher Education	April 2009 – September 2012	£701,500	Developing partnership approaches to support older people of working age, including new migrants to the region and providing guidance on self-employment.
Age-NC	North West	Further Education Consortium	May 2009 – June 2012	£506,800	Providing a strategic response to employability issues for older workers in work or at risk of redundancy.	

Continued

Table 2.2 Continued

Theme	Project title	Region	Lead partner	Start and end dates*	ESF funding (£)**	Summary
	Flexible Lives for Older Workers	South East	Third Sector	April 2009 – March 2012	£484,100	Developing a business model to respond to the social care transformation agenda and personalised budgets, upskilling existing staff and exploring recruitment issues.
	Ageless at Work	South West	Sector Skills Council	May 2009 – April 2012	£216,700	Ensuring employers in the care sector are equipped and willing to work in flexible ways to meet the needs of older people.
	WorkAge – Extending Working Lives	Yorkshire and the Humber	Further Education	June 2009 – May 2013	£497,900	Promoting the concept of age management within the region to prolong individual working lives and support employers by developing and implementing age management strategies.
Engaging with Employers (EE)	The Essex Apprentice	East of England	Local Authority	April 2009 to December 2013	£912,900	Addressing skills availability in engineering by encouraging apprenticeships, establishing a training agency structure and reducing barriers to access.
	Host Borough Employer Offer	London	Third Sector	April 2009 – October 2012	£1,200,000	Providing a bespoke training and recruitment service to employers to place people from the five Olympic Host London Boroughs, and create jobs through new social enterprises.
	Employer Engagement and Leadership	North East	City Strategy Partnership	July 2009 – December 2012	£340,000	Developing a model of employer engagement to support engagement with the workless agenda, provide access to vacancies and lead the employment and skills agenda.
	The Virtual Jobs Hub	North East	Private Sector	April 2009 – March 2011	£378,500	Aiming to compare and learn from different welfare-to-work models, establishing a virtual jobs portal for all local vacancies and establishing provider accords.
	Graduate Employability Support Programme	North West	Higher Education	September 2009 – July 2013	£1,729,300	Improving graduate employability through the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG), support for retraining and new course provision.

Continued

Table 2.2 Continued

Theme	Project title	Region	Lead partner	Start and end dates*	ESF funding (£)**	Summary
	New Employer Engagement/DUAL System (Merseyside)	North West	Chamber of Commerce	May 2009 – May 2012	£941,000	Ensuring employers engage with and benefit from training opportunities, and making training more relevant to them through learning from the German DUAL system.
	Employers for Employment Project	West Midlands	Local Authority	April 2009 – June 2013	£1,024,600	Bringing together five regeneration local authority departments in the West Midlands to produce a single job brokerage model.
ICT and the Digital Divide (ICT)	Creating e-Business Champions	East Midlands	Further Education	May 2009 – November 2011	£300,000	Helping small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) grow through a package of measures to raise awareness of and involvement in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and e-business.
	The Digital Activist Inclusion Network (DAIN)	East Midlands	Workers Educational Association	April 2009 – May 2012	£699,900	Bridging the digital divide by providing training in digital skills through a community empowerment model, training volunteers to pass on their skills to others in the region.
	Making IT Personal (South Yorkshire)	Yorkshire and the Humber	Local Authority	June 2009 – August 2012	£1,835,200	Aiming to improve access to ICT skills through a regional network of volunteers/trusted individuals offering support and advice to neighbours, colleagues and customers.
Skills for Climate Change (SCC)	Clear About Carbon	Cornwall	Local Authority	April 2009 – March 2013	£984,100	Developing approaches to increase the level of carbon literacy, skills and knowledge within the workforce, with a focus on creating low carbon supply chains.
	Skills for Climate Change	London	Further Education Consortium	April 2009 – July 2012	£791,000	Exploring new ways of raising awareness of climate change amongst SMEs, upskilling staff and transferring knowledge.
	GreenWays to Work	North West	Housing Association	June 2009 – May 2012	£806,700	Working with Housing Association (HA) clients and staff to provide training in energy efficiency, transferring knowledge on renewable fuels and providing training/work placements at their recycling centre.

Continued

Table 2.2 Continued

Theme	Project title	Region	Lead partner	Start and end dates*	ESF funding (£)**	Summary
	Eco Advantage	South East	Local Authority	April 2009 – May 2013	£672,700	Using environmental and employability tools, and training materials to help individuals and employers gain an advantage in the labour market and address disadvantage.
	Skills for Climate Change	West Midlands	Further Education	April 2009 – December 2012	£724,800	Developing a new partnership to trial approaches to address climate change issues, embed them and develop a post-graduate leadership programme.
	Low Carbon Living and Working	Yorkshire and the Humber	Local Authority	June 2009 – November 2012	£632,100	Providing support and training to the unemployed or those with low skills levels in low carbon technologies at three levels – basic level, level 2 and higher level training.
Social Enterprise (SE)	Employment, Education and Enterprise in Northamptonshire	East Midlands	Third Sector	July 2009 – January 2012	£665,000	Establishing a new social enterprise employment agency, based on an existing model to address the entrenched problems experienced by young people not in employment, education or training.
	Steps to Success (Merseyside)	North West	Third Sector	May 2009 to September 2012	£938,500	Supporting unemployed/at risk individuals to secure training and employment in the social enterprise sector, and providing advice to help social enterprises become more sustainable.
	Catalyst Pluss	South West	Social Enterprise	May 2009 – March 2013	£606,100	Providing assistance to workless individuals, focusing on those disabled or learning disabled, by establishing social enterprises to act as Intermediate Labour Markets.
	Social Enterprise Leadership Project	South West	Social Enterprise	April 2009 – August 2011	£353,500	Addressing the absence of social enterprise leadership programmes by developing provision to move the sector forward.

Source: ICF GHK.

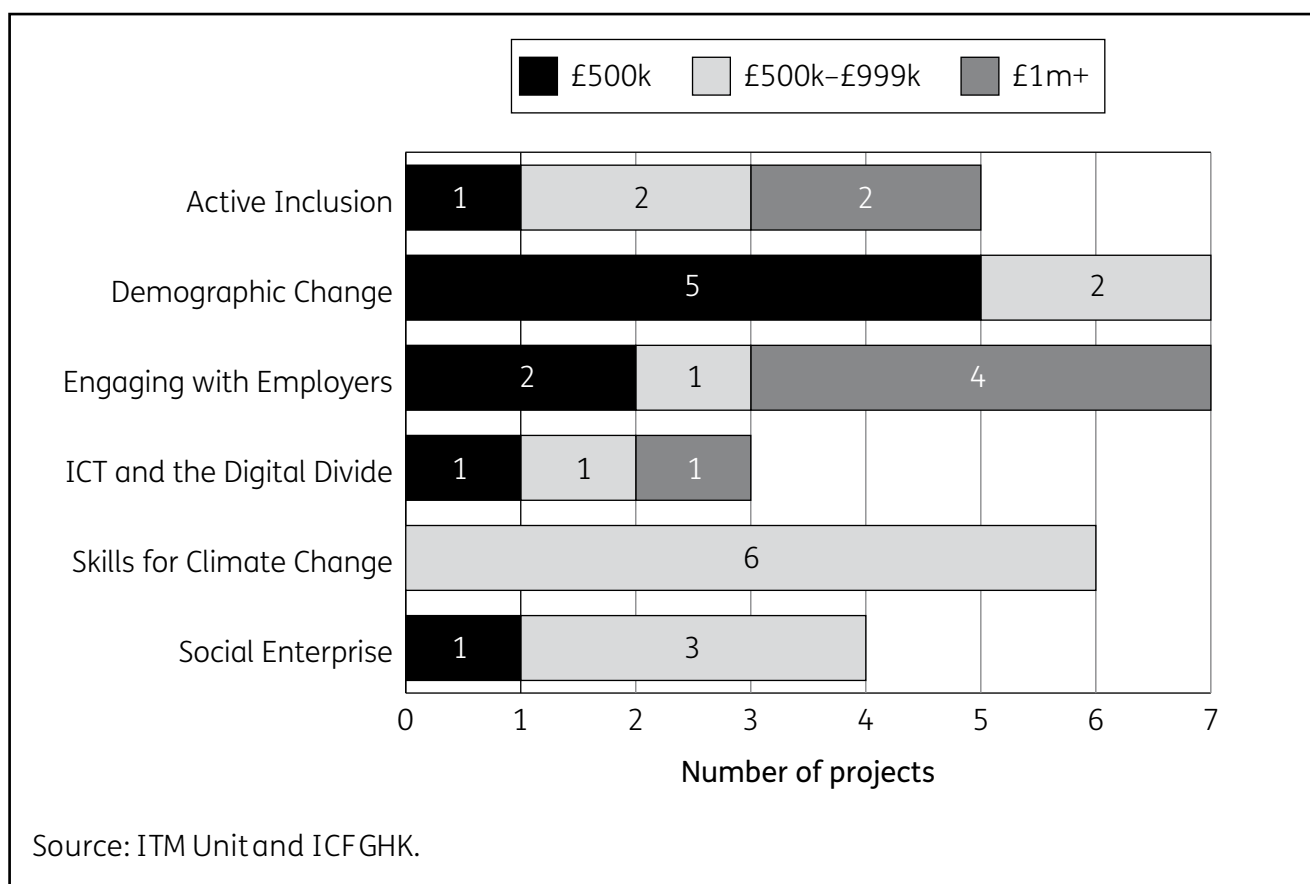
*End dates including extensions where approved at time of writing .

** ESF funding including additional/extension funding approved at time of writing. Highlighting shows where projects had completed at the time of interview.

2.3.3 Distribution by level of ESF funding

The level of ESF funding allocated to each of the projects by theme is summarised in Figure 2.1. Based on data supplied by the ITM Unit, and including additional extension funding approved at the time of writing, the projects received between just below £200,000 to over £1.8 million ESF funding. The figure shows the funding allocated in bandings of £500,000 across the six themes.

Figure 2.1 ITM projects by theme and ESF budget



As the figure shows, nine of the projects received below £500,000 ESF funding, spread across each of the themes with the exception of the Skills for Climate Change strand. The majority, 17, received between £500,000 and £999,999, again spread across each theme, but with a concentration in the Skills for Climate Change theme. Finally, six projects received over £1 million, including those in the Active Inclusion, Engaging with Employers and ICT and the Digital Divide themes.

As described previously, 12 of the projects were also granted additional funding (as well as being granted time extensions). These awards were made to help projects complete profiled or re-profiled activities, address partner or match funding issues, or to extend their work to build on successes achieved.

2.3.4 Project duration

At the outset of the strand, the majority of the projects were intended to last for between two and a half and three and a half years, and starting between April and June 2009. In a couple of cases, smaller projects such as the Virtual Jobs Hub were intended to last for approximately 18 months.

However, in 2011, projects were allowed to request extensions to their completion deadlines (in addition to additional funding described above). Requests could be submitted for an extension period of up to six months, or for 12 months if additional funding was also granted. At the time of writing three quarters of the projects were granted extensions to their completion deadlines. The rationale for the individual extensions varied – and included responding to delayed starts at the outset to allow outcomes to be achieved, helping address delivery or management issues experienced, or to allow projects to continue trialling or extend dissemination work to build on earlier success.

While two of the projects have completed their activities at the time of study (the Social Enterprise Leadership and the Virtual Jobs Hub projects), and one had closed early (Creating e-Business Champions – following issues with gaining suitable match funding from partners, with changes within the Further Education (FE) sector and a withdrawal of funding for work-based provision limited one partner’s ability to commit to the project)³, all participated in the study through telephone interviews with lead partners. As Table 2.2 shows, 11 of the projects will complete between March and December 2013, with the remainder either awaiting approval for time extensions or completing in the latter half of 2012.

2.4 Aims, objectives and focus of the ITM projects

First and foremost, the ITM strand is about innovation. When project leads were questioned on their understanding of the aims and objectives of the strand, more than four out of five emphasised the innovation component, ahead of transnationality and mainstreaming.

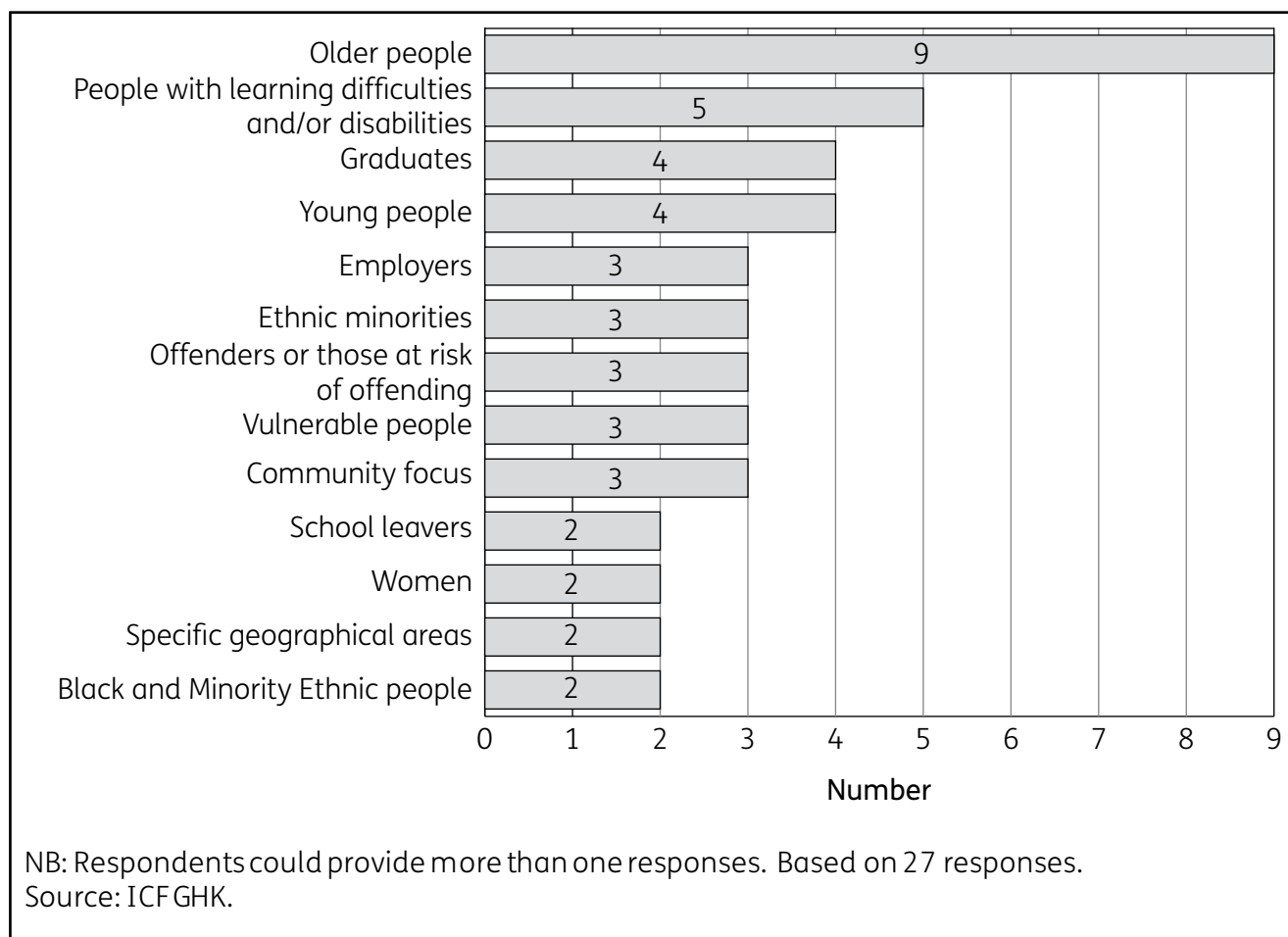
The lead partners also commonly had previous experience of working with ESF funding and of leading or participating in other innovation-based programmes. All but two lead partners were familiar with the requirements of ESF funding through involvement in previous ESF-funded activities. In addition, 60 per cent of the projects reported participating in innovation-focused projects previously, either through previous ESF programmes such as Equal or Adapt and Employment, or other pilot or pathfinder programmes at the local or national levels.

2.4.1 Project target groups

As the project interviews identified, the ITM projects were working with a range of target groups. Figure 2.2 sets out the target groups reported – with an additional five projects who reported being to all eligible participants.

Of the remaining 27 projects, older people were the focus of one-third (within and beyond the Demographic Change theme), with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities being the next most common target group, followed by young people and graduates. Many projects described working with people facing multiple barriers to inclusion, for example, one that was working with older migrant people.

³ The project closed in August 2011 following a management review which highlighted issues with gaining suitable match funding from partners. Over the project’s lifetime a number of changes within the FE sector and a withdrawal of funding for work-based provision impacted the partner’s ability to commit to the project fully. A direct result of this has been activities associated with the project have been curtailed hence contracted outputs have not been met.

Figure 2.2 ITM projects by target group

2.4.2 Overview of activities

As well as focusing on individuals with multiple barriers to labour market participation, the ITM projects also commonly described trialling several innovative approaches. While project innovation is explored in more detail in Chapter 3, the majority of ITM projects fell into two groups – those focusing on supporting individuals move closer to the labour market, into work, or facing redundancy; and those focusing on employer or employee training and support.

Supporting progress towards work

Those projects focusing on unemployed people or those facing redundancy had a range of target groups, approaches and engagement partners. The most frequently mentioned target groups were people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and older people. The main support mechanisms used were:

- **Social Enterprises** which were used in three ways:
 - the main way was in supporting out-of-work people to create their own social enterprise. Support included peer mentoring and delivering entrepreneurial skills;
 - using social enterprises to provide support for out-of-work people. Social enterprises can be run by people who are from or close to the target group, and so understand their issues, barriers and aspirations more; and
 - using social enterprises to provide work experience (such as work placements and volunteering opportunities), as they can often provide a more supportive atmosphere to people, especially those at a distance from the labour market, compared to commercial enterprises.

The Catalyst Pluss project sought to develop an intermediate labour market model to support individuals facing disadvantages in the labour market.

Developing an ILM based on Social Enterprises

Catalyst Pluss was conceived as an Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) model. The aim was to be innovative in the use of social enterprise.

The lead partners are a social enterprise themselves, and saw the ITM strand as a chance to develop micro enterprises and use them to support people into employment. It was about seeing how a social enterprise model could be used to further disadvantaged people's employment.

ITM funds were used for pump-priming to get three social enterprises up and running, with a view to them becoming self-sustaining:

- Future Clean – a car park-based car cleaning business featuring an eco-friendly car wash company. In addition to employing people (via the ILM model) with learning difficulties, ex-servicemen with disabilities run the business. Future Clean has contracts with Plymouth City Council, Devon County Council and Exeter City Council, operating in three public city car parks.
- A school shop was developed in partnership with the West of England School (which has visually impaired and other disability pupils). The school, as part of the project, transferred existing retail outlets at the school into social enterprises. The idea was to provide work experience and learning opportunities for pupils. Catalyst Pluss provided job coaching support within the shops. There was also an eBay shop which employed one person.
- New Horizons – a grounds maintenance business operating in Plymouth and employing people with learning disabilities (through an ILM model).

- **Mentoring** which also includes **peer mentoring**. Mentoring and peer mentoring can provide more intensive and responsive support from people who are from, or close to, the target group.

Mentoring – the Working Better project

The Working Better project on Merseyside sought to offer a holistic package of support to help individuals from disadvantaged groups secure employment, bringing together a range of specialist agencies to provide comprehensive services for individuals with previous health or mental health issues, or with disabilities.

The project trialled a range of activities, including a one-to-one mentoring component to provide support to individuals less likely to access public and statutory agencies for support. By improving clients' self-esteem, they could progress to become volunteer mentors themselves and were particularly helpful when offering peer-to-peer support and providing emotional support.

- **Improving recruitment processes**. Project activities to improve recruitment processes included bringing available job vacancies together in one place, providing a recruitment brokerage function and efforts to encourage employers to adopt more flexible recruitment and working practices. For example, the Virtual Jobs Hub project sought to provide a single website for vacancies and influence employer recruitment practices.

Virtual Jobs Hub

The Virtual Jobs Hub project aimed to compare and contrast welfare-to-work employment models in the North East of England and the Netherlands to identify innovation and best practice, and to import and share the best practice found for the benefit of local employers.

The core project objectives were to:

- build a virtual jobs hub portal that captures all the vacancies in Tees Valley in one place for the benefit of Middlesbrough job seekers;
- create 24 formal partnerships with private, public and voluntary sector organisations through provider accords; twenty-three have already been created;
- mentor 144 employers in the Tees Valley and share innovation and best practice, focusing on employment, recruitment and diversity; 125 employers mentored; and
- import innovation and best practice from the Netherlands.

The virtual jobs hub involved the use of ‘crawlers’ to bring all job vacancies advertised on websites located in the Tees Valley onto a single website. In addition, the project mentored employers across the Tees Valley to identify and share innovation and best practice, focusing on employment, recruitment and diversity.

The project completed its activity in March 2011, although the absence of continuation funding means that the Virtual Jobs Hub has not been continued. However, elements of the approach and Hub model have been introduced by a London Borough.

A number of projects focusing on out-of-work people were using housing organisations to engage with disadvantaged people, in addition to Jobcentre Plus, and statutory and voluntary sector organisations who usually work with specific groups of disadvantaged people. For example, the Greenways to Work project is led by a housing association and seeks to create new job opportunities in the renewable energy, energy efficiency and recycling sectors. The innovation in the project includes the use of the housing sector as a means of accessing and engaging with long-term unemployed individuals, provide skills development and work opportunities, as well as providing energy efficiency advice to help address fuel poverty.

In-work training

Nine projects focused on in-work training either in whole or in part. These included projects with a specific sector focus (care, health, construction and engineering), particular groups of workers (older workers and young people), and cross cutting themes (sustainable development and climate change).

These projects tended to be more disparate than those focused on supporting people progress towards the labour market and/or employment:

- **Older workers.** The largest number of projects focused on working with employers to improve their practices on retaining or recruiting older workers, especially in the social care sector (which is facing an ageing workforce and provides opportunities for older workers if employers can adapt their working practices). The WorkAge – Extending Working Lives project, for example, worked with both individuals and employers as described below.

Developing Age Management Practices

The overall aim of the ‘WorkAge – Extending Working Lives’ project is to promote the concept of age management in the Yorkshire and Humber Region to both prolong the working lives of older workers and support employers to ensure that they retain the skills, experience and knowledge of older workers in the labour market.

This will be achieved by working with older workers, employers and employer organisations to develop and implement age management strategies which maintain and invest in the continued employability and productivity of older workers by:

- developing and piloting new, as well as adapt existing, employer age management tools for the regional labour market;
- building a bank of good practice resources that employers can utilise;
- developing and piloting new tools to support unemployed/inactive people over 50 and those people over 50 in employment, but at risk of redundancy, to further develop their skills and actively match these skills to those being sought by employers, supporting their re-entry or retention in employment; and
- carrying out research to support the development of age management strategies to encourage continued participation and or re-entry of older workers in the labour market.

- **Apprenticeships.** Two projects focused on meeting skills shortages by developing apprenticeship provision but with different foci. The Essex Apprenticeship project was developing engineering apprenticeships, whilst the New Employer Engagement/Dual System on Merseyside focused on basic skills provision.

Essex Apprentice project

The Essex Apprentice project was developed to respond to the needs of the local engineering sector, where new staff were required, but employers found the intake was often not work ready or good quality. Apprenticeship training in the engineering sector is costly, payback periods lengthy, and the recession was found to be making employers reluctant to invest in this form of provision.

The project developed a new apprenticeship training model, with the local authority taking the role of ‘employer’ and as the apprenticeship training agency. The project also engaged with employers who had not traditionally recruited apprentices previously, offering a rotating pattern to maximise work experience while minimising the risk for the employers.

- **Business support.** This covered a range of projects. Three projects were focusing on developing the capacity of SMEs to respond to sustainable development and climate change. One project was promoting leadership and management provision within Social Enterprises, and one project was using ICTs to develop business e-mentoring between business.

Creating e-Business Champions project

The Creating e-Business Champions project aimed to help participating SMEs to survive, compete and grow in the context of the current recession. It intended to create an innovative package of measures, delivered via the internet on a 'shared community' basis, to support SME growth through direct support to help understand and exploit potential competitive advantages offered by e-Business.

However, due to a combination of challenges with match funding, local college restructuring and accompanying redundancies, the project finished early.

2.5 Project progress and performance

As described previously, the individual projects were at different stages of their implementation cycles at the time of their involvement in the study. In two cases they had come to the end of the funding period, with a third project completing early due to match funding issues. Elsewhere the projects were either continuing to deliver activities with completion dates in 2013, awaiting approval for extensions or completing in the latter half of 2012.

2.5.1 Overview of performance

While the primary objectives of the ITM projects are to develop and trial innovative approaches and mainstream the resulting products, approaches and learning, they also produce management information on the level of spend achieved and individuals participating. This section draws upon the most recent data from the ITM Unit⁴, which provides data on project spend, participant numbers and characteristics, and participant destination on completion.

Project spend

The most recent data from the ITM Unit showed that overall the ITM projects had claimed 60 per cent of total ESF programme allocation, and were progressing well at an average of 89 per cent of their individual spend profiles. This average masked differences in spend by theme, which ranged from 60 per cent for the Climate Change and 101 per cent for the Social Enterprise themes.

When questioned during the project fieldwork, approximately three-quarters of the projects reported being on profile in terms of ESF spend, and were confident that they would spend their ESF budgets by project close.

Project participation

A total of 20,061 participants were reported to have engaged with the projects at November 2011, exceeding the strand target of 18,882 (106 per cent). Table 2.3 shows the distribution of these participants by target group (for individuals with disabilities, aged over 50, from minority ethnic groups and females) across all 32 projects. Table 2.4 shows the distribution of participants by a series of additional characteristics. This table includes data from all projects with the exception of the three operating in the Cornwall Convergence area.

⁴ ESF Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) 2007-2013 Performance Report, March 2012 – based on data submitted up to the November 2011 claim period.

Table 2.3 Participation by target group – all projects

	Overall participants	Disabled	Aged 50+	Ethnic minority	Female
Target	18,882	4,167 (22%)	4,594 (24%)	4,352 (23%)	8,819 (47%)
Achievement	20,061	3,788 (19%)	5,672 (28%)	5,137 (26%)	10,280 (51%)

Source: ITM Unit.

Table 2.4 Participation by target group – excluding Cornwall Convergence projects

	Priority 1 Overall Target 14,769, Achieved 16,405 (111%)			Priority 2 Overall Target 3,933, Achieved 3,087 (78%)		
	Unemployed	Economically inactive	14–19 NEET	With basic skills needs	Without Level 2	Without Level 3
Target	6,960 (47%)	6,305 (43%)	738 (5%)	867 (22%)	1,157 (29%)	1,314 (33%)
Achievement	9,508 (58%)	3,454 (21%)	926 (6%)	241 (8%)	306 (10%)	348 (11%)

Source: ITM Unit.

As Table 2.3 shows, performance in terms of participation by target group at the strand level is positive, with targets being exceeded in all areas with the exception of individuals with disabilities. Table 2.4, which includes additional target group data, but excludes the three Cornwall projects, shows that performance against Priority 1 variables has been stronger than against Priority 2:

- Under Priority 1, 111 per cent of the participant target had been achieved, with participation by unemployed and NEET individuals being above target. However, participation by economically inactive individuals has been below target.
- Under Priority 2, 78 per cent of the participation target has been achieved, which is reflected across participation by each of the additional target groups shown. However, when Priority 1 and Priority 2 performance is combined the overall participation target is exceeded by four per cent.

Considering levels of participation by region and by theme, it emerges that:

- participation targets were exceeded in the East Midlands and North West regions (excluding Merseyside), the South Yorkshire ‘phasing in’ area and the Cornwall Convergence area – most significantly in the East Midlands (with 3,000 participants compared to a target of 1,500) and in South Yorkshire (with almost 4,000 compared to a target of 1,300); and
- projects in the ICT theme had significantly over-performed in terms of participation – almost quadrupling the initial target of 1,500 to engage almost 6,000 individuals. Good progress was being made towards the achievement of the participation targets in the remaining five themes.

As the Performance Report describes, both the regional and thematic over-performance were accounted for by two ICT projects, one in the East Midlands and the other in South Yorkshire, reflecting their success in attracting participants through similar approaches using networks of volunteers as ‘digital ambassadors’.

Project achievements

Data was also available on the achievements of all the projects with the exception of those operating in the Cornwall Convergence area. Table 2.5 summarises the performance of these Priority 1 and 2 projects in terms of participants in work on leaving their projects; young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) progressing into employment, education or training; and individuals gaining basic skills, Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications.

Table 2.5 Achievement by Priority 1 and 2 – excluding Cornwall Convergence projects

	Priority 1		Priority 2		
	Participation Target/Base 14,769 Participation Achieved/Base 16,405		Participation Target/Base 3,933 Participation Achieved/Base 3,087		
	In work on leaving	14-19 NEET into EET	Gained basic skills	Gained Level 2 qualification	Gained Level 3 qualification
Target	4,534 (31%)	515 (3%)	339 (9%)	459 (12%)	271 (7%)
Achievement	2,000 (12%)	287 (2%)	0 (0%)	592 (19%)	117 (4%)

Source: ITM Unit.

Table 2.5 shows that, at the time the data was collected, performance amongst the Priority 1 projects was below target for the numbers in work on leaving their projects and those aged 14–19 and NEET entering employment, education and training. However, much time remains for the projects to rectify this position. Performance in terms of outcomes from the Priority 2 projects was some way below target for individuals gaining basic skills and gaining Level 3 qualifications – although, again, time remains for this position to be rectified – but above target for individuals gaining Level 2 qualifications.

The most recent data on project participation and achievement at the individual project level is provided as Appendix B.

Project fieldwork

The interviews with the 32 projects included a brief discussion on performance in terms of spend and output/participation against profile. Of the three projects no longer operating, both of those which completed their contract periods reported achieving their output targets.

The projects currently operating reported positively in terms of performance at the time of interview. Almost three-quarters of projects (73 per cent) reported being on profile in terms of their output targets, and the same proportion, although not necessarily the same projects, were on profile regarding spend. Over one-third of the projects (35 per cent) which reported being on profile with their outputs reported having already, or being highly likely to, exceed their output targets on completion.

Where projects experienced challenges in meeting their spend and output targets these were reportedly due to a range of reasons. The most commonly cited reasons were:

- accruing match funding, due to the demise of the Learning and Skills Council and Regional Development Agencies;
- significant policy changes with the new Coalition Government in 2010, for example the ending of Train to Gain;
- spending cuts resulting from a combination of the recession and cutbacks in public sector funding, for example leading to redundancies in representatives from partner organisations; and
- reduced employment opportunities resulting from the recession, providing a barrier to participants securing employment as well as reducing opportunities for work placements.

3 Developing and delivering innovation

3.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews the approaches developed and trialled by the projects, categorising and providing examples of innovative activity and exploring the extent to which projects' approaches have proved to be effective to date.

The section draws heavily on the project telephone interviews, and particularly the project case studies, as well as the review of documents and other relevant materials.

3.2 Project innovation

3.2.1 What is innovation?

According to the guidance for the England and Gibraltar 2007–13 European Social Fund (ESF) programme:

*'Innovation can be defined as the successful exploitation of new ideas ('Innovation Nation', DIUS, 2008). In the context of ESF, innovation can include new approaches, tools, methods and service provision to extend employment and raise skills. It can also mean adapting and applying existing approaches, tools, methods and services to new regions, sectors or target groups.'*⁵

The Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming (ITM) projects were found to have embraced this definition, and for the large majority innovation meant developing new approaches or testing out new activities. Importantly, the innovations developed and tested focused on local/regional practical problems and issues, with an emphasis on policy implementation rather than new policy formulation, such as mechanisms to help particular groups of people into work.

Two important points need to be made when considering new approaches and/or activities under ITM:

- Timing – the main project ideas were developed in 2007, and in some cases appear 'mainstream' in 2012 as policies, strategies and approaches have developed, despite being leading edge five years ago when bids were being invited.
- 'New' also needs to be put into context – innovative approaches in one context or location may appear mundane in another. Innovation can also include the application of existing approaches, tools, methods and services to different target groups, sectors, institutions and areas.

A small minority of projects thought that the 'I' in ITM meant identifying good practice elsewhere (especially in other countries), targeting existing approaches at different target groups and making delivery 'more effective'.

⁵ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/manual1.pdf>

3.2.2 Project innovations

In considering, and attempting to categorise, the innovations developed by the projects two classifications were used. First innovations were classified in terms of being:

- process oriented – developing new methods, content and/or approaches;
- goal oriented, for example, working with different target groups, sectors, types or levels of qualifications; or
- context oriented – new organisation of training, networking and dissemination.

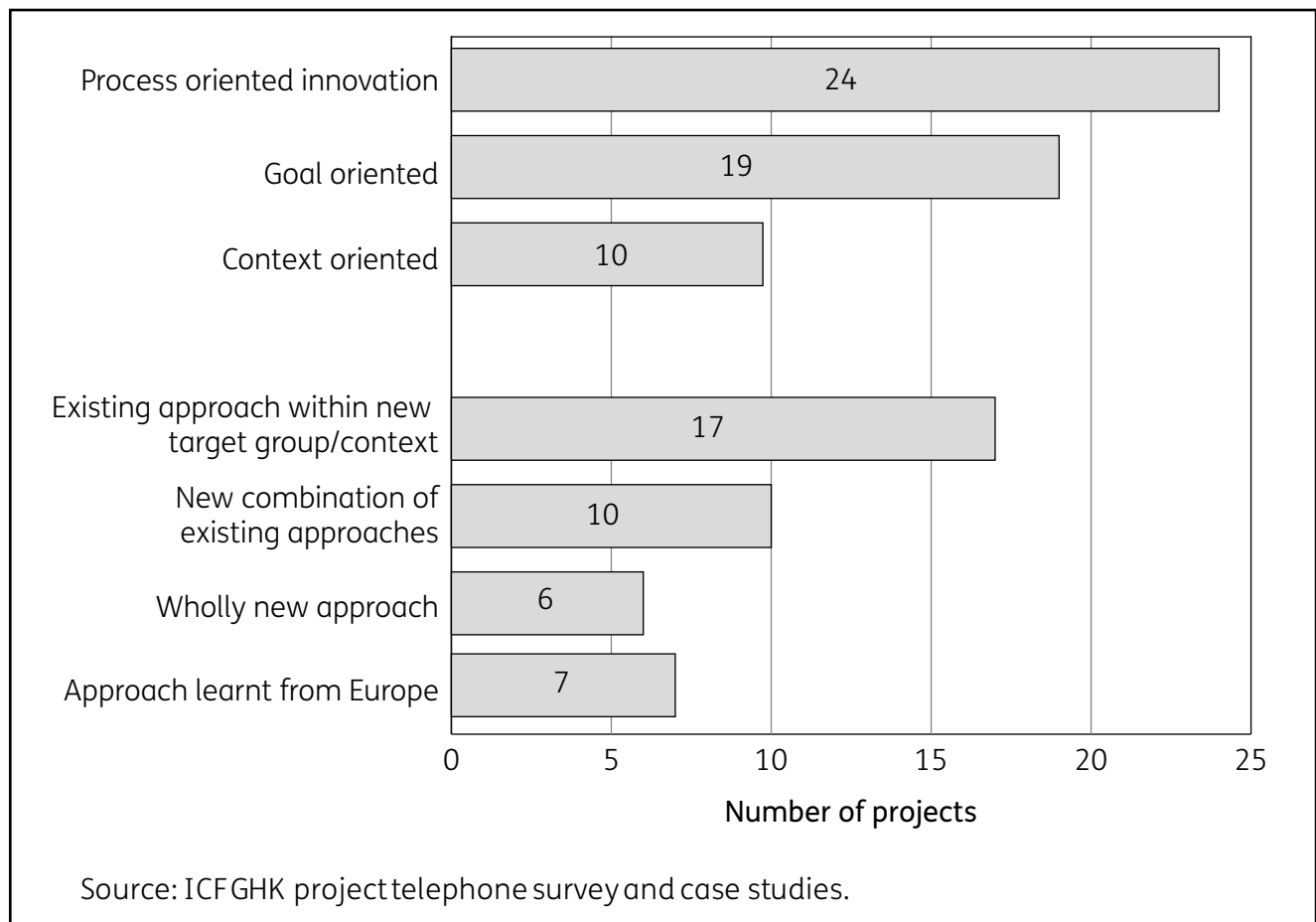
They were also classified in terms of whether their activities were based on:

- wholly new approaches;
- existing approaches being used with new target groups/in a new context;
- new combinations of existing approaches; or
- approaches identified from Europe.

In reality, the coding of projects by either classification was difficult, not least as projects were commonly trialling multiple approaches each of which could be classified differently.

Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of project innovations according to both classifications, based on discussions with each project.

Figure 3.1 Project innovations



As the figure shows, innovations were most commonly based on applying existing approaches to new target groups or in new contexts, followed by new combinations of existing approaches and approaches learnt from elsewhere in Europe – with wholly new approaches being less commonly identified.

In terms of orientation, the most common innovations focused on process, followed by goal and context oriented activities. Innovation by orientation is explored in more detail below.

Process oriented innovation

For most ITM projects, innovation involved developing new processes, with examples of the most commonly identified process innovations being described below:

- **Developing whole person/employer approaches** – just under one-third of projects were developing whole person/whole employer approaches, which tended to focus on out-of-work people facing multiple barriers. The whole person approach starts with the premise that supporting people with multiple barriers to move closer to the labour market involves addressing several of these barriers, and not just employability issues. The What Works project described their approach as follows:

‘In Sweden, they support people with housing, debt, the criminal justice system and they are looking at how they can deliver it or work with social landlords more effectively to help people secure their accommodation. We are looking at a person centred approach. We don’t just do welfare to work/employment work; we have got nursery and youth provision, provision for older people, and promoting healthy lifestyles. We are now looking at how our whole organisation is supporting employability and moving unemployed people into work. We are trying to pre-empt the people who come to us at the end of the work programme journey and haven’t found work.’

As far as employers were concerned, a whole employer approach involved supporting an employer’s recruitment needs. Small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) rarely have dedicated recruitment resources and require more than a stream of applicants, and the JET project in Stoke-on-Trent, part of the Employers for Employment project, sought to:

‘...provide SMEs with a dedicated recruitment function; in return employers provide a guaranteed job interview. SMEs are provided with a broker who identifies their recruitment needs and they then select candidates from a bank of people registered from the local community. In addition, JET has worked with care homes and Stoke City Council (as a procurer of care services). Stoke City Council provides the training which gives care homes a pool of qualified trainees to draw from.’

- **Using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance or replicate other delivery and support mechanisms** – here projects ranged from those where the use of ICTs was one element of a wider process to those whose main focus was developing support based upon ICTs. For example:
 - The New Employer Engagement/DUAL System project used hand held devices to identify the skills gaps (primarily literacy and numeracy) of employees, which allowed skills assessment to be more readily used to identify appropriate provision.

- The Virtual Jobs Hub in the North East included creating a virtual jobs hub portal:

'The idea behind the hub was to make it a one stop shop. If you are searching for a job, we could go onto about 40–50 websites. The websites are growing daily. So it would be sensible if they were all in one place. Also if you go on each of the websites, you have to register with each one, and they send you email alerts with a job you would be interested in. It is a huge mammoth task wading through a minefield of stuff on the net. We thought we would create a jobs hub that takes all the jobs in all the travel to work area of Middlesbrough and pool them into onto one hub. All the main sites that you can think of, e.g. fish for jobs, Jobcentre Plus (there were 15 altogether). We built crawlers that pulled in the vacancies into one pot, that meant that the jobseekers could log into the hub, put what they wanted in there and local towns and it would search the entire database and find you all the jobs that were live.'

- **Social Enterprises and other new delivery mechanisms** were each mentioned by one-quarter of projects:

- **Social Enterprises** were seen as an appropriate option for disadvantaged people to create their own businesses, a supportive environment for people to get work experience, as well as a sector that required skills support. There were projects whose sole focus was developing Social Enterprises, whilst for others it was one of several options. For example the Social Enterprise Leadership Programme (SELP) in the South West sought to:
 - enhance the leadership training opportunities for managers and owners working in social enterprises in the South West;
 - develop 24 'advanced leaders' for South West social enterprises. The advanced skills levels of these leaders will help drive forward a sea change in social enterprise development and performance; and
 - link the leadership skills for social enterprises to the new Social Enterprise Mark; extend and enhance the use of existing innovative tools, e-learning and other platforms, qualifications, networks and standards (developed in other programmes and currently under-exploited).
- Projects were also trialling a range of new or different **delivery methods**, including mentors and peer mentors, experiential learning and community coaches. Again the rationale was that these were more appropriate and sensitive learning, skills and development approaches for the hardest to help people, such as those with mental health issues. Volunteer-based approaches were also identified, for example the Digital Activist Inclusion Network (DAIN) trialled a community-empowerment model of delivering digital community learning which:
 - recruited and trained 100 volunteers to become digital activists;
 - designed and trialled material to train digital activists;
 - built a network of partners in the East Midlands to enable delivery of community learning (e.g. through libraries);
 - provided support to digital activists through the sub-regional Digital Activist Coordinators so that the volunteering/community learning could be achieved (e.g. brokering volunteering arrangements with learners/libraries/other venues/community learners). Each sub-region ended up with slightly different models because Digital Activists led the approach and, because of differences in topography (e.g. rural and urban areas);
 - set a system for monitoring engagements with community learning and progression of 'informal' community learning activities; and

- enabled digital activists to become involved in every element of the project, such as participating in the Steering Group meeting, having a say in the development of training material and participating in transnational activists in the role of ‘researchers’.
- **New partnerships** were mentioned by one in five projects. While all 32 projects were underpinned by collaborative working, in some cases the partnerships had been developed specifically for the ITM project, or featured the involvement of additional partners/types of organisations not worked with before. For example:
 - Several projects described how new or extended partnerships had been formed to deliver their activities, featuring a broad range of organisations and being considered as a source of innovation in themselves. For example the Employer Engagement and Leadership project in the North East involved a partnership of 13 local authorities and Jobcentre Plus across the City Region. Elsewhere, the Employers for Employment project brought together five local authority regeneration departments across the West Midlands.
 - Elsewhere, projects described working with new types of organisations. For example, these included housing organisations, as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) were seen as a useful means of identifying and engaging with disadvantaged groups of people, as well as providing work opportunities for participants to apply their skills gained from their projects.

Goal oriented innovation

Two main types of goal oriented innovation were identified – projects and activities working with different groups of clients, and projects developing new qualifications/training outcomes:

- **New target groups** – a number of projects focused on delivering support and/or training to new groups of people. The most frequently mentioned target group was people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with mental health issues. These approaches were often developed in response to the view that mainstream support (such as the Work Programme and other employment support provision) is not sufficiently flexible to provide tailored support to people with multiple or intensive disadvantages. The Working Better project in Merseyside provided an example of a multi-stranded project supporting individuals with mental health issues.

Developing a suite of support for people with mental health issues

The Working Better project was piloting a number of approaches:

- **one-to-one mentoring** – using the mentoring process to engage and provide intensive support to individuals who would normally be less inclined to participate or seek support from public organisations.
- Providing a specialist service for people with multiple disadvantage, for example **people with brain injuries and addiction**. The projects link different organisations to provide joined up support, e.g. alcohol dependence and mental health, otherwise people would have to go to two separate services. One action plan is developed but it involves support from both organisations.
- **Flexible and tailored provision** – while mainstream programmes can be very structured, the project offered training through day time sessions within the school day or evening sessions which enable individuals to accommodate caring responsibilities.
- A **Health Champions course accredited by the Open College Network (OCN)** – which included an intervention model covering the employment lifecycle, and against which appropriate interventions and useful links are mapped for individuals.

Continued

Developing a suite of support for people with mental health issues (continued)

- **Support for self-employment** – each project has its own innovative dimension, and provides one-to-one support to a range of client groups and a variety of support mechanisms:
 - through volunteer mentors who provide practical (business) and emotional support;
 - using Community Coach volunteers trained in a recognised qualification to provide a cost effective solution for out-of-work people looking to develop their own business idea;
 - support for people with neurological conditions through one-to-one support.
- **Referrals** – the referral methods are informal, and reflect the sensitivities around a mental health client group.
- Developing discrete **assessment and awareness raising tools**, e.g. apps on touch screen computers, and developing the Mindful Unions website.

- The **development of qualifications and/or training outcomes** was the second most frequently mentioned goal oriented innovation. An important issue faced by many groups of employers and people is that training programmes and qualifications are often not sufficiently flexible to respond rapidly to the needs of specific groups or to organisational, political and/or economic changes. The development of the Qualification and Curriculum Framework (QCF) based on unitised provision and a credit accumulation approach to qualifications increasingly provides an opportunity to tailor qualifications and training outcomes to specific groups of people or organisations. For example, qualifications may not reflect the fact that a learner is in the criminal justice system, or respond to the specific needs and requirements of social enterprises.

A number of projects used the Climate Change and Sustainable Development agendas as a focus for provision – both those within the Skills for Climate Change theme and more widely. For example, the Low Carbon Living and Working project delivered new provision at basic level (for unemployed individuals), Level 2 training (developing low carbon qualifications) and higher level training (for people in employment), and the Eco Advantage project provided training to individuals in prisons to provide them with skills to be utilised on their release. In Cornwall, the Clear About Carbon project sought to raise the level of carbon literacy and skills in the workforce, including developing training materials with a focus on low carbon supply chains, as summarised below.

Developing new skills for the Low Carbon Economy – Clear About Carbon

The Clear About Carbon project is based in the Cornwall Convergence Area, and aims *‘To develop, test and deliver innovative approaches to increase the level of ‘carbon literacy’ within the workforce in order to develop the necessary capacity, skills and knowledge exchange to drive low carbon economic development’*.

The project has four strands of activity, three involving the development and delivery of training packages and the fourth focusing on outreach and dissemination, namely:

- Work package 1 – Leadership and Procurement Management Skills for Climate Change – led by University of Exeter Business School;
- Work package 2 – Procurement Skills for Climate Change – led by the Cornwall Development Company;
- Work Package 3 – Skills for Low Carbon Supply Chains – led by Duchy College; and
- Work Package 4 – Outreach and Dissemination – led by the Eden project.

Continued

Developing new skills for the Low Carbon Economy – Clear About Carbon (continued)

The four elements were designed to interlink, with a key feature being the establishment of a ‘participant journey’ where organisations could be routed to and between different partners depending on their needs.

The project is particularly innovative in terms of the sector within which it operates, namely low carbon procurement, which has proved challenging in terms of identifying both transnational partners and mainstreaming contacts, and the specific training and delivery approaches developed. Much initial activity focused on establishing a methodology for creating low carbon public sector supply chains – working initially with the public procurement sector to establish what influences procurement practice, then prepare the private sector on how to answer questions around low carbon and sustainability. As Chapter 5 will show, the project has already achieved mainstreaming success at the national level with training materials produced being adopted by Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The sustainable development agenda also influenced activities across other themes, where activities such as recycling were used as a means of helping individuals at some distance from the labour market move closer towards it by providing work experience opportunities. For example, the Host Borough’s Employment Offer project under the Engaging with Employers theme featured a range of activities and training outcomes:

- Wombles/Newham Community Recycling Network – offering training to unemployed people to become furniture restorers through the network;
- Photovoltaic installations – upskilling unemployed people with electrical safety cards to become photovoltaic installers, and working with Registered Social Landlords in Hackney to provide work opportunities;
- Green Doctors – training people to become energy assessors and advisors on green technology in the households, again placed in jobs with Registered Social Landlords;
- Coaches in the Community West Ham United – training young people to become football coaches, with the club offering new trainees jobs to deliver community football activity to younger children; and
- Every Child a Musician (ECAM) trainees – training local people with an interest in music to become music teaching assistants, who are now placed in 62 local primary schools and provide assistance across the curriculum.

Context oriented innovation

Context oriented innovation was identified less frequently, in part because this type of innovation (particularly changes to the organisation of training) can be challenging to achieve. In addition, in several cases it was also not clear whether the context-based networks proposed would be achieved by the time of project completion, and it was not easy to establish whether the new approaches to training described really represented a new organisation of training.

That said, several examples of context innovation were identified, in each case where goal or process innovations were also identified, including:

- The Essex Apprentice project developed a new approach to the organisation of apprenticeship training to ensure a continued supply of new engineers. The costs and investment return period for engineers are greater than for other sectors, dissuading employers from taking on apprentices. A new apprenticeship training agency structure was established, where apprentices are ‘employed’ by the local authority and work across a range of engineering firms to develop a broader set of skills and experience that would have been possible otherwise.
- The work of the Eco Advantage project led to a new local authority network, which meets quarterly to discuss issues around carbon management and sustainability for business issues.
- The Virtual Jobs Hub project created a new, formalised partnership arrangement between 24 private, public and voluntary sector organisations through provider accords, to ensure organisations worked together to obtain the best outcomes for service users.
- The Graduate Employability Support Programme in the North West aimed to develop and test new approaches to increase graduate employability, and developed a network of seven HEIs across the region to share best practice.

3.3 Developing project approaches

The innovations identified across the ITM projects had been developed through a range of routes. As described previously, and as Figure 3.1 illustrated, the innovations trialled were most commonly based on existing methods which were adapted to new target groups or in new settings. Existing approaches were also trialled in new contexts or with new target groups – with relatively few projects describing wholly new approaches.

Consultations with the projects found that their project ideas sprang from a range of sources – including prior research, responding to identified gaps in local services – although a key source of the inspiration often emerged from discussions with their partners – further emphasising the importance of partnership. The wide ranging nature of the project partnerships, including statutory and voluntary sector representatives from the health, justice, social services, housing, environment and employment and skills sectors, demonstrates the learning and development that such cross-fertilisation can produce – especially in creating ‘whole person’ responses. The New Pathways to Work project developed their approach through:

‘...the steering group, and through internal discussions. This involved working with hard-to-reach parents (especially Muslim women) through schools, and working with housing association tenants through housing providers.’

A number of project ideas were based on previous activities, often pilot initiatives funded through a disparate number of funding pots. For example, the Graduate Employability Support Programme:

‘...had already received a small amount of Government funding. We were the only Higher Educational Institute (HEI) to run one of these projects and this identified a huge gap in the area e.g. developing links with JobcentrePlus and targeting graduates.’

Finally, a number of projects had seen approaches to work elsewhere, including in Europe, and felt that they had the potential to be applied here. A range of approaches were described, in some cases, which encapsulated ‘better practice’, for example, learning from apprenticeship providers in Germany or Social Enterprise experts in Finland. Ideas from other European countries involved:

- Transplanting an entire approach into an English setting – for example the JET project (part of the Employers Engagement project) took their approach for supporting Incapacity Benefit claimants into/towards employment, which included intensive group training sessions prior to work experience, from their Swedish transnational partner.
- Tailoring an approach that has been successful in another country to the English context, such as the DUAL approach (employers and Trades Unions) followed by the New Employer Engagement/ DUAL System project on Merseyside, which is characteristic of the German apprenticeship system.
- Taking an approach that has been unsuccessful in another country and applying it to the English context. For example, the New Pathways to Work project used: ‘...the IPS (*Individual Placement Support*) model (which) was first tried across Europe with little success but has now been implemented across West London successfully’. This is a ‘place and train’ approach.

These different approaches show that the adoption of innovative ideas depends on bringing together people with different perspectives and experiences. It may, therefore, be worth, in future programmes, utilising the many national and European mutual learning networks as a means of highlighting, disseminating and discussing practice from different policy areas and countries to inform both programme development and the formulation of individual project concepts.

3.4 What worked well

The projects were questioned on what they considered to have worked particularly well in terms of implementing their innovative approaches. The following factors emerged across the projects.

3.4.1 Partnerships

The most frequently mentioned productive aspect was project **partnerships**. Partnerships emerged as an important underpinning of project approaches for a number of reasons:

- **Engaging with the hardest to help clients** – here, organisations including RSLs, health organisations, voluntary sector organisations, trades unions, schools and the armed forces all provided opportunities to engage with different hard-to-reach groups as part of project activity. These groups included people with mental health issues, employees with basic skills needs, people living in isolated and deprived communities, and army veterans. In addition, many hard-to-reach people are already engaging with these service providers for other reasons and, if receiving support already, are more likely to be open to approaches for additional support.
- **Changing the mindsets of people and organisations** – rather than developing new services, a more effective and efficient approach may be to change the perspectives or focus of existing service providers, users or target groups such as employers. This could include, for example, getting health organisations to adopt a social as opposed to medical model of support, or getting employers to consider the attributes of a particular group of people, such as older workers. In any area there are a range of existing statutory, private and voluntary organisations already providing services, and in many cases existing provision was mapped to identify common objectives. The Age NC project in the North West provides an example of coordinated service development.

Developing partnerships to build on existing provision

The Age NC project's objectives included:

- promoting education and training throughout working life;
- active and preventative measures to support employment; and
- active ageing and longer working lives.

The partnership, led by The Lancashire Colleges Ltd., included: Campaign for Learning, Lavender Hill/Warrington Borough Council, People 1st, 5050 Vision, Lancaster City Council, Morecambe Bay NHS Trust, Warrington Disability Partnership, Warrington CVS, Trafford College, Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, Blackpool and the Fylde College, Unionlearn, Manchester Metropolitan University, Burnley Borough Council, VEDAS (Nextsteps provider), Lancaster and Morecambe College.

The partnership is new, brought together specifically for the project. The approach was to:

'Have dedicated expert staff in each of the key organisations. We have learned that the problem is gaps in information, not gaps in services. The best use of funding is to knock on doors and get the buy-in of stakeholders rather than develop new services.'

- **Enhancing approaches to training courses and tools** – several projects, including the Social Enterprise Leadership, Working Age, Low Carbon Living and Working and New Pathways to Work projects, all used a range of voluntary sector, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) providers to provide a blended input to create higher quality and more appropriate courses and delivery/assessment tools. In each case this depended on identifying and building on the different strengths of different organisations and approaches within a partnership framework.
- **Extending coverage** – finally, partnerships also allowed lead partners to enhance provision by enabling a broader range of activities to be included and wider geographical areas to be covered.

However, partnership working is not without its drawbacks, as the experiences of some of the projects illustrated. Partnerships can be dependent on a single individual within each organisation, and if that person leaves or moves to another role, links between organisations can be broken. Similarly, high level changes within an organisation, either in terms of staff and/or strategic priorities, can affect the level of buy-in and commitment to a collaborative project. This issue has been exacerbated in several cases by reductions in public spending and policy changes, which can affect staffing and the focus and commitment of partner organisations. These included examples where partners were unable to deliver on their initial commitments.

3.4.2 Whole person/family/employer approaches

The next, most frequently mentioned, overall approaches that worked well were holistic approaches, whether they were aimed at individuals, families or employers. In the main these approaches consisted of creating an independent brokerage role, including to provide: employability, employment and/or skills approaches to older people; full recruitment offers to employers; support to engage with the sustainable development agenda; or support to get the hardest to help individuals into jobs or closer to the labour market.

Holistic approaches were used to support people with mental health difficulties in particular. As such people can straddle several policy and operational agendas, they may often have to go to several organisations to receive support. Offering support from a single point of contact, instead of having to negotiate a more complex landscape, was seen by several projects as an appropriate and successful approach and underpinned their activities.

Elsewhere, projects used mentoring approaches successfully in working with army veterans, women and graduates. The use of peer mentors, often volunteers from the same population groups the project was targeting, was seen as an effective approach. While this worked well in most cases, experience showed the importance of providing sufficient support for the peer mentors, and one project had to dispense with the approach because they could not provide enough support.

3.4.3 Use of ICTs

While projects in the ICT and the Digital Divide theme focused on raising awareness and facilitating the use of ICTs amongst individuals and employers, other projects benefited from the use of ICTs in developing new approaches or in enhancing existing ones. Examples where ICTs were used included:

- **In assessing learners** – for example, handheld devices were used with learners as assessment tools, providing a more discrete and efficient way of assessing skills needs and allowing assessment to take place in a variety of settings. This approach also allowed assessment information to be collected, stored, communicated and analysed immediately, so skills needs could be linked directly to training provision.
- **In engaging learners** – in several cases social media (primarily Facebook and Twitter) were used to engage with young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- **In delivering new courses** – for example the Making IT Personal project developed a number of digital resources – bite-sized, self-directed units – including employability provision.
- **In enhancing traditional approaches** – although completing early, the Creating e-Business Champions project used a combination of online and offline approaches to bring together business communities to discuss their ideas.
- **In bringing together different resources into one place** – as we have seen the Virtual Jobs Hub brought together job vacancies from several websites into a single website.

However, projects identified aspects of ICTs which posed challenges or did not work as well as intended. Bringing together information from different sources, for example to create an employer database or consolidate client information, can fall foul of both data protection legislation and organisational protocols. The most common drawback of ICT approaches reported by the projects was that individuals and employers vary in the extent to which they are able, and comfortable, engaging with them – despite several projects including steps to raise awareness and empower individuals and employers to use ICTs. Learning and engagement styles also vary, and so do some courses, and assessment tools worked better with some participants in the same projects than others. This emphasises the importance of being able to offer offline as well as online provision to ensure comprehensive coverage.

3.5 Common challenges in implementing innovative approaches

In addition to the ICT-related issues described above, the projects reported facing a range of challenges in implementing their approaches. These varied depending on the nature of the approach being trialled and the target groups in question, with the most common issues being described below.

3.5.1 Working with hard to help groups

There were a number of aspects of working with hard-to-help groups, individuals and employers, that projects found challenging:

- **They are harder to help than envisaged** – for example, several projects found that some of the hard to help individuals they were working with needed some form of pre-entry stage to enable them to engage with their interventions. Even when these were in place, some projects found further pre-support was needed – for example, one project trialling a social enterprise-based approach included a pre-entry stage, but found that an additional stage in the engagement process was required to raise awareness amongst some of their workless target group. The work readiness of people with significant and/or multiple barriers can also mean they require more intensive and longer support than first envisaged, and so necessarily influences the length of time needed to achieve the specific stages in the client journey.
- **Working within the benefits system** – two projects made specific reference to challenges faced in delivering their innovative approaches due to concerns over their compliance with benefits regulations. While others experienced similar concerns, and in some cases worked closely with Jobcentre Plus and other organisations to ensure compliance, one had to counter concerns from participants that the volunteering element of the project would affect their eligibility for benefits as they would not be available for work. A second project, which paid a training allowance, reported that the allowance affected the whole family's benefit claim because it was counted as income. These experiences emphasise the importance of considering the implications of any new intervention for individual and family benefits.
- **Client referral** – projects working with some disadvantaged groups (such as older people made redundant) often had to wait 6–12 months before they could be referred from Jobcentre Plus, although they could have benefited from support much earlier. In addition, several projects working with targeting specific groups of people reported that the overall quality and appropriateness of referrals received could be variable, resulting in time being wasted and individuals' expectations being raised only to be referred back. A further issue, reported by several projects, was the tendency for some organisations working with hard-to-reach groups to be reluctant to refer people, which required a degree of trust to be established between the project and the referrer.
- **Striking the right balance** – several projects described how, particularly when working with hard-to-help groups, it could be difficult to find a balance between delivering benign, flexible and non-threatening approaches with a structure that is needed to progress people towards the labour market.

3.5.2 Other challenges

Looking beyond the challenges posed in working with hard-to-help groups, other commonly mentioned implementation issues reported by the projects included:

- **Changing policy agendas** – as described previously, and will be returned to in Chapter 5, the projects were implementing their innovations during periods of considerable change in the policy and operational landscape. While some projects were able to adapt to these changes, for some it has been more difficult to adjust. Although one of the strengths of ESF provision is its ability to complement mainstream provision, changes in this provision (for example, the abolition of Train to Gain) can mean the projects find themselves detached from the programme they were supplementing. Other policy changes which affected projects in this study were the development of the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework and the overhaul of worklessness programmes leading to the introduction of the Work Programme, which has a limited number of prime providers. Combining these policy changes with the effects of the recession and reductions in public expenditure illustrate how many of the projects have been operating within a highly dynamic environment.

- **Rigidities within the labour market** – which can make the achievement of the overall project objectives difficult. For example, it remains challenging to attract women into predominantly male sectors and occupations, and it is more difficult to encourage employers to recruit from, what for them are, non-traditional groups in a period of recession.
- **ESF-related issues** – in some cases projects experienced difficulties in accessing match funding, which led one project to close early and caused delays and additional project management burdens in others. Problems with match funding mostly resulted from reductions in public expenditure due to the financial crisis. This led to a restructuring of public sector organisations (for example, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were abolished) and cuts in the expenditure of other partners (such as local authorities and colleges) who no longer had resources to support the projects. In addition, some organisations were dependent on match funding for particular outputs (e.g. higher level qualifications), but if the project delivered lower level qualifications then matched funding could not be provided.

There were also issues over the administration of ESF impacting on innovative projects. One project felt their Government Office did not fully understand the ITM strand and did not allow them any flexibilities. For example, some projects used the initial stages of their project to research which approaches to take forward. Some of these ideas did not fully meet ESF requirements and so there were issues with funding them: *‘Our intention was to use the research and evaluation process to substantiate and evidence details of an operational model in practice, a model which innovates through its explicit alignment with the mainstream. But we were told what we could and could not do, because the research has highlighted some things that ESF won’t allow them us do. But surely we are trying to be innovative!’*

4 Transnationality

4.1 Introduction

Transnational collaboration, and the exchange of ideas and experience between organisations across Member States, has been a central component of previous European Social Fund (ESF) innovation programming. This was continued in the Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand, although, as this section will describe, the ITM projects faced the specific challenge of an absence of reciprocal funding to support their activities.

This section explores the transnational partnership element of ITM, reviewing the range of transnational partners engaged, how they were identified and the nature of the partnership activities undertaken. Finally, the section reviews the benefits of transnational working from the project perspective, and reviews the challenges experienced. It draws on the project telephone survey and the project case studies, including interviews with transnational partners undertaken as part of the project case studies.

4.2 Transnational partners

The ITM strand required that each project had at least one transnational organisation as part of their partnership group. Consultations with the project identified that while the most commonly reported number of transnational partners was one, the majority of projects had engaged with more than one partner to date. It also emerged that for many projects their transnational partnerships were dynamic, with initial partners falling away and being replaced by others having made their contributions.

4.2.1 Transnational partners – numbers

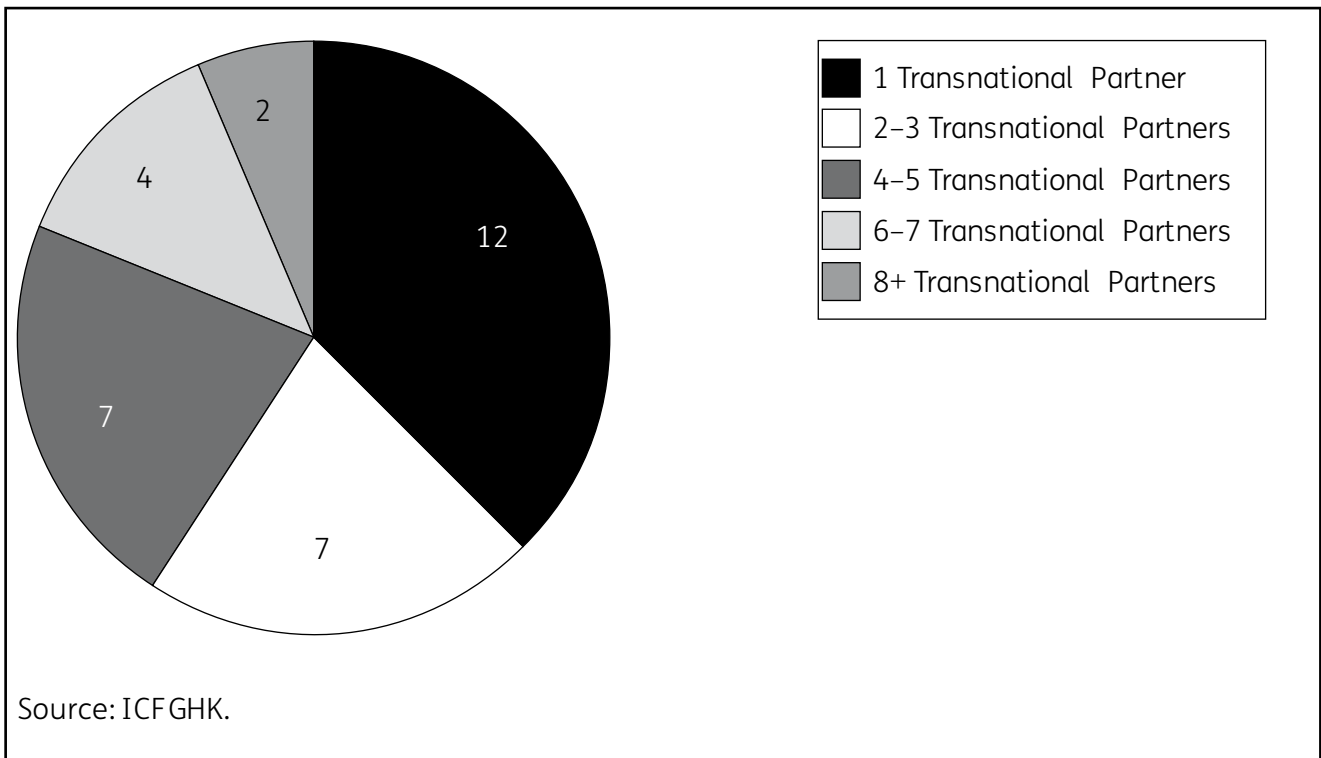
Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of projects in terms of the number of transnational partners engaged with over a sustained period. As the figure shows, the most common number of transnational partners was one (38 per cent of projects), although almost two-thirds (62 per cent) had engaged with two or more. In a small number of cases projects had engaged with seven or more transnational partners, the greatest number being 12.

Where transnational partners left the project partnerships on an unplanned basis, the main reasons for this were:

- a lack of funding to support transnational activities;
- the emerging, or expected, benefits of transnational working being considered limited; and
- projects and organisations working to different timescales.

These issues are explored in more detail in Section 4.5, with the other challenges faced in projects transnational experiences.

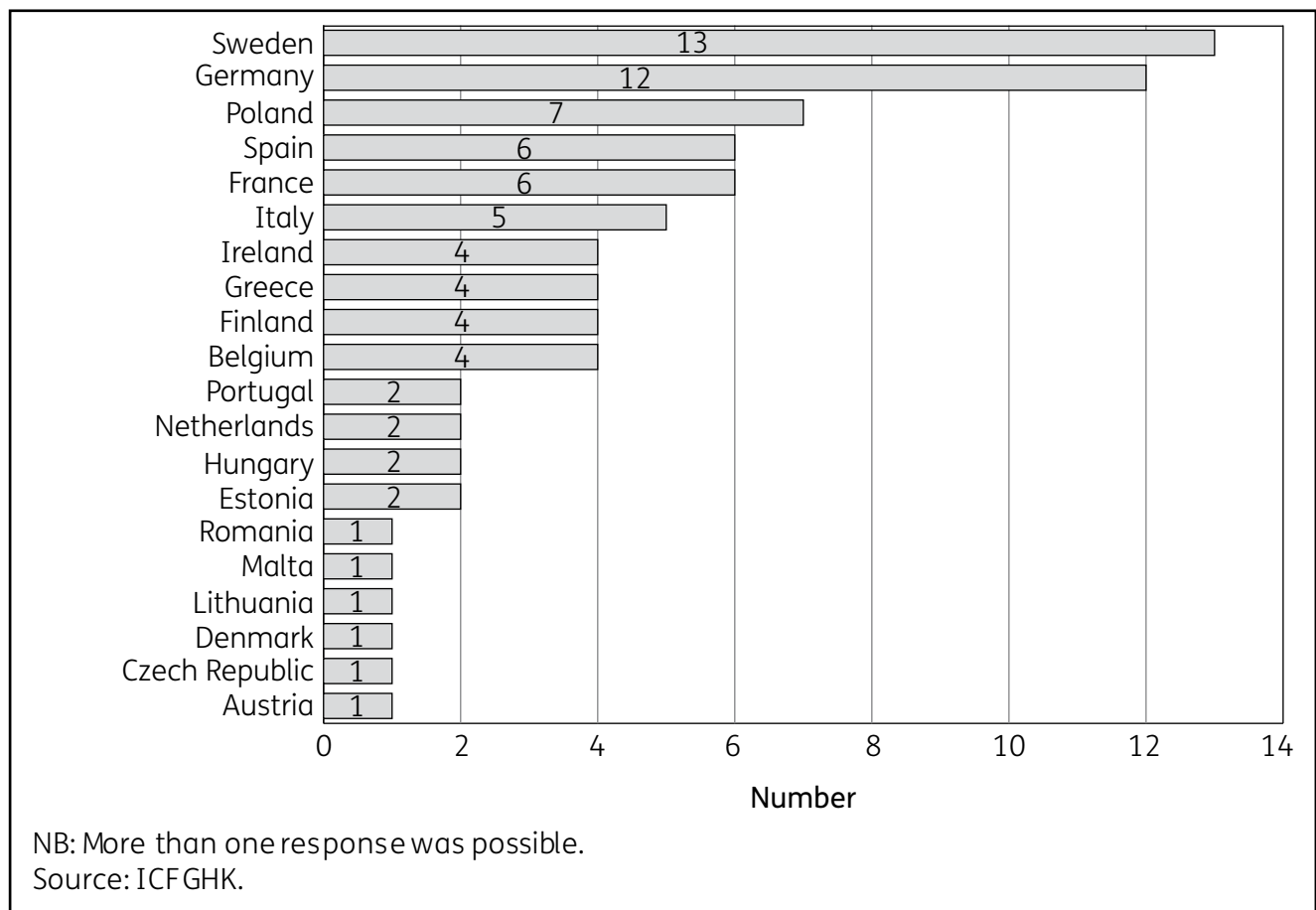
Figure 4.1 Number of transnational partners



4.2.2 Transnational partners – Member States

Organisations from 20 of the 26 Member States (excluding the UK) were included by the ITM projects as transnational partners. As Figure 4.2 shows, Sweden, Germany and Poland were the countries most represented as transnational partners – each of which had some form of explicit provision for transnational expenditure in their ESF programmes.

Whilst Northern European Member States are most frequently represented, so are more southern and culturally different Member States, including Spain, Italy and Greece. All sizes and types of states are represented. The six Member States not represented were Bulgaria, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Slovenia.

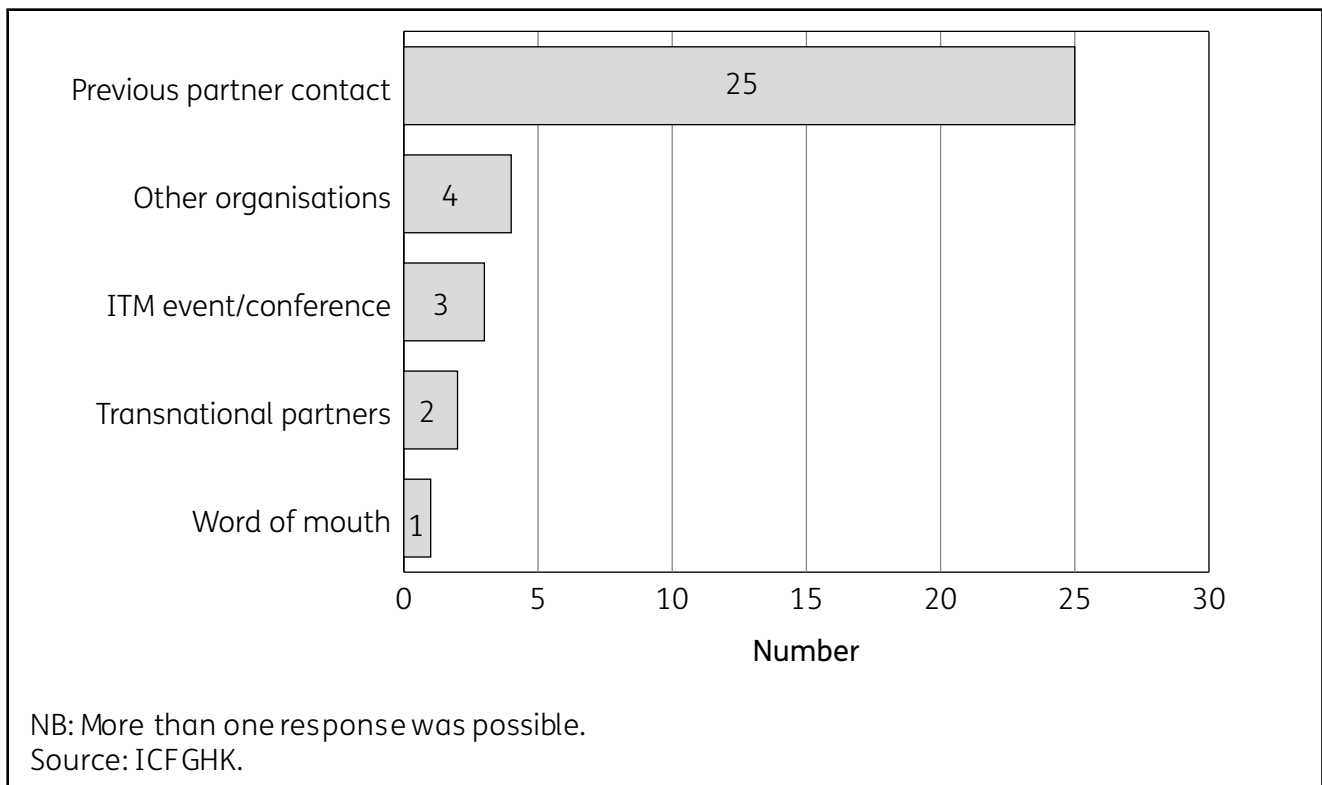
Figure 4.2 Member States of transnational partners

4.3 Identifying transnational partners

While the lead partners in each project normally took responsibility for identifying transnational partners, this task was, in several cases, shared or allocated to other partnership members. For example, the Digital Activist Inclusion Network (DAIN) project identified their initial transnational partners through their UK partner the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)'s existing transnational contacts.

In the majority of cases (25), the ITM projects recruited their transnational partners from organisations already known to the lead, or other, project partners – either through involvement in previous innovation projects funded through Equal, other European programmes such as Grundtvig, through European Networks (such as the Europe-Net Trainers network), by attending conferences or through personal contacts. Figure 4.3 shows the main means by which transnational partners were identified across the project group.

In addition to previous contact, partners were also identified by recommendations from other (non-project partner) organisations (such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), European Union (EU) funding teams and Chambers of Commerce), contacts from transnational partners and word of mouth. In a number of cases, identifying potential transnational partners working in appropriate areas was challenging – with the lack of reciprocal funding not helping the partnership development process. In recognition of this challenge the ITM Unit organised an event in Poland to bring ITM projects and potential partners together, which led directly to several new transnational partnerships.

Figure 4.3 How transnational partners were identified

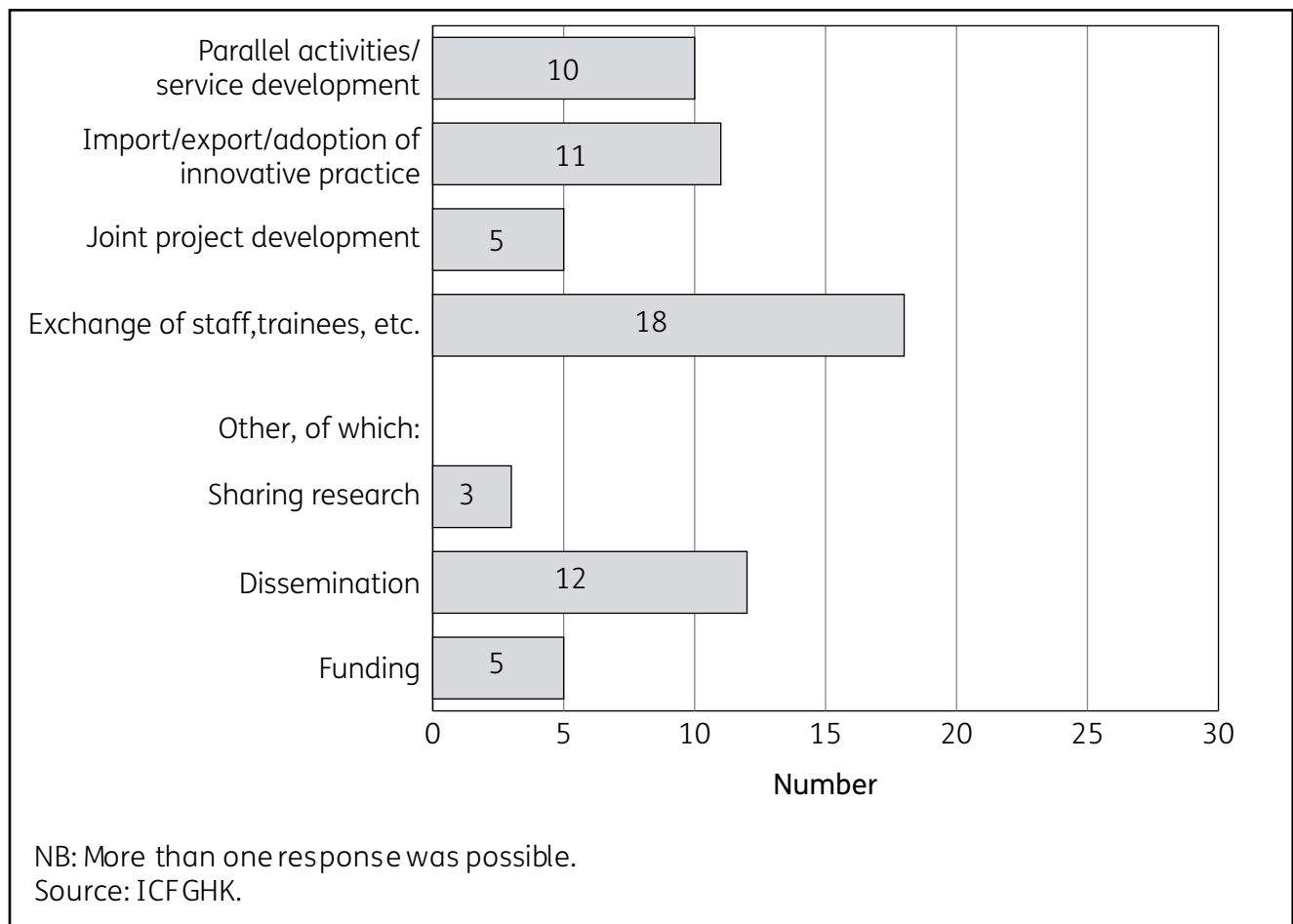
4.4 Transnational activities

Activities to date most commonly focused on visits to, and the exchange of learning with, projects' transnational partners (18 projects). Figure 4.4 provides an overview of the main transnational activities reported by the projects.

As Figure 4.4 shows, the other main transnational activities included:

- parallel activities/service development – reported by 10 projects;
- the import and adoption of innovative practice – by 11 projects;
- joint project development – less commonly reported, by just five projects.

The projects also reported sharing their, or their transnational partners', research to inform the development of their activities, explore funding opportunities at the EU level, and more commonly sharing and more widely disseminating the findings from their work to date through conferences, joint publications and via social media.

Figure 4.4 Nature of the transnational work

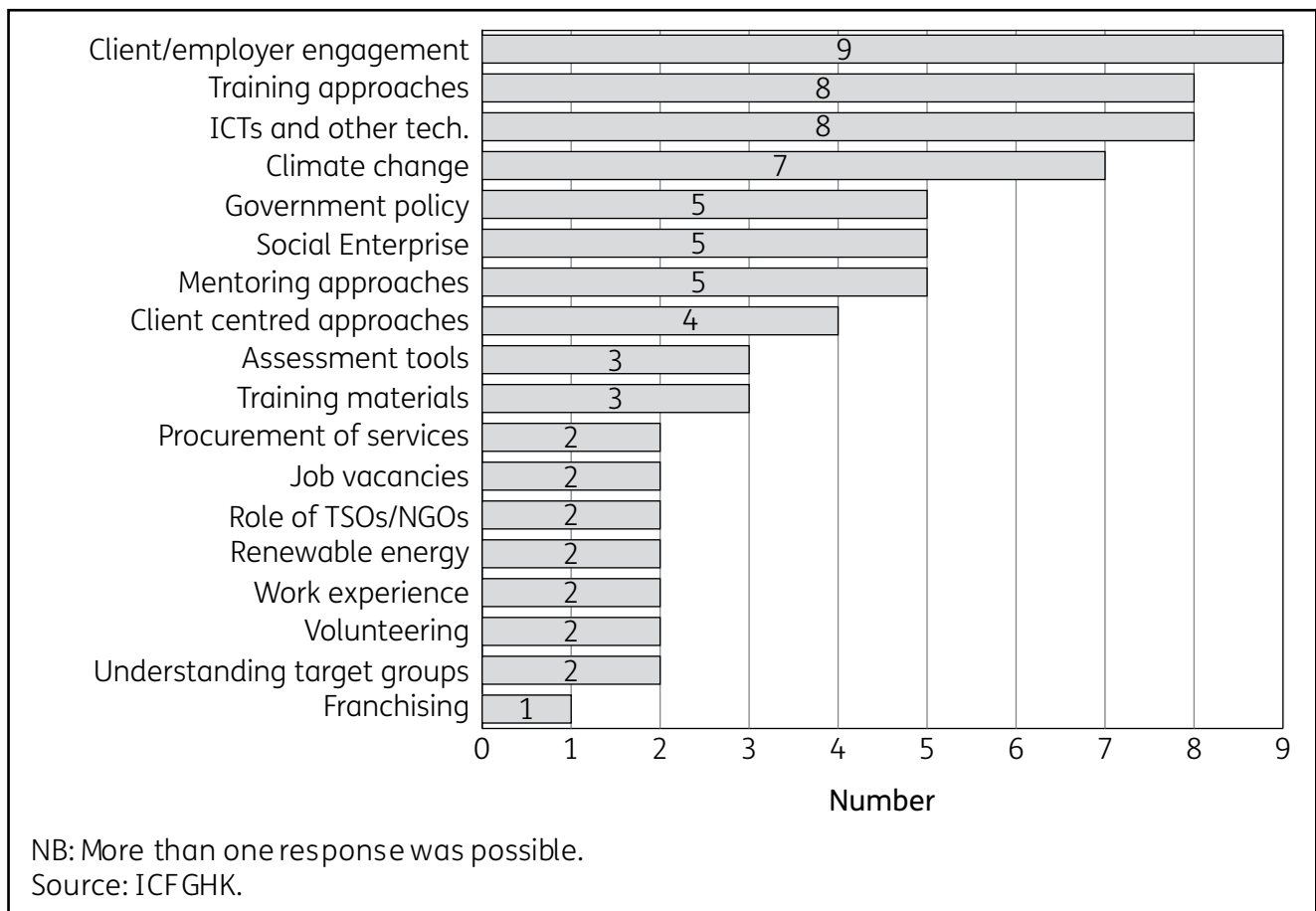
4.4.1 Exchange visits

The projects established that the most common transnational activities undertaken to date involved visits to projects and the exchange of project staff and beneficiaries. Over half the projects reported making at least one visit to their transnational partners, but others had funded several, up to 12 in one case.

Projects tried to include a range of people in their visits, including frontline delivery staff and managers, trainees and employers in a couple of cases, as well as project staff. Projects focusing on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) also arranged e-visits, which involved teleconferences and online workshops between various staff, although others used ICTs to keep 'in touch' with individual transnational partners outside structured meetings and events. Physical visits usually lasted for several days, and involved meetings with transnational partners, presentations and discussion sessions in workshop and more open formats, and visits to see how services were provided.

4.4.2 Exchanging and adopting innovative practice

The import and adoption by the projects of innovative practices from Europe was the second most commonly reported main transnational activity, with a wide range of areas of interest being described as shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Subject of the transnational work

Most commonly, information was exchanged and influenced service and product development on a parallel basis, i.e. once information was exchanged the English partners then built it into their approach independently. Less commonly a ‘joint development’ approach was reported, where a small minority of projects worked on a continued and more intensive basis with their transnational partners to ‘co-produce’ the end product.

As Figure 4.5 shows, the most frequently mentioned subjects of transnational exchange were related to client or employer engagement approaches. The Employers for Engagement project, for example, visited MFT in Germany to look at how it was working with young people to attract them into the industry:

‘This project was a great working example of how a company in the manufacturing industry has secured its position as a market leader in the machine tool and precision engineering industry and has had five years of successive growth through its investment in new equipment and local talent. The company engages closely with the local schools, e.g. through the KURS initiative (Cooperation of Regional Companies and Schools). Under this scheme, pupils spend one day a week for five months with a firm, seeing how it operates and what the world of work really entails. MFT staff also teach maths and technical subjects in local schools.’

Experiences and lessons ranged from generic practical approaches to others working with specific client groups. For example, the Aim project learned from their Hungarian partner’s work with the Roma community to inform developing practice on peer mentoring programmes.

The deployment of ICTs and other technologies (for example, assistive technologies for older workers) was the next most frequently mentioned subject of the transnational work. Creating e-Business Champions worked with Hibernia College in Ireland:

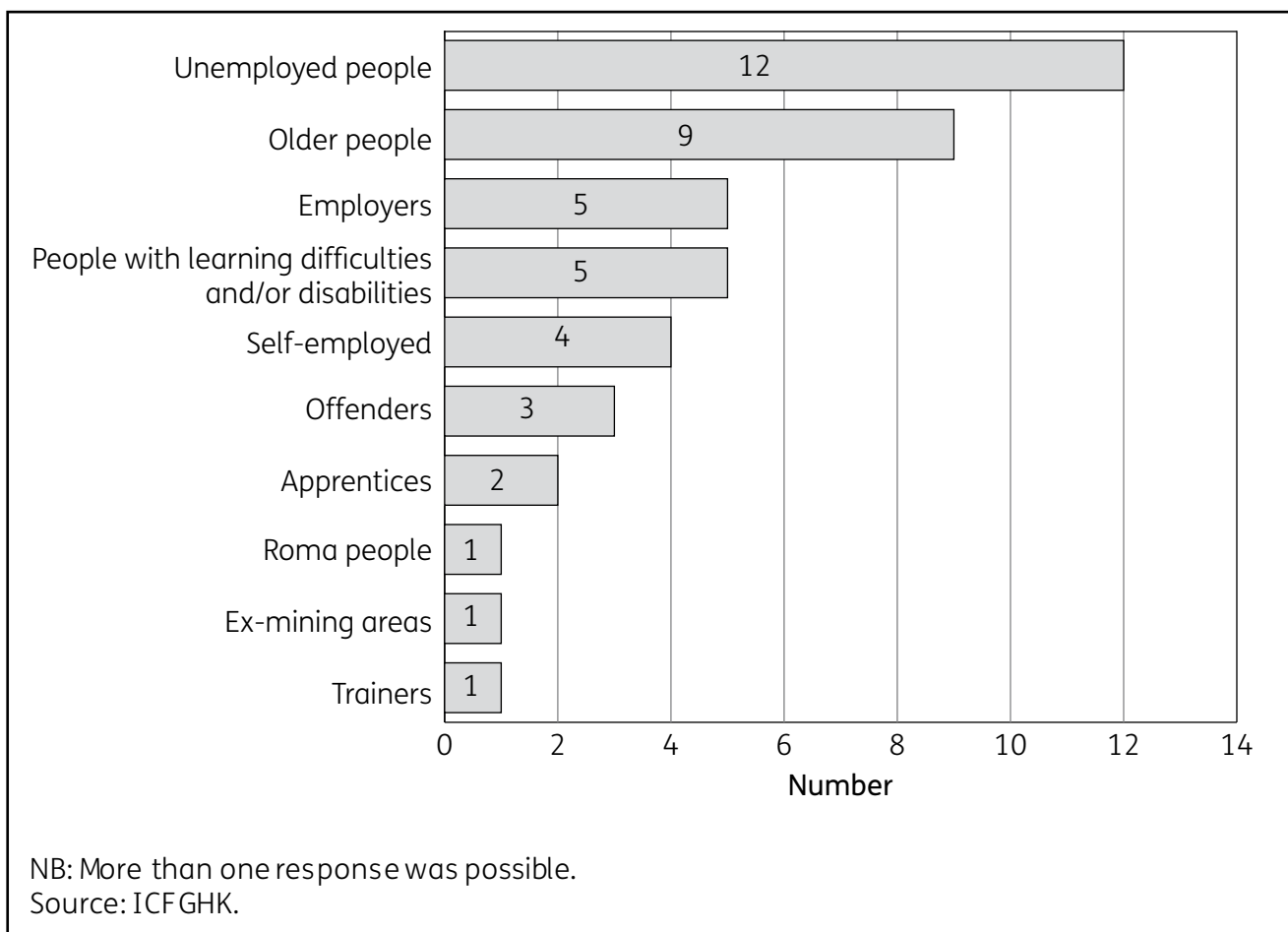
'We wanted to learn from Hibernia College's expertise in eLearning and web-enabled communities. They currently deliver online learning to over 25 countries. We took expert advice and guidance from Hibernia College on the development and delivery of the eCommunity activity. We also met with SMEs which were used to help develop learning materials and approaches.'

Focusing on good practice in training approaches was also a key activity. This included a wide range of training approaches, for example, with specific client groups, within certain sectors, use of ICTs, and mentoring. Cornwall Works 50+ visited a partner working in Poland who works with unemployed older people, and those facing redundancy:

'We went on a study visit to Lublin in Poland. The visit covered the project's research and analysis of 50+ needs in accessing the labour market; experience of the tools they have developed to support this; integration trips for workers to overcome insecurity and relieve stress; an ability index self-assessment questionnaire; motivational workshops; individual life coaching; aqua aerobic/swimming pool/sauna/jacuzzi/aerobics/tai chi/yoga; vocational training and ICT support (website).'

Since most projects had worked with their transnational partners previously, they were aware of the areas where they could best learn and exchange best and innovative practices. The skills for climate change and social enterprise projects showed how these previous links were built upon to allow learning from different approaches. For example, Steps to Success visited Polish and Swedish partners to explore social enterprise within the hotel sector, with an example being based on a franchise model. EcoAdvantage learnt from a training company in Estonia which provides administrative training for diverse groups of adult learners in local authorities and for unemployed people.

In terms of **target groups**, unemployed people were understandably the main group of interest in projects' transnational exchange activities. As Figure 4.6 shows, the other most common client groups that projects focused on were older people and people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Projects were interested in the variety of approaches, contexts and policies that transnational partners were involved with.

Figure 4.6 Client Group Focus of the transnational work

4.5 Benefits and challenges of transnational activities

4.5.1 Benefits of transnational working

Although the projects described differing levels of transnational activity at the time of interview, the majority were well advanced in their programmes and were able to cite some form of benefit as a result. In a small number of cases, projects were only just embarking on their transnational work, having left this activity until the end, and two projects who had been more involved considered that there had been no benefits from their transnational working.

Overall, the most commonly described benefits from transnational working by some way was the ability to learn from partners' expertise in their chosen area. This required transnational partners to be at the same level, or more advanced, in their work, so allowing the English projects to learn from their partners' tried and tested approaches. Areas of specific benefit, in terms of most commonly being reported, were:

- social enterprises – here the ITM projects learned that a social enterprise approach could work with a range of hard-to-help groups in the population, as well as examples of good practice in working with these groups;
- sustainable development and climate change – here projects found examples where their transnational partners were ahead of practice in the UK, which provided lessons on taking holistic approaches to the climate change agenda as well as learning about specific technologies of relevance to their work (for example, using heat exchange technologies to use heat generated from industrial processes to heat local social housing schemes);

- effective mechanisms for engaging and working with specific groups of people, for example older people, Roma people and employers; and
- the use of ICTs – here much was learnt from best practice in utilising ICTs to deliver provision, as well as approaches implemented elsewhere for addressing the digital divide.

Many of the projects also reported learning from direct experiences of observing service delivery as part of their transnational work. This direct exposure to partners at work was felt to be particularly helpful, both by providing insights into the content and delivery of different approaches, but also by providing projects with the confidence that their new and innovative approaches can be effective. Although the context in which the service was being implemented was a key consideration for the transferability of resulting learning, several projects found these more ‘hands on’ contacts, and the opportunity to discuss them with front line workers, particularly useful. Examples of learning from across the ITM projects are provided below.

Transnational benefits – learning from experience elsewhere

The majority of the projects reported benefiting from their transnational activities by learning from experience elsewhere, and applying these lessons to the further development of their approaches. The nature of lessons learnt varied widely across both themes and projects within themes, with examples drawn from the case study fieldwork being provided below.

The **Host Borough Employment Offer (HBEO)** project described how learning from their transnational partners was one of the rationales for participating in ITM and the project benefited from exchange visits to and from their Swedish local authority partners, which had a direct influence on the development of several strands of their activity. For example, several small scale projects, such as a recycling social enterprise model and peri-urban farming, were developed directly as a result of seeing such approaches operating in Sweden. They were clear that the transnational input had inspired several innovative elements of their work.

While the different political and operational contexts limited the transferability of lessons from their German partners, the **Employer for Employment** project learnt what can be achieved in terms of employment of individuals with physical or learning disabilities – e.g. 50 per cent of employees at a supermarket visited had some form of disability. In Poland, the project visited a provider offering a blended learning approach, which was transferred in its entirety by the English project as a template for use in its work with its social housing clients. Despite these benefits the project described being disappointed with their transnational work – although they recognised that perhaps their initial expectations were too high, and that ‘Incremental changes and observing what others are doing is just as important as the whizz-bang stuff’.

The **Making IT Personal** project described having limited expectations of their transnational activity at the outset, looking for lessons from others who had tried e-mentoring approaches to combating digital exclusion, although their expectations were exceeded and led to the project moving into different areas. Their college partner had established links with the Europe-Net Trainers network, which were exploited to provide both partners and a series of visits to Germany, Malta and Greece, and their materials have recently been submitted to the network for review. Key learning has included the adoption of ideas from German partners’ training materials, learning from the Maltese national approach to digital inclusion and to including individuals with learning disabilities (leading to specific classes being run in England). The project has learned, and hopes to continue to learn, from peer-review of materials by the European Net-Training network. Their Maltese partners had also trialled and contextualised some of the materials produced by the project, adopting them to focus on culture and holidays.

Continued

Transnational benefits – learning from experience elsewhere (continued)

As the project lead described *'I think if you are looking to do things differently you need to see how others do things. Transnationality gives you a fresh perspective ... it generates new ideas for problem-solving from different angles. I don't think we would have the full richness of activities and understanding of the possibilities of using e-mentoring if we did not have the transnational element'*.

The **DAIN** project set clear objectives for their transnational work, namely *'...via study trips to transnational partner organisations to identify innovative examples of good practice in the engagement methods for digitally excluded individuals and resources to support engagement'*. Following an 'action research' approach, the resulting learning was intended to benefit both the project and the staff and volunteers participating in the visits. Learning to date for the project has included how volunteers in Germany and Belgium are self-organised and how the Belgian partners sought to influence European policy. The project also learnt about the process of transnational learning – the importance of flexibility; ensuring visits are focused, and the potential differences in, and implications of, different cultures and contexts.

Project participants/volunteers attending the visits also gained significantly in terms of developing their self-esteem and raising their confidence. The visits offered the opportunity for them to gain experience from group activities, learn more about the challenges in engaging disadvantaged learners from different cultures, and develop their film making and ICT skills through the blogs and other media maintained by the participants. As one participant described: *'From our trip to Germany it was interesting to find out more about how the relationship with the voluntary sector and the state works over there. What we do in the UK is very different ... our organisations are more independent'*.

The **Clear About Carbon** project operated in the particularly innovative field of low carbon supply chain development, and initially had fairly low expectations of the benefits that transnational working could offer them. Their transnational activities to date had included partner visits and attending conferences (which led to identifying their UK mainstreaming contacts – see Chapter 5), although these were in the process of becoming more focused and proactive study visits, for example, between their college partner visiting their agricultural partners in Sweden they had also recruited additional transnational partners when their original partners' involvement in low carbon activities was less than expected, and recruited two new partners with greater experience in this area. Consequently the benefits for the project included learning about best practice in green public procurement procedures and low carbon and sustainability initiatives from their new partners (e.g. around agrifood and anaerobic digestion), and on low carbon/sustainable fuel practice in Sweden. The learning from their transnational partners also gave the project confidence that not only were the approaches they were following the correct ones, but that they were also capable of being implemented at the national level.

Continued

Transnational benefits – learning from experience elsewhere (continued)

The **Catalyst Pluss** project described learning from their transnational visits in terms of providing ideas which influenced their domestic project activity. These included visiting and reviewing approaches to generating jobs through supported employment, and how private firms were engaged in developing different activities. The project's Future Clean model was developed to replicate such approaches, where a supermarket-based franchise emerged from collaborative work with private sector, as a sustainable and scalable approach to supporting employment. The French partner confirmed that both they and Catalyst Pluss had learnt from each others' experiences, despite the different public-private contexts. In the case of the French partner, they had introduced a more environmentally sustainable approach to their car cleaning project, and extending the coverage of recruits to the project to include people with disabilities. Both partners described how their car cleaning activities had been successful and were optimistic that the links established between them would be continued.

Finally, several projects also considered that the transnational element of their activities had resulted in less tangible activities, such as strengthening the project teams (both English and English and transnational partners) through shared experiences.

The case studies also featured the review of participation in transnational activities, and the resulting benefits, from the transnational partner perspective. This included interviews with a sample of transnational partners and the review of project information, and found that for the majority of transnational partners their experiences had been positive.

Transnational benefits – benefits for transnational partners

In several cases benefits for the case study projects' transnational partners were identified, with examples being provided below.

The **Working Better** project described how the main benefits of their transnational work had been for their transnational partners – primarily because it emerged that they were further ahead in measures to help disadvantaged groups into work than their two transnational partners. These benefits included: lessons from the project's mental health drugs project provided lessons for their French partner to take forward, and their Lithuanian partner had developed two funding bids based around the project's mentoring model.

Visits took place on a bilateral basis with the **HBE0** project's single transnational partner in Sweden. The Swedish partners were interested in observing and learning from practitioners in London on engaging with the private and the voluntary sector. However, the English context was different for them given: the absence of a 'voluntary sector' in Sweden (with most community organisations being owned or run by local authorities); the lack of a tradition of partnership between large private sector organisations and the state; and the limited flexibility of the Swedish education and training system. 'Community obligation agreements' were of particular interest, with one participant describing *'This is exactly what we are working with in Sweden. To get input from some who have worked with it for a few years is very valuable'*.

Continued

Transnational benefits – benefits for transnational partners (continued)

For the transnational partners in the **Employers for Employment** project, the benefits of their involvement included learning about post-employment support with employers, the role of dedicated support staff for unemployed people and the frequency and depth of adviser meetings with clients. These benefits were considered by the Swedish partner to have been impossible without visits to England.

Involvement in the **Making IT Personal** project provided a range of benefits for their transnational partners. The main example was the use of the materials produced by the Maltese Communication Agency, which have now become adapted to their own needs and context. For example, they have developed content which focuses on travel, holidays and culture, and the English project are interesting taking some of these developments back for use here – in some ways following a parallel development model. A further benefit for Malta University has been the new link forged with Sheffield College, where links have been developed to explore common curriculum and learning materials.

The Estonian partner of the **Eco Advantage** project described how they have been sharing information and knowledge on their approach to supporting unemployed learners, and had hosted a visit for the ITM project partners and experienced some of their training on business development and skills for climate change. They considered the climate change agenda to be an important one for Europe and were keen to contribute to the project having worked with the lead partners previously. However, they found the issues with funding challenging, and restricted the amount of time they could contribute and meant that no visit to the UK was possible. Nevertheless, the Estonian partner reported benefiting from gaining a deeper understanding of UK-based approaches, first about the development of a sustainability centre but also by the work with prisoners, including the production of the digital magazine, which they found ‘... *fascinating and very innovative*’.

The Estonian partner also offered suggestions for what makes a successful transnational project, on the basis of their previous involvement. From their perspective, key factors include: parity of partnership – with all members being considered equal, as ‘*there is as much to be learnt as there is to learn*’; the importance of culture – but while the cultural context is key, any form of learning about effective methods in other countries can be beneficial; and the importance of funding – in allowing ‘equal’ partnerships to develop and operate, but also in recognition and appreciation of the time and effort of the contributions of others.

However, in one case the project’s Danish partner reported how, in their view, they ‘... *have been delivering more than receiving*’ as a transnational partner so far. With no budget for transnational work, the organisation engaged out of politeness following a previous collaboration with the project lead, and hosted several visits by project staff. No return visits were arranged, and as no money was available for engagement with the English project the partner had to draw on their own resources. As they described ‘*That was really a little strange for us that they were so limited in money for the transnational European part of it; normally if we are joining a trans-European project we would be part of the steering committee, and participate in all Committee meetings and things like that*’. Although the English partners reported benefiting from their transnational work, in this case there was no benefit for their transnational partner.

4.5.2 Challenges to transnational working

While the majority of the projects reported benefits resulting from their transnational activities, it was clear that their experiences had not been without challenges. Given the absence of a common source of funding for transnational work under ITM, it is unsurprising that the most commonly reported challenge was **funding transnational activities**.

Projects described three main funding challenges:

- the lack of reciprocal funding for partners in countries where there was not the equivalent of an ITM strand – which affected the level and extent of involvement of some transnational partners, and in some cases the ambitions of their English partners;
- lack of clarity over what ITM funding could be used for – in several cases, projects reported being unclear on precisely what their transnational budgets could be used for. For example, several reported being confused over whether funding could be used for travel, accommodation and subsistence, and whether it also covered some employment costs; and
- funding of experts – the inability to fund visits from transnational partners to England caused some issues in terms of reciprocity, but also meant that ‘experts’ amongst their partners could not be funded to come to England and attend workshops and conferences.

Just three Member States, Germany, Poland and Sweden, had also included explicit provision for transnational activities in their ESF programmes, and had the equivalent of the English ITM Unit to help facilitate contacts. While this led to these nations being the most common source of transnational partners, some projects felt that this restricted the potential inclusion of others with closer and more relevant links to their work. However, even in these cases differences in programme scheduling led to issues in ‘synchronising learning’. This refers to the fact that the transnational work does not occur at the same time across different Member States. When projects embark substantively on their transnational activity is usually dependent on when they have something to share, which occurs at different stages in different projects.

Challenges to transnational working – funding

The absence of, or limited opportunities for, reciprocal funding for transnational activities was the most commonly cited challenge.

The **Making IT Personal** project described how they were only able to allocate five per cent of their budget to transnational work, and then only able to claim for direct costs and not staff time. In their experience arranging visits and other transnational exchanges took significant amounts of staff time, which was completely uncoded. Being funded solely for their work meant they had to rely on the goodwill of their partners, which was a significant departure from the previous Equal model they had previously worked under. Although they did receive ‘...*special dispensation*’ to pay for their Maltese partner to come and speak at their conference, they would have liked to invite a wider pool of people to provide a broader base of experience. While pleased with the outcomes of their transnational work overall, the funding issues were felt to go against the ‘*spirit of transnational work*’.

Projects also struggled to make the case for funding transnational visits from their own resources, particularly at a time of austerity. One described how ‘...*sensitivities were high*’ and they struggled to persuade senior managers and political leaders to commit to their transnational work.

Continued

Challenges to transnational working – funding (continued)

However, in a few cases the projects described how the absence of reciprocal funding had only a limited impact on their work. For example:

- The **HBEO** project described how their transnational partners, a local authority in Sweden, committed significant resources to the project as part of continuing wider links between the areas. This funding avoided the logistical issues experienced elsewhere, and in addition to English staff visiting Gothenburg allowed practitioners from Sweden to visit London on several occasions. These visits included finding out how employment support services are organised and procured, and a team of Youth Social Workers sharing practical experiences with their English counterparts.
- One transnational partner in the **Catalyst Pluss** project described how they had accessed local authority funding in their native France to pay for a return visit to their English partners.

While funding was the most common, and influential, challenge to transnational working faced, many projects also referred to the challenges of **finding appropriate transnational partners**. Although projects commonly worked with transnational partners with whom they had pre-existing links, it was clear from the experiences of many that the transnational partners initially identified were not appropriate for their specific project and new partners had to be found.

In some cases projects also described recruiting additional partners later in their implementation period, either when they found their initial partners were not able to provide the learning expected; where their experience of trialling their approaches meant that additional insights were required, or where they had come across organisations of particular relevance to them as part of their transnational work. While many examples of flexibility were identified to allow these latter opportunities to be exploited, the funding issue in some cases limited the extent to which projects could easily change their transnational partners.

Challenges to transnational working – finding partners

Finding appropriate transnational partners is key to the effectiveness of the process of transnational working – and many of the projects provided evidence of this through the benefits resulting for the development and delivery of their innovative activities. However, for several projects the process of identifying appropriate transnational partners was more challenging, as the examples below illustrate:

- The **DAIN** project described how, despite working with partners with considerable experience of transnational working, the partner identification process was challenging. For them the main issue was finding partners whose interests and experience matched their requirement for knowledge of working with disadvantaged groups through the use of volunteers or community-based approaches. As the lead partner described *‘We initially expected that we could uncover projects that we could use on our course, but the individualities of each community project ... meant this was not possible’*. Best practice approaches identified were either state-run and incorporated good digital inclusion practice, or were volunteer-led but were weak on digital inclusion. However, this was turned to the project’s advantage, where the focus of their transnational work shifted to learning about digital inclusion in other countries and the influence of local cultures and structures.

Continued

Challenges to transnational working – funding (continued)

- The **Clear About Carbon** project worked in a particularly innovative area, focusing on support for the development of low carbon supply chains as part of the climate change agenda. As the project was highly innovative, identifying transnational partners they would be able to learn from proved to be difficult, and the project described how their initial transnational partners were found to have less experience in this specific field than was initially expected. As a result, the project recruited two additional transnational partners from Sweden, who they had met at other climate change conferences in Europe, and who were able to provide useful lessons to inform the development of elements of the project.

While finding transnational partners and funding transnational activities were the most commonly reported challenges, several projects also reported additional issues, namely:

- Transnational partners not being as advanced as expected – as suggested above, in some the projects established that their transnational partners were not as advanced in their specific areas of work than expected. This meant that the direction of learning was more from the English projects out, and that learning for the project was limited. For example, the Age NC project started their transnational activity late, and were granted a time extension to complete their activities. However, their partners appeared not to be as advanced in thinking as in the UK – as the lead partner described *‘Their best practice is bread and butter stuff to us’*.
- Different contexts and legislation – the projects were aware of the importance of the specific contexts, legislative frameworks and cultural environments within which their transnational partners were operating in, considering the lessons from them. In some cases, replicable learning was limited from countries with very different operational and strategic frameworks – for example, ITM projects working with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities adopted a **social model** approach to providing support, while some other countries adopted a **medical model**, so learning was limited.
- Language barriers – in some cases working across different languages, particularly regarding specific terminology, could be problematic. Given the often high costs of employing translators, on an already stretched budget, meant that the ITM projects tended to rely on the English language abilities of their partners.
- Timing issues – as described above, where other Member States had similar programmes which included funding for transnational activities, these could be behind the ITM strand and so projects were trying to share, and learn, from projects at different stages of implementation.

5 Mainstreaming

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the findings of the study in terms of the mainstreaming impacts of the projects at the time of interview, drawing upon findings from the review of documentation, project survey and case studies and interviews with policy influencers to explore:

- the approaches followed in disseminating the findings from their work and engaging with potential policy influencers – including reviewing the thematic events from the project and policy influencer perspectives;
- the ‘mainstreaming outcomes’ reported to date – and expectations for future influence and the potential for continuation; and
- the success factors and challenges reported by the projects.

Although the projects were at different stages of their programmes of activity it was clear that all had, to different extents, taken steps to promote their activities and share the learning emerging from them. While a minority described how they were waiting until they had compiled evidence of the effectiveness of their activities before starting their mainstreaming efforts, the majority saw their early dissemination work as part of their efforts to mainstream their activities either locally and/or nationally. It was clear that for some projects their main mainstreaming audiences were local – amongst members of their partnerships and other organisations which could support the continuation of successful approaches or who could benefit from their learning more widely. Elsewhere ambitions were higher – with the intention of influencing at the national level being a stated intent from the outset – and with activities being focused appropriately.

5.2 Dissemination activities

Projects were questioned on their approaches to disseminating the outcomes of their activities – in terms of attending the thematic events facilitated by the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) Unit on an annual basis, by engaging with potential ‘policy influencers’ both locally and nationally, and through other mechanisms such as conferences and the production and circulation of reports and other documents.

5.2.1 Thematic events

A series of thematic events took place on an annual basis, with initial events in 2009 focusing on introducing the projects to each other and policy representatives, and the second events in 2010 allowing emerging lessons and progress to be reviewed and shared. While the 2009 and 2010 events were organised on a ‘thematic’ basis, with each theme being addressed independently through six events, this approach was changed for the 2011 events. Rather than events for individual themes, three events were delivered following a ‘cross-thematic approach, with a focus on three broad policy areas:

- New Skills for New Jobs;
- Engaging Workless Families and Tackling Poverty and Multiple Disadvantage; and
- Big Society and Localism.

Each of the projects were invited to select the events which were most appropriate to their work, with the cross-thematic approach being intended to better reflect current policy priorities, which had shifted considerably since the inception of the strand, as well as stimulating projects to consider where their learning could best be applied in the new policy environment.

The new structure was welcomed by the majority of the projects, primarily as it gave them the opportunity to find out about and learn from projects in different themes. The revised events also extended opportunities for networking, and for projects to learn from those in other themes about their successes, common issues and challenges. One project commented that *'The three recent events have been very constructive indeed, and have actually started to engage with the policy level a little more effectively'*, and several others described how the events had helped them consider their activities and learning in the current policy context.

The annual Thematic Network Reports produced by the ITM Unit, and the consultations with the projects, showed that the thematic events were well attended. Commonly, projects had attended each of the events, from the initial events in 2009 and 2010 to the cross-thematic events held in 2011, where they selected which events were most relevant to their activities.

Project experiences

Overall, the vast majority of the projects found the thematic events to be useful, well structured and delivered, and helpful in their work. Only two of the projects expressed reservations – in both cases where they considered that they had not benefited from attendance, in one case only attending the 2009 and 2010 events which were happening *'before we had any results to speak of'*.

The majority of attendees, however, cited a range of benefits resulting from attending the events. Most commonly projects referred to the opportunity to meet with other projects, share their experiences (and in the later events the learning from their work) more widely. One project summarised the views of many – *'The thematic events have been interesting and a great opportunity to share what we have learnt and find out what other people are up to'*. Several projects also reported that the events and contact with other projects helped confirm what they were doing – and that the challenges they faced were not unique to them.

The events also offered the opportunity to make contact with policy makers – allowing initial contacts to be made at the early events, and to share emerging learning in the 2011 events. Policy maker contributions also provided useful updates on policy developments – ranging from high level policy direction to more specific details on relevant initiatives, such as the Work Programme. While the projects considered that these were informative, there was limited evidence that these had led to any significant change in direction in terms of the approaches being trialled.

Projects also welcomed the opportunity to present at the events – either in the main sessions or in the workshops and plenary groups. This not only allowed the opportunity to promote individual projects and their activities to other projects, but also directly to policy makers attending. As one project described, presenting at the events was a *'...great opportunity to showcase what we've done, as well as learning from others'*, while another considered this offered *'a great platform for us to raise awareness of our work to policy makers and other projects'*.

However, while the majority of projects were positive about their experiences of the thematic events, several issues were raised:

- Policy influencer representation – several of the projects, while welcoming the opportunity to interact with other projects, described being disappointed with the degree of involvement of policy makers in the events. These projects were either yet to enter their main ‘mainstreaming phase’ or had already established contacts for mainstreaming locally and nationally, in some cases with the assistance of the ITM Unit, and felt that policy representation at the events could be enhanced. This was a particular issue for the 2011 events as the projects were formalising their key learning.
- Post-event follow-up – similarly, several projects considered that more could be done to follow-up after the events and, while the summary documents produced by the ITM Unit were useful, more could be done to capitalise on awareness raised and develop further the links made with policy makers at the events. While many projects described making useful contacts with policy makers at thematic events, which had led to ongoing relationships, others had little idea whether the information provided had been useful, and used, to inform policy development or implementation.
- Level of specialist knowledge – in two cases, projects trialling particularly specialist interventions described how in their view the generic nature policy representatives attending the events limited their value in supporting mainstreaming. In both cases, however, the projects were keen to stress this was not a criticism, as their specialist nature meant that the audiences for their work were highly limited and both had already made appropriate contacts at government level.

A final point raised by several projects was that while the events were useful, they would have liked to see more contact between projects with similar interests. Indeed, while examples of links being made between projects to share ideas and responses to challenges were identified, these were comparatively rare. Although one of the objectives of the thematic events was to promote project-to-project links, with a view that these would be taken forward by the projects themselves, several projects felt that they would have benefited from making such links earlier in their work and that some form of facilitated exchange between projects with similar interests would have been useful. For example, the idea of site visits, facilitated by the ITM Unit, was raised as a means of exploring project activities in more detail, and this approach was felt to have the potential to complement the events.

Policy influencer experiences

The experiences of policy makers attending the events were explored through interviews with a sample of those attending thematic events between 2009 and 2011. As Chapter 1 described, securing interviews with the policy representatives was particularly challenging, although 11 individuals participated from organisations including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Environment Agency, Cabinet Office, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Ministry of Justice and LANTRA. The sample focused on individuals who had a more sustained engagement with the strand, and who had attended either the 2011 or previous events.

The sample development process identified that comparatively few policy makers had maintained a consistent involvement with the strand in terms of attendance at events – indeed according to attendance records few (outside of ESFD representatives) had attended events in each of the three years they were available. This reflects the common challenge facing programmes where close links with policy influencers are required – and the reality of securing sustained engagement over multi-year programmes as experienced under previous European Social Fund (ESF) programmes such as Equal and Adapt and Employment. Chapter 1 showed how staff turnover amongst policy influencers can pose particular challenges for maintaining such links, which were clearly exacerbated by the current economic climate and public sector cut backs.

Policy influencers attending the thematic events considered them to have been well organised and structured, with the early events being seen as primarily benefiting projects in terms of initial networking. Where attended, these events provided policy influencers with an introduction to the projects and their proposed activities, and in some cases allowed early contacts to be made. Subsequent events, and particularly those in 2011, were helpful in showing how project activities had progressed, and in communicating emerging learning. The format of the events in 2011 was again referred to positively – one attendee described the New Skills New Jobs event as ‘... *fantastic, it looked at issues in the round from different perspectives – policy and delivery, local strategic initiatives, different delivery mechanisms and different geographical areas*’. The opportunity to learn about projects from other themes was a major benefit for individuals who had previously attended events previously. One policy influencer, with an interest and strong links with the social enterprise theme, found the cross-thematic approach particularly helpful as it allowed learning from other themes where social enterprise approaches had been followed to be considered.

The main benefits cited by the policy influencers attending the events were, for the most part, focused on providing insights into new approaches from a delivery perspective – as one described ‘*to see what is going on on the ground*’. Both presentations and the opportunity to speak with individual projects were considered useful, with examples of the benefits resulting being provided below.

Benefits of attending events for policy influencers

The policy influencers interviewed described benefiting from attending the thematic events, primarily from identifying different examples of activity with the potential to be developed further and inform or be adopted as mainstream services.

Examples of such benefits reported amongst the policy influencers interviewed included:

- One Environment Agency representative had been involved in the ITM strand from the outset, attending events and keeping in touch through European Social Fund (ESF) Works, project reports and case studies and contacts with individual projects. He reported that the thematic events had been extremely useful in initially informing him of the range of activities under the Skills for Climate Change theme, and that the Agency had benefited from the innovations trialled, with the learning to date informing their thinking and practice around the learning and skills agenda.
- One DWP representative attending the 2011 events described finding the work of the Catalyst Plus project, and their franchising approach to providing supported employment, particularly relevant. He was particularly interested in progress made with extending the model trialled through car cleaning services in a national supermarket chain, which offered the opportunity of scaling up the approach to offer real impact and provide progression routes for participants. However, while an interesting approach, the individual described how, at the current time, there were no opportunities for the project to directly influence policy delivery and while he considered the experiences and approaches of some of the projects were interesting, no further involvement with the strand has resulted so far.
- A second individual represented BIS at her first event as a policy expert in 2011, and was interested in what the projects were working on. Following the event she exchanged emails with two projects, but has had no further contact with them following her secondment away from BIS. Had she stayed she felt she would have visited the projects to explore their work in more detail. For her the main benefit had been to expand her knowledge on the range of activities ESF can encompass, and to raise awareness of ITM as a potential resource to provide evidence of effective approaches.

Continued

Benefits of attending events for policy influencers (continued)

- One Sector Skills Council (SSC) representative involved in the strand from the outset described attending the events to see what the Climate Change theme was delivering, with a view to providing support with labour market intelligence as well as identifying relevant learning. While enhancing her awareness of the project's activity she has not directly used any of the information provided in policy or service delivery development.
- A final policy representative, based in the Cabinet Office and with a specific interest in the development of social enterprises and how they can contribute to promoting inclusion amongst disadvantaged groups, also described being engaged with ITM from the outset. While he considered that he had learnt most from direct involvement with projects in the Social Enterprise theme, he described how these initial contacts had resulted from his attendance at ITM events. Importantly for him, the 2011 events had been particularly useful in providing wider insights into how the social enterprise concept had been developed outside the specific Social Enterprise theme, which had provided useful insights into the potential application of the social enterprise model across other policy areas.
- Finally, one DWP representative, with an interest in the Skills for Climate Change theme, found learning about the activities of the projects on the ground to be particularly useful, and reported that examples from ITM projects had fed into the development of the skills aspects of the national Climate Change Adaption Plan.

Several of the policy influencers interviewed also described making contacts with individual projects through attendance at the events which had led to ongoing relationships. Examples of relationships developed with projects amongst the individuals interviewed included:

- One policy representative with an interest in social enterprise described continuing an interest in ESF innovation programmes following a previous involvement in the Equal programme. Taking both an 'expert' and observer role, he had attended each of the thematic events and had engaged directly with each of the projects in the Social Enterprise theme, seeing this as part of his role in terms of keeping them up to date with policy developments as well as learning from their work. He described being keen to identify '*...evidence of what does, and what doesn't, work*', and to assess on this basis approaches which could be taken forward, with a strong focus on policy delivery. He described being kept informed and provided with reports, presentations and other materials by the projects and, while he considered it to be too early for learning from the projects to impact on policy, was optimistic that useful learning would result. However, an early example of learning came from the Employment, Education and Enterprise in Northamptonshire project, which had responded to changes in the business support infrastructure (such as the closure of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)) by producing useful work mapping the capabilities of the emerging LEPs and how business support could best be provided in the 'new world'.

- In a second example, a DWP representative with an interest in measures to promote labour market inclusion amongst individuals with complex problems described working with the Social Activation Model (SAM) project, where new approaches to participation and inclusion were being trialled based on a user driven model featuring volunteers to support individuals recovering from mental ill health return to the labour market. As well as learning about the approach followed on the ground, the individual accompanied the project on a transnational visit, which also provided insights from Swedish Government officials into their approaches to and experiences of mechanisms for combating labour market exclusion. The learning from their contact with the project and its partners helped to emphasise that transforming the lives of people with complex problems is possible – and that an important success factor is that individuals take responsibility for their own future (alongside the support received) for interventions to be successful. This message helped to emphasise this perspective and supported the findings of the Strategic Review of Support for Homeless People.
- In a third example, two representatives of the Environment Agency described how attending thematic events, and subsequent contacts with individual projects had been particularly useful, and had influenced the Agency’s thinking on how to deliver skills training in sustainable construction, to support the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and around flood and coastal risk management. They had also learned lessons on how best to commission and work with social enterprises (e.g. around flood management schemes). One representative described how the combination of attending events, and additional information provided by the ITM Unit, had identified a range of innovative approaches to skills development within the environmental sector. His specific interest was to develop a project to employ not in employment, education or training (NEET) young people to deliver environmental projects in collaboration with local providers – and following contacts made at an event has engaged with the Groundwork Trust to learn from their ITM project. The ITM contacts were helpful in showing what could be achieved, which was central to gaining internal support for the project, which was being rolled out in two regions at the time of interview and represents a new area of work for the Agency. They are currently considering developing a second project, extending the approach of the first to include unemployed graduates. He also described how new contacts had been made with individuals in other Government Departments as a result of attending the events – including the Cabinet Office (around developing the role of the third sector) and with the DWP.

5.2.2 Other dissemination routes

The thematic events were just one of the means by which the projects had disseminated the findings of their work. The projects also reported sharing the emerging lessons from their work, and the new materials, services and products developed, through a combination of mechanisms, including:

- holding specific or attending other conferences to present their work – at the local, national and European Union (EU) levels, and including at the ESF Mid-Term Conference in 2010;
- producing and circulating reports and other information to promote their activities and emerging lessons – including through dedicated websites, blogs, press releases and newsletters – and in some cases producing videos to promote their projects;
- through case studies and other details of project activity on the ESF Works website – which were used by both projects and several of the policy influencers interviewed to identify and find out more about potentially interesting projects – as well as self-produced case studies, including examples of individual beneficiaries; and
- identifying and engaging directly with local and national policy influencers – with the aim of informing policy development and delivery, and sustaining interventions proving to be effective.

Several of the projects had also benefited from the profile raising as a result of winning national awards, including a EU Year of Volunteering Award 2011 (the Digital Activist Inclusion Network (DAIN) project), the British Car Parking Awards (Catalyst Pluss for their supported employment car cleaning franchise), and an ESF Sustainable Development Specialist Leader Award winner (the Clear About Carbon project).

As the introduction described, not all of the projects had commenced their main mainstreaming activities – with a few describing their intentions to start the process shortly after their interviews or later within their contract extension periods. Indeed, there was some debate about the most appropriate time to begin the mainstreaming process – either from the outset (first through raising awareness of the project as a precursor to engagement) or later once the project had gathered sufficient learning to be shared (the less common view). In several cases, projects referred to ‘mainstreaming’ their project ideas early on rather than waiting for their approaches to be thoroughly developed and tested prior to sharing the outcomes. This process was described by one project as ‘reverse mainstreaming’, and had proved effective as a means of sharing developed project ideas while still allowing for change to meet the needs of the potential mainstreaming agency.

Engaging with local policy influencers

Projects most commonly reported sharing the emerging outcomes of their work with local or regional organisations, or local representatives of national organisations, as part of their delivery and dissemination processes. This process was aided where projects had included representatives of potential policy influencers and others, with the potential to influence continuation and mainstreaming, as members of their partnerships. In other cases, projects reported how they had worked hard to raise awareness of their projects and kept local contacts informed of progress, with a view to engaging more closely when they had a final product or set of outcomes to mainstream.

However, changes in the public sector infrastructure, as part of moves to address the public sector deficit, had led to challenges for a number of projects. In some cases, initial dissemination targets, such as Regional Development Agencies, had been abolished during the projects’ delivery stages, and many had to identify other options for dissemination locally.

Engaging with national policy influencers

As the previous examples from the thematic events illustrate, many projects had taken the opportunity to establish contacts with national policy influencers through attendance and presentations at national events. However, many also reported that identifying and engaging with national level policy influencers was the most challenging aspect of their dissemination and mainstreaming approaches which, in several cases, had led to a reduction in their ambitions in terms of national influence.

Indeed, in some cases, projects’ ambitions regarding national mainstreaming had been limited from the outset, with their projects being seen as having a primarily local focus in terms of the final utilisation of their outcomes.

Where projects had been successful in engaging policy influencers, they reported a variety of ways in which these contacts were established and nurtured. In addition to contacts made at ITM events, they also reported identifying policy influencers:

- from contacts brokered by the ITM Unit – for example the SAM project described how a social inclusion policy advisor from DWP accompanied them on a transnational visit to Denmark, having been put in contact with the project by the Unit;

- from contacts made at local, national and European conferences – which allowed individuals with common interests to be identified more readily. For example, the Catalyst Plus project presented at the British Association of Supported Employment (BASE) conferences in 2010 and 2011 – which in both cases generated interest in the project from supported employment delivery agencies and policy representatives attending; and
- through colleagues and partners in their projects with existing links to potential influencers – either through previous personal contact or via their participation in wider national networks.

For projects trialling particularly innovative approaches the task of identifying appropriate policy influencers was particularly challenging. For example, the Clear About Carbon project aimed to develop approaches to increasing the level of carbon literacy within the workforce, with a focus on developing procurement skills for low carbon supply chains. The specialist nature of the project, and the limited range of organisations with an interest in the low carbon procurement agenda, meant that the audience for its work was limited. However, as described in detail later, the project was able to mainstream a new training model developed with Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), through UK Government contacts established at specialist European Union (EU) conferences. This also led to the project engaging directly with other staff across government, including officials from the Department of Health and the Cabinet Office, which were followed up by meetings, presentations and led to the establishment of ongoing relationships.

5.3 Mainstreaming outcomes

As the previous text suggests, many of the projects had been successful in both disseminating the outcomes of their work and supporting their continuation and/or wider influence through the mainstreaming process. While, as we will see later, this process was not without challenge, and had been embarked upon to different degrees depending on the individual project's stage in their delivery cycle, the majority of the projects had taken at least initial steps in sharing and preparing for mainstreaming their work. In some cases, projects had also received extensions of time to complete or extend their mainstreaming activity, so the picture presented by the study is that of a work in progress.

Identifying and verifying mainstreaming outcomes is, however, notoriously challenging – not least as projects themselves may not be aware of where information provided to 'policy influencers' has had any impact. Consequently our approach included attempting to verify the mainstreaming impacts reported by the case study projects, either through the review of supporting evidence, such as evaluation documentation and case studies on ESF Works, or in some cases through interviews with appropriate partners and/or 'policy influencers'.

5.3.1 Examples of mainstreaming impacts – case study projects

The majority of the case study projects described achieving some form of mainstreaming outcomes, which ranged from the adoption of new training materials and approaches at the local and national levels to informing the delivery of services locally and nationally. The case study fieldwork with projects allowed these impacts to be explored in detail, with examples of mainstream outcomes identified under each of the ITM themes being provided below.

Mainstreaming outcomes – case study projects

The case study projects provided examples of mainstream outcomes achieved at the time of interview, which are set out by theme below.

Engaging employers

Employers for Employment – here dissemination and mainstreaming efforts to date had focused on sharing learning across the members of the project partnership, with less of a focus on mainstreaming at the national level. Impacts reported to have resulted were consequently local, and included:

- influencing new policy by informing the development of the lead authority's Health and Wellbeing Charter;
- influencing local authority employment strategies, including the inclusion of community benefit clauses in procurement contracts, and the introduction of a single point of contact for local employers seeking support, advice or guidance; and
- influencing policy delivery – software used to record and track contacts with employers is now being used across the project partners, and the project activities are also being used to promote inward investment into the area (contributing to their recruitment support offer).

Host Borough Employment Offer (HBE0) – mainstreaming attentions have focused on continuing the various activities trialled by the project, with less of a focus on national mainstreaming and more across the five local authorities participating. However, the project evaluation report highlighted the potential for wider dissemination and interest at the national level across agendas from worklessness (DWP) to sustainable development (Defra).

Mainstreaming impacts reported to date included the adoption of the Every Child a Musician (ECAM) pilot by one London Borough and the establishment of a food waste recycling company as a social enterprise by another London Borough. In addition to these impacts, the project was confident that (and plans were in place for) many of their activities would be continued, including:

- Continued collaboration with the private sector to create jobs and opportunities for their target groups – including a newly secured contract by the lead partner to maintain the Olympic Park site after the Games, allowing them to continue to provide work placements for local unemployed and low skilled individuals. As the lead partner described *'This is a major success for us and I don't think we would have been able to go for this without our experience with ITM. It's a major win for the project's legacy'*.
- A furniture recycling project will be continued as a social enterprise, with support from one London Borough.
- Experience of community recycling will be mainstreamed through a multi-borough waste disposal contract with the London Recycling Network.

Active inclusion

Working Better – the learning from the project has been shared with local policy influencers including the local Health Trust and regional equality group, and the project was currently working with the City Council to develop a volunteer mentoring service based on the approach trialled by the project.

Continued

Mainstreaming outcomes – case study projects (continued)

More broadly, the project partners are currently exploring how the project can be continued once ITM funding ends, including developing a business plan through which tendering and other funding opportunities will be identified

Social Activation Model (SAM) – mainstreaming efforts to date have focused on securing continuation funding for the project. However, they have also engaged with DWP representatives through the thematic events, which led to a social inclusion policy advisor accompanying the project on a transnational visit.

Although mainstreaming efforts are concentrated towards the end of the project, they have influenced Jobcentre Plus locally in the way they view volunteering for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants (emphasising the need for additional support), and now receive referrals from Jobcentre Plus clients. This has also led to the Jobcentre introducing drop-in sessions for ESA clients. The project and its partners are also currently involved in a bid to the NHS to provide an integrated wellbeing approach.

ICT and the Digital Divide

Making IT Personal – the digital outreach trainer approach has influenced the latest Government digital access campaign ‘Go On’, leading to the adoption of the Digital Champion approach for providing volunteer support to help people get online, and the model has also been adopted by UK Online. Locally, Jobcentre Plus now includes the use of Digital Champions in their offices.

Future dissemination and mainstreaming efforts will focus on the national level, with the bite-size learning materials now being offered online for self-learning. Delivery is also continuing through embedding within the project’s Further Education (FE) partners’ mainstream provision, where it is considered to have helped motivate learners and encouraged continued learning.

DAIN – the project contributed to policy development through the BIS Informal Adult and Community Learning Review (as part of the stakeholder group), and also informed the development of the BIS Community Learning Champions programme. Learning from the project also influenced the Workers Education Association’s national volunteering strategy, as the idea of using volunteers to achieve digital inclusion becomes more widely recognised.

Skills for Climate Change

Clear About Carbon – the project sought to mainstream both locally and nationally from the outset, and at the time of interview had achieved considerable success at the national level. Through contacts made at conferences, the project had shared the learning from their work around low carbon procurement with staff in Defra, the Cabinet Office and the Department of Health.

One example of mainstreaming resulting to date is the Carbon Literacy for Providers course, which has been mainstreamed by Defra and embedded within the National Sustainable Public Procurement Programme from August 2011. Working with Defra staff, the project produced the carbon literacy element of the course, directly influencing the content of this on-line training programme which is expected to reach over 10,000 users per year.

More local mainstreaming, including working with private sector employers, is scheduled for the later stages of the project. However, local mainstreaming success has already been achieved with Cornwall County, where the project has contributed to the authority’s ability to respond to the low carbon agenda.

Continued

Social enterprise

Catalyst Pluss – shared learning at both the national and local levels, and contributed to national policy discussions with DWP around the Access to Work agenda and the lessons from the project to inform policy.

In terms of delivery, the main mainstreaming impact to date has been through the project's social franchise model, with the supported employment car cleaning business being extended to other sites across the country. The approach has also been taken up by a national supermarket chain, which is using the model as an entry to employment through establishing traineeships in their car parks with a view to offering participants employment opportunities within their stores. Discussions are also ongoing with a national charity to also follow the approach and roll it out nationally. These developments show the potential for replication to provide supported employment opportunities for disadvantaged people at the national scale.

The schools shops element of the project, which also has a supported employment dimension, is continuing to operate, and a 'starter pack' for local authorities has been produced to provide information on developing and running the franchise approach.

Finally, the move to formalised traineeships in the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) model trialled by the project has offered learning to other employment support bodies – for example, encouraging Jobcentre Plus locally to refer into traineeships as part of Work Choice (the employment programme that supports people with disabilities and long-term health issues facing barriers in finding and keeping work).

Demographic change

Age NC – here the main impacts have been on service delivery, with the project's Jobcentre Plus partners now having an over 50's advisor as a result of learning from the project (which showed that the over 50's have different needs) – a role which is expected to continue following the end of the project. The Jobcentre was felt to have changed their approach to older workers due to their collaboration with the project, and now provide an increasingly personalised service.

Looking to the latter stages of the project, partners are looking into opportunities to franchise or sell the model developed, and their Higher Education partner intends to continue to offer the new management qualification developed for individuals in the sector. Finally, the Age Access course developed has been made into a toolkit, with a view to sharing with partners.

5.4 Mainstreaming – success factors and challenges

The project interviews identified how their initial experiences of, and preparation for, mainstreaming had provided a series of success factors for effective mainstreaming practice, as well as raising challenges.

5.4.1 Success factors

A series of success factors were identified on the basis of projects' experiences to date, summarised below in terms of lessons for partnerships and preparation; effective communications and engaging with policy influencers.

Partnership and preparation

- Having effective project management in place – to ensure that the dissemination and mainstreaming aspects of the projects were not forgotten and given the support required.
- Project partners having experience of both working on partnership projects and bringing people together to share learning – as well as having partners with existing links to potential policy influencers and other interested parties.
- Engaging with the right partners for the right roles – in some cases, dissemination and mainstreaming responsibilities were given to a specific partner to lead, where their experience, contacts and resources made them best suited for this role.
- Being flexible in terms of identifying mainstreaming and other project continuation opportunities, particularly at a time of change amongst potential policy influencers. Several projects described how they had refocused their dissemination plans to be effective in the new environment.

Communicating effectively

- Ensure dissemination events are focused, short and with key points being made concisely – ensure they will be a good use of time for all those attending.
- Ensure messages are applicable to the specific audience, or audiences, in question – for example, an audience of policy influencers will have different interests to employers, who will want to know whether an approach can be applied to their business and, if so, what the business benefits will be.
- Be clear what your key messages are before embarking on the disseminating and mainstreaming process – avoiding simply repeating the project activities and focusing on what has been learnt, what innovative activity has proved to be effective and what the implications are for the audience.

Targeting policy influencers

- Establishing credibility with policy influencers from the outset – particularly high level policy influencers, by ensuring that materials and presentations offered are high quality and professional.
- Showing by doing – several projects reported inviting potential policy influencers to visit them and see directly their work with their customers, sit in on training and service delivery, etc to give them insights into developments ‘on the ground’.
- Targeting the right people, at the right time – rather than sending out materials on a scatter gun basis, seek to target specific materials to specific individuals for greatest effect.
- Being persistent – many of the projects who had successfully made links with national policy influencers described having to work hard to firstly identify and develop relationships, then keep these relationships fresh through the delivery period. Persistent, but polite, contacts are often required, with one project describing how they emailed one Department with progress updates on a monthly basis until they agreed to meet with them.

5.4.2 Challenges

The most commonly reported challenge faced by the projects by far was the ability to identify and engage with policy influencers, both nationally and locally, following changes in the public sector at both national and more local levels. The abolition of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), reduced levels of funding, and the latter effects of the abolition of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (and the subsequent withdrawal of the Train to Gain programme) meant that in several cases

projects' intended mainstreaming targets were not viable. One project spoke for many when they described how '*... funding cuts affecting local authority and our partners are proving significant threats to our ability to mainstream and our ability to continue*'.

In addition, several projects described how ongoing reform of the National Health Service, at both local and national levels, also limited their ability to engage with policy influencers. This was particularly the case at the local level, with the abolition of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and other local and regional structures meant that their successor organisations were themselves in a state of transition, and so less able to consider new approaches at this point.

Finally, the current economic climate was also felt to be less than conducive for employers to take on staff that were from outside their traditional areas for recruitment. Although this affected mainstreaming through transferred or sustained practice at the local level, several projects seeking to engage more challenging target groups with employment reported how both work placement and volunteering opportunities appeared to have been limited with the current recession.

Outside these more 'environmental' challenges, projects reported familiar challenges in terms of identifying national policy representatives for mainstreaming purposes. Despite attending thematic events, and in some cases receiving direct support offered by the ITM Unit, identifying individuals at the national level remained challenging.

In a small number of cases, additional challenges included having time to develop and implement dissemination and mainstreaming activities alongside their other work; being unclear how, and at what level, they needed to provide evidence of the effectiveness of their work to support mainstreaming; and the need to overcome entrenched attitudes where projects were working with employers to change their recruitment practices.

The issues around ESF funding for transnational activities also impacted on projects' dissemination and mainstreaming strategies, as described in Chapter 4. However, one ITM project operating in the Cornwall Convergence area reported how they had struggled with the requirement for all expenditure to be targeted within the county, which appeared to go against the principles of national mainstreaming. This meant that the project had to complete much bureaucracy or get their audiences to fund much of their national dissemination and mainstreaming activity.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides our conclusions and recommendations, drawn from the findings presented in previous sections of this report and from across the document reviews and fieldwork with projects, partners, participants and other stakeholders.

The section addresses the key aim and areas of investigation set for the study, namely to ‘...examine the impacts of the ITM projects, to see what works in terms of moving people closer to the labour market, and whether this is influencing future mainstream policy and policymakers’. Within this overall aim specific areas for investigation included:

- how the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand is being delivered – identifying what works well and potential areas for improvement;
- has ITM been effective in generating new ideas to influence policy and delivery?; and
- what are the key lessons for future transnational activities in the next round of the European Social Fund (ESF)?

6.2 Conclusions

As the report has illustrated, the projects overall have made good progress towards the achievement of their individual aims and objectives of developing and testing innovative approaches across the six strand themes. As the majority of the projects were still implementing their approaches at the time of the study, with many extending their work into 2013 and several yet to start their full dissemination and mainstreaming efforts, it is too early to provide any final assessment of their impacts. However, their achievements to date show that several have achieved real success in mainstreaming their approaches at the national level, while for the majority the benefits have remained at the local or regional levels.

6.2.1 Innovation

As this section has shown, the ITM projects have developed a range of innovative approaches across the six ITM policy themes. The projects have a strong focus on new approaches to policy implementation and, when categorised collectively, the most common types of innovation were process (focusing on the development of new methods, content or approaches) or goal (working with different groups, sectors and types of qualifications) oriented. Context-oriented innovation (relating to new ways of organising training and networking) was identified less frequently.

Common areas of ‘process’ innovation focused on:

- developing whole person/employer approaches – with many focusing on providing holistic, integrated solutions for target groups with multiple and complex needs;
- using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to enhance/replicate other delivery mechanisms – for example, by bringing job vacancies together at a single point or in the assessment and delivery of learning to participants;

- social enterprises – both as a mechanism for generating new employment opportunities and as a focus for leadership development services;
- new delivery mechanisms – including integrated, multi-partner and ICT-based approaches; and
- new partnerships – with new groups of partners working together for the first time.

Examples of goal innovation included:

- working with new target groups – including individuals with mental health problems, disabilities, ex-offenders and young people not in employment, education or training (NEET); and
- developing new qualifications and training outcomes – across a range of areas ranging from employability amongst challenging-to-reach groups to low carbon and sustainable development training for employers.

Examples of context innovation focused mainly on the creation of new networks.

In developing their innovative ideas, the projects drew upon existing approaches found to be effective elsewhere, with different target groups or in different settings, with wholly innovative approaches being less common. Project ideas commonly emerged from discussions with partners, research and responding to gaps in current local provision, although some drew on previous activities which appeared promising and were developed further. Lessons from practice in Europe were also influential – both at project design stage and more frequently later as lessons from transnational partners were identified.

As the vast majority of projects were yet to complete their work, it was not possible to provide an assessment of the extent to which their individual innovations had proved to be effective. However, in many cases there was considerable evidence that the new approaches trialled were working well, and had already been successes in terms of mainstreaming. Across the projects several elements emerged as having worked well in terms of implementing innovation, including the role of partnerships (from helping engage more challenging-to-engage groups to extending provision thematically and spatially); the development of whole person/employer approaches, and the use of ICTs in working with learners and delivering new provision.

Developing and implementing innovative approaches is not without challenge, and while projects described the issues associated with working with hard-to-engage groups changes in the national policy agenda also meant that in many cases projects had to review both their activities and their potential audiences for mainstreaming.

Finally, given that mainstream ESF provision has also been shown in previous studies to frequently include new approaches to services to move people closer to the labour market, a key issue is the extent to which the ITM strand has added value over the mainstream. We conclude that the ITM strand, as a specific vehicle for the development, trialling and mainstreaming of innovative approaches, provides clarity and added value. While mainstream ESF can also feature new approaches, ITM is sufficiently distinct through its specific aims, objectives and key features and role as an ‘innovation’ programme. This clarity, which brings with it the freedom for innovative approaches trialled to ‘fail’ as part of the learning process, marks the strand out and makes the case for continued programming of this type.

6.2.2 Transnationality

The majority of the projects had embraced the transnational element of ITM, despite the fundamental challenge of the absence of reciprocal funding in many other Member States to support transnational activities. While the strand required at least one transnational partner within each ITM project partnership, almost two-thirds reported sustained engagement with two or more transnational partners, including 12 in one case. In many cases the make-up of transnational partnerships changed over time – either where initial partnerships failed or, more commonly, where new partners were identified whose interests and activities more closely matched that of the English projects.

Projects had engaged with partners from 20 of the 26 Member States, most commonly with organisations in Sweden, Germany and Poland where explicit funding for transnational activity were included within their ESF programmes. Partners were most commonly identified on the basis of previous contact, in some cases through the earlier Equal programme and more widely through lead or other partner contacts from a range of sources. Finding appropriate transnational partners was a challenge for some projects, with a partnership broking event being organised by the ITM Unit and leading to new partners in several cases.

Transnational activities most commonly focused on visits to other Member States by project representatives, with the intention of sharing practice and learning, and to observe different provision directly. Parallel development and the import of innovative practice from Europe were also key objectives for transnational activities – with projects both learning and providing lessons for their transnational partners. Co-development was rare – again made more difficult through the absence of parallel funding.

The projects were at different stages of their transnational work plans, and, in some cases, activities to date had been limited while in others transnationality had been a strong feature from the outset. The vast majority of projects cited a range of benefits from their transnational activities so far, including: learning from the experience of others across a range of interests to influence project development and delivery; seeing similar approaches being delivered on the ground; and gaining confidence that their innovative approaches could work (accounting for political, structural and cultural differences). A less tangible, but nonetheless valued, benefit was the sharing of experience amongst the project team (and participants where included in transnational work) to enhance partnership cohesion and shared purpose. The majority of the projects also considered that many of the relationships with transnational partners established under ITM would be continued, both for the remainder of their project work and in the future.

However, in some cases learning from transnational partners was limited, with practice in England being found to be ahead of that of the transnational partner. While this restricted the benefits for some, others responded by seeking out new transnational partners, being able to search at a finer level of detail and specificity having established the type of activities they wished to explore.

The main challenge to transnational working under ITM was the issue of reciprocal funding, which influenced both the nature of activities undertaken and the ambitions of some projects. While this was less of an issue where Swedish, German or Polish partners also had funding for transnational work, differences in programme timings could also cause difficulties. There was also a degree of uncertainty over just what could be covered by projects' transnational budgets – not least in terms of funding 'experts' for return visits to England.

For the majority of the projects, the benefits of their transnational work were considered to be worth the resources (time and funding) expended on them – with only a couple reporting otherwise due to the limited benefits resulting for them. While the majority of the projects considered that their transnational learning complemented rather than underpinned their specific approaches

trialled, a significant minority reported that the lessons from their transnational work had directly influenced certain strands of their activities. In these cases the projects were clear that without their transnational inputs certain elements of their approach would not have been taken forward.

6.2.3 Dissemination and mainstreaming

Although the projects were at different stages of their work plans, and particularly their plans for mainstreaming, all had been involved in some form of dissemination activity to both promote their work and share the lessons emerging from it. The most common dissemination routes at the national level were via the thematic events, although projects also noted other meetings, conferences and presentations locally and nationally. In addition, projects reported making contacts with policy influencers through a range of routes – via the thematic events, via contacts brokered by the ITM Unit, and through their own efforts.

The thematic events were viewed positively by both the projects and the policy influencers attending them – particularly the cross-thematic events in 2011, which broadened the opportunities for potential learning across the six themes as well as providing a more current policy focus. However, several projects commented that the representation of policy influencers was disappointing, while others would have preferred more of a formalised post-event, follow-up process to capitalise on awareness raised and contacts made.

Several policy influencers and projects identified the ESF Works website as a useful focal point for information about ESF funded projects (not just ITM projects). It enabled them to identify relevant projects to their work or policy area, and identify innovative practice.

Most commonly dissemination and mainstreaming activity had been locally focused, with lessons being shared with partners and other local interests with a view to continuing the activities trialled. While in some cases attempts to engage with policy makers at the national level had been limited, reflecting the projects' limited ambitions in this area, others reported the challenges of identifying and establishing relationships with national policy influencers. While making such links has been a common challenge for previous innovation-focused programmes under ESF, they had been made more difficult for the ITM projects at national (and local) levels by changes in the public sector infrastructure resulting from measures to address the deficit, and the ongoing restructuring in the health service. Nevertheless, many projects had dedicated energies and worked flexibly to establish contacts with national policy influencers, which had resulted in the successful mainstreaming of approaches trialled.

Although it is too early to provide a comprehensive record of mainstreaming outcomes, examples identified in the study included:

- informing local strategies around the employment, health, social enterprise and skills development agendas;
- the development and delivery of new training courses, materials and delivery approaches – with mainstream impacts being primarily at the local level, but with examples at the national level;
- the introduction of new services, through local arms of national agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, with the potential for adoption more widely; and
- the development of models of supported employment for a range of target groups, again adopted mainly at the local level, but with examples at the national level showing the potential for such interventions to be scaled up.

These early mainstreaming efforts provided a series of insights into success factors for effective approaches, emphasising the importance of partnership and preparation; effective communication and in targeting policy influencers.

It was also clear that many of the projects were just commencing, or in the early stages of, their mainstreaming efforts – and that there remained a rich pool of potential learning to be drawn upon across the strand.

6.2.4 Overall conclusions

On the basis of the findings above, we conclude that **the ITM strand has been effective in generating and testing new ideas with the potential to influence the delivery of policy at the local and national levels**. The mainstream impacts identified in the study show that many projects have the potential to be influential at the national level and the challenge for the remainder of the programme is to maximise the degree to which project outcomes can be brought to the attention of the relevant national policy influencers. Previous innovative programmes have shown the difficulties of engaging and sustaining the interest of policy influencers, and the challenge this poses at a time of public sector stricture and restructuring is a considerable one.

The delivery of, and the structures developed for, the ITM strand have been shown to work well, again in the face of challenges not envisaged at the outset. The **thematic approach** has worked well in terms of providing clear distinctions around project activities, and the stakeholders and other consultees considered that the themes selected were appropriate for the policy needs at the time they were developed. However, changes in policy over multi-year programme periods are inevitable, and in this case compounded by a change of government in 2010 and resulting measures in the Coalition Agreement to address the public sector deficit. Combined these have seen significant changes, including the abolition of the Government Offices and key local mainstreaming targets (such as RDAs) and changes in national programmes (such as the abolition of Train to Gain and the introduction of the Work Programme), which influenced the management of the strand and the ability of projects to mainstream their outcomes.

Finally, the study has shown that **when transnational partnership works well it can produce real benefits for projects**, in the case of ITM even with the additional challenges of reciprocal funding only being available in three Member States. Challenges also exist around identifying appropriate transnational partners, and while the majority of projects considered that the benefits resulting for them were worth the resources invested, it was apparent that for some the ‘return on their investment’ was greater than for others.

6.3 Recommendations

Here we provide our recommendations for consideration in the remainder of the ITM strand and for future programme periods.

6.3.1 Recommendations for the remainder of the ITM strand

Our recommendations for the remainder of the ITM strand focus on maximising the learning from projects’ activities and supporting further mainstreaming at the national level, and are directed primarily towards the Managing Authority and the ITM Unit:

- The expectation that projects will share their outcomes with a view to mainstreaming at the national level should continue to be emphasised – encouraging projects to broaden their horizons and ambitions regarding their potential influence.

- Plans should be put in place to capture the outcomes of, and learning from, the projects, including extending the programme of the thematic events to provide the opportunity for final learning to be shared. In planning these events, consideration should be given to:
 - maximising attendance by policy influencers – including by emphasising the specific areas of learning that will be showcased and directing this towards Departmental and individual areas of interest;
 - engaging with projects as part of preparations for the events to ensure they identify the key outcomes and areas of learning resulting from their activities, and consider where this learning could be applied – to ensure the materials and presentations provided are both attractive and accessible to policy influencers;
 - structuring the events to allow cross-theme representation – based on the success of the 2011 events, but with careful attention being paid to the specific event themes followed. For example, a combination of policy (e.g. tackling the challenge of unemployment for specific challenging groups) and method (e.g. supported employment) focused learning could be considered; and
 - offering the opportunity for projects to display examples of their work (materials produced, video clips, etc) through exhibitions at the events – to policy influencers and other projects to develop a better understanding of their work.
- Continue to provide support to projects in identifying potential policy influencers – recognising that the thematic events are not the sole route to mainstreaming, with the Managing Authority having a role to play in stimulating additional interest within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) at least.

6.3.2 Recommendations for future innovation and transnational programmes

The evaluation of the ITM strand has provided a series of lessons for future innovation and transnational programming, both in terms of the challenges faced and the successes achieved. **We recommend that innovative programmes continue to be supported under ESF**, where they have a distinctiveness and an added value through providing resources with the express intent of fostering innovation in an environment outside the mainstream (and where the risk of failure inherent in all truly innovative activity is recognised).

Our remaining recommendations take the form of suggestions for consideration, based on the lessons emerging from both the ITM study and previous evaluations of ESF innovation programming.

Programme Delivery Model

Overall, the ITM model is considered to have worked well, with many of its key features having been developed to build on earlier programme experiences. **Areas which we recommend are considered for inclusion in future programmes** include:

- the provision of project support through a dedicated support unit – to assist and provide guidance on project development and implementation, dissemination and mainstreaming and facilitating links between projects and potential policy influencers, given the effectiveness of the ITM Unit, and recognising that ‘innovation projects’ have very different support requirements compared to mainstream projects;
- combining project support with wider programme management roles – the ITM Unit has shown that these roles can be delivered effectively, provided the emphasis and conduct of interactions with projects are supportive while maintaining rigour;

- replicating a programme of events and other mechanisms to allow projects to promote their activities at the outset, share emerging lessons and issues throughout their implementation period, and share the final lessons from their work effectively;
- taking steps to ensure that policy inputs continue to influence the initial scoping of project activity at the programme development stage – with a view to continuing initial involvement throughout project implementation; and
- consider the options for the transnational element of any future innovation programming, as described below.

Transnationality

As the study has shown, effective transnational partnership approaches can add significant value to the development and delivery of innovative projects. While the majority of projects considered that their transnational efforts had been beneficial, issues with funding influenced the extent to which partnerships operated on a reciprocal basis.

The projects showed on one hand that results can be achieved with limited resources, while also suggesting that potential areas of shared benefit had not been explored in others. It also emerged that, while transnational inputs were considered in many cases to have been helpful, they were central to projects innovative work in comparatively few cases, and examples of true co-development were rare.

Consequently we recommend that consideration should be given to **whether the transnational component of future innovation programmes should continue to be mandatory, or be more of an ‘option’** which projects can include in their project applications and plans and for which additional funding would be received. Issues of compliance with ESF regulations aside, this approach would help focus projects’ attentions on engaging with transnational partners where the expectations for added value may be greatest – although they should still be able to add new partners who are identified as they implement their approaches.

For this approach to work, projects would need to be clear, and detail in their project documents or shortly after approval, the areas where transnational learning is expected and details of partners proposed (itself requiring additional detailed development work at the outset). While more of an optional approach may serve to focus attentions on added value, it may also make projects reluctant to include a transnational element and so miss out on any (perhaps unexpected) benefits.

Irrespective of whether a mandatory or free choice approach is followed in future, we also recommend that:

- **issues around parallel funding of activities by other Member States are considered**, with lobbying at Commission level to ensure that parallel funding is available for transnational partnership activity. Given the limited likelihood of any single Member State funding both sides of transnational activities, such parallel approaches will be essential; and
- **a transnational partner brokerage service is included** – or efforts made to replicate the engagement event and other support provided by the ITM Unit.

Mainstreaming

The effective mainstreaming of the outcomes from innovation projects is known to be particularly challenging, with policy influencer attention and involvement being notoriously difficult to establish and maintain over time – and the ITM strand has faced a series of exceptional challenges in this regard. Consequently our recommendations are to:

- **continue to follow the model of support for mainstreaming applied under ITM**, with a support unit tasked with supporting dissemination and mainstreaming, and a programme of events where learning can be shared – again in recognition of the unique support requirements of innovative projects, the benefits resulting from a central coordinating body, and specifically the challenges posed by establishing and maintaining links with policy influencers;
- at the start of any new programme **ensure that projects' ambitions are set high** – in terms of influencing at the national policy level, **while at the programme level being realistic** about the challenges and about what can be expected;
- ensure that projects are **well briefed on how best to present themselves** – perhaps through the development of templates which clearly set out what is being trialled, what the learning has been, and what the potential implications of this learning are for both policy influencers and for other projects;
- recognise that the **thematic events are not the sole route to mainstreaming, especially below the national level** – so continue to offer support to identify national policy influencers for specific projects, including where projects' activities are sufficiently innovative or specialist that the policy audience will be limited. One potential option could be the establishment of 'champions' or 'policy ambassadors' in Government Departments whose role is to represent the Department's interests and be a conduit for any resulting learning;
- seek to establish a **greater level of project-to-project networking** – either on a facilitated basis or through the exchange of information in a specific format to identify opportunities for joint learning and development; and
- **continue to follow and expand or provide a specific website** for projects under any future programme to describe themselves and their learning, rather like the current ESF Works case study model.

More radically, the Managing Authority may wish to consider **whether a series of short-duration, tightly focused projects may help address some of the barriers faced by innovation projects seeking to address specific policy areas**. These projects would be between 12 and 24 month duration, developed in response to short/medium-term policy priorities, and be delivered by tight partnership groups with existing interests and expertise in specific policy areas. Such an approach may help address the issue of policy change before a longer term innovation project has completed, and enhance policy influencer ownership as projects would in effect be 'commissioned' to meet specific policy needs.

Appendix A

Questionnaires

A1.1 Telephone survey of projects

1.1 Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. GHK have been commissioned by DWP to undertake an evaluation of the Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming strand of the ESF 2007-13 programme.

The main aim of the study is to: “...examine the impacts of each of the (ITM) projects, to see what works in terms of moving people closer to the labour market, and whether this is influencing future mainstream policy and policymakers.” Key questions within this broad study aim include:

- How is the ITM strand being delivered – what works well and what could be improved?
- Has the ITM strand as a whole been effective in generating new ideas and influencing policy and delivery?
- What are the key lessons for future innovation and transnational work in the next round of ESF?

The findings from the study will help inform whether this strand has met its objective of influencing policy development and delivery. The results will help to inform how innovative and transnational activity might be taken forward in any future ESF programme, especially in the light of budgetary constraints.

Check contact details:

Name of contact:

Job title:

Organisation:

Date:

1.2 Project Details

1.2.1 When did your project start, and when was it initially intended to finish?

Start: _____ (month) / _____ (Year)

End: _____ (month) / _____ (Year)

1.2.1.1 Have you applied for an extension?

If so was it for time, funding or both, and what will it enable you to do?

1.2.2 Can you provide your budget details (including extension funding if approved)?

Levels of ESF funding: £ _____

Other funding: £ _____

1.3 Strand and project aims and objectives

1.3.1 What do you understand as the main objectives of the ITM strand? What is it seeking to achieve?

1.3.2 Have you been involved in ESF funded projects previously, and if so was this in a 'lead' role?

1.3.3 Have you been involved in similar developmental projects/activities, either within the ESF programme or as a pathfinder or pilot project?

1.3.4 What are the main aims and objectives of your project? Have these changed during implementation (and if so why)?

If innovation, transnationality and/or mainstreaming not directly mentioned or referred to ask:

1.3.5 What are the aims and objectives of your project in terms of innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming?

1.3.6 At what point is your project at the moment? Is it broadly on profile in terms of expenditure and outputs achieved?

- If No to either, describe any deviation, the reasons for this and the implications for the achievement of the overall project objectives.

1.4 Innovation

1.4.1 Could you provide a short overview of your approach and delivery model? As appropriate to each project, and including exploring:

- The services being trialled;
- The delivery partnerships and key partners (national – with transnational experiences being reviewed in more detail below); and
- Target groups.

1.4.2 Please describe the innovations you are trialling in your project? How is what you are trialling different?

Free text description, then code by:

- Process oriented innovation (e.g. new methods, content, approaches)
- Goal oriented (e.g. new target groups, qualifications)
- Context oriented (e.g. new organisation of training, networking, dissemination)

AND is the innovation:

- Trialling an existing approach with a new target group/in a new context;
- Trialling a new combination of existing approaches; or
- Trialling a wholly new approach.

- 1.4.3 How was your project idea developed, and what was the rationale for its selection?
- 1.4.4 To what extent have your innovative activities proved to be effective to date? Explore for each innovation identified, exploring:
- What has worked well and what less well
 - What has shown the potential for mainstreaming/looks promising so far?
 - On what evidence is this judgement made?
 - Where approaches have worked less well, what conclusions did you draw from this and did this change your activities?
- 1.4.5 Have you experienced any challenges implementing your innovative activities? If so describe.
- 1.4.6 Has the ITM strand supported/contributed to your innovative approach(es)? If so describe.
- 1.4.7 What support have you received? Would additional support have been helpful?
- 1.5 Transnationality**
- 1.5.1 Who are your transnational partners? (Check against information received)
- 1.5.2 How did you identify your transnational partners? Did you know them in advance or recruit them specifically, and if the latter what were your experiences of identification?
- 1.5.3 What type of activities have you undertaken with your transnational partners? Describe, and seek to characterise by the following variables:
- Getting to know each other/sharing experience
 - Parallel activity/service development
 - Import/export/adoption of innovative approaches
 - Joint project development
 - Exchanges of staff, trainees, etc
 - Other
- 1.5.4 What have been the main benefits for your project from your transnational work to date? What are the main benefits expected by the end?
- 1.5.5 What have been the main challenges faced in operationalising your transnational work?
- 1.5.6 Has the ITM Unit supported/contributed to your transnational work? If so describe?
- 1.5.7 Would any additional support have been helpful?

1.6 Mainstreaming

1.6.1 What dissemination activities have you been involved in to date? Probe for the sharing of information via:

- Attending Thematic Group events – if every year, which events? (If attending 2011 events, views on grouping/change in policy focus)
- Engaging directly with national policy influencers – i.e. from Govt Departments and agencies – describe and collect contact details
- Engaging directly with local policy influencers – describe and collect contact details
- Producing and distributing documents/via a project website, etc – if so who/what types of organisations were these distributed to?

Overall, collect views on:

- *The effectiveness of the ITM approach and structures developed in communicating lessons from projects;*
- *Whether the Thematic Group events are an effective means of supporting mainstreaming; and*
- *Whether the dissemination and mainstreaming approach followed be improved?*

1.6.2 What have been the outcomes of your dissemination activities to date? Probe and explore in detail any mainstreaming impacts achieved or reasonably expected in terms of:

- Influencing national or EU policy development?
- Influencing local/regional policy development?
- Influencing national or EU policy implementation?
- Influencing local/regional policy implementation?
- Other mainstream impacts.

(In each case collect contact details where a mainstream impact has resulted, for subsequent follow-up).

1.6.3 If no mainstreaming impacts have been identified to date, what does the project expect to achieve in this area by the end of their activities?

1.6.4 What challenges have been experienced in terms of mainstreaming any activities which have proved to be effective?

1.6.5 What do you expect to happen to your project when ITM funding ends? Will any aspect of it be continued, and if so:

- What will be continued/what will be its influences on local delivery?
- Who will deliver what is continued?
- How will this be funded?

- 1.6.6 Are there any other ways in which the ITM Unit has supported/contributed to your mainstreaming work?
- 1.6.7 Looking back across all your interactions with the ITM Unit, how would you characterise their role?
- From your perspective, was their role to provide projects with support or to monitor their performance? Did this balance change over time?
 - Were you clear on the different roles of the Unit, GO staff and DWP throughout?

1.7 And Finally

- 1.7.1 Across all the areas discussed, and looking to the future, what are the key success factors for programmes seeking to:
- Trial innovative approaches;
 - Work on a transnational basis; and
 - Influence policy development and delivery
- 1.7.2 What for you are the main lessons emerging from your ITM experience that should be considered in planning similar activities in the future?
- 1.7.3 Are there any other points you would like to raise?

Thank you for your time

A1.2 Project case study checklists

1 Introduction

This document provides a series of draft checklists to be used in the case study fieldwork with a sample of 12 ITM projects. The case studies have an allocation of two days each, to be used as follows:

- The review of available project documentation – to set the context for the visit and individual interviews;
- A visit to the project and interviews with lead partner staff, representatives of key partners, and where possible participants available on the day – with an average of five individuals being interviewed in each case study;
- A telephone interview with one transnational partner – suggested by the project as the most engaged with their activity to date; and
- The production of a short report for each case study – providing an overview of the project and its activity, highlighting the innovative component and any evidence of effectiveness, experiences of mainstreaming and examples of good or promising practice.

Consequently draft checklists have been developed for use with:

- Project leads/key staff – reflecting the coverage of the project telephone interview checklist for comparability, but exploring topics in more detail;
- Key UK partners, and a separate checklist for transnational partners; and
- Project participants available for interview at the time of visit.

Information on ‘policy influencers’ engaging with the projects will also be collected, to inform the ‘policy influencer’ sample and subsequent interviews.

Given the wide range of project approaches, partnership structures and delivery models, and target groups, the final checklists will be applied within the context of the individual projects and the environments within which they are set.

Comments are welcomed on the draft checklists, prior to their use in the field. The first case study is scheduled to begin on the 28 February, having been brought forward given the imminent departure of the project manager. This offers an opportunity for the fieldwork tools to be trialled, after sign-off by the client, prior to the main case study fieldwork stage.

1 Final Project Lead/Staff Checklist

This checklist is to be with the project lead/supporting staff in the lead partner organisation. Each question will be contextualised by project, based on the available documentation.

ITM Project	
Interviewee Name and Job Title	
Interviewer	
Date	

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Introduce the study, the purpose of the interview and explain confidentiality.
- 1.1.2 Have you been involved in ESF funded projects previously, and if so was this in a 'lead' role?
- 1.1.3 Have you been involved in similar developmental projects before, under ESF or elsewhere?
- 1.1.4 What do you understand as the objectives of the ITM strand? What is it seeking to achieve?
- 1.1.5 What were your expectations of involvement in the strand at the outset, in terms of:
- The benefits that would result from it; and
 - The resources (cash, expertise and time) that would be required?

1.2 Project Overview

- 1.2.1 Please provide an overview of your project. First, can you confirm:
- When your project started, and when was it initially intended to finish?
 - What the initial project budget was – in terms of ESF and match funding?
 - Whether you have applied for an extension? If Yes:
 - Has your extension been approved?
 - Is it for time, additional funding or both?
 - If for funding, any issues associated with securing additional match funding?
 - When will your project complete, and what is the final amount of ESF funding?
 - What will this extension enable you to do?
- 1.2.2 What are the main aims and objectives of your project – and in terms of innovation (what is being trialled), transnationality and mainstreaming?

1.2.3 Who are your key national and transnational partners, and what are their roles?

Partner	UK/Transnational	Summary of Role

1.2.4 Have you worked with your project partners before – was the partnership developed, wholly or in part, specifically for this project?

1.2.5 Overall, did your partners commit to the project and deliver their roles effectively? If any issues, describe and identify any implications/changes resulting.

1.2.6 Is your project currently broadly on profile in terms of expenditure and outputs achieved?

- If No to either, describe any deviation, the reasons for this and the implications for the achievement of the overall project objectives.

1.3 Project Innovation and Delivery

1.3.1 Please describe the innovations you are trialling in your project. For each area of innovation:

- Describe what is being trialled
- How is this new or different?
- Code in terms of:
 - Process, Goal and Context; and
 - Whether they are trialling an existing approach with a new target group/in a new context; trialling a new combination of existing approaches; or trialling a wholly new approach?

1.3.2 Please describe the rationale for the innovations you are trialling. How were the initial concepts developed, and what is the evidence base that underpins them?

1.3.3 Would these innovative approaches have been developed further without ITM funding? If Yes/In-part, explain

1.3.4 Please describe the key features/steps in your project delivery model (or models as relevant). As appropriate to each project, explore:

- The project target groups:
- Is delivery taking place locally, regionally or nationally?
- Key aspects of the delivery model/process, including what is being delivered and how, covering as appropriate:
 - Promotion/raising awareness:
 - Participant engagement:
 - Initial assessment;
 - Participant review: and
 - Participant progression and aftercare:

- 1.3.5 To what extent have your innovative activities proved to be effective to date? What evidence of their effectiveness has been collected to date? For each innovation explore:
- How the innovation has been evaluated (overview of method and findings)?
 - What has worked well and what less well?
 - Where approaches have worked less well, what conclusions did you draw from this and did this change your activities?
- 1.3.6 In your view, which of your activities have the potential for continuation/expanding/replicating elsewhere, either wholly or in part? Describe
- 1.3.7 Have you shared ideas around innovations being trialled with other projects? If so summarise and what were the benefits?

1.4 Transnationality

- 1.4.1 What were your expectations from the transnational partnership element of your project? What did you expect your transnational partners to contribute?
- 1.4.2 How did you identify your transnational partners? Did you know them in advance or recruit specifically, and if the latter what were your experiences of finding transnational partners?
- 1.4.3 What type of activities have you undertaken with your transnational partners? Describe, and seek to characterise by the following variables:
- Getting to know each other/sharing experience
 - Parallel activity/service development
 - Import/export/adoption of innovative approaches
 - Joint project development
 - Exchanges of staff, trainees, etc
- 1.4.4 Were any challenges experienced in delivering your transnational activities?
(If not mentioned, probe specifically for any issues around funding transnational work. How were the transnational partner's activities funded?)
- 1.4.5 What have been the main benefits and key learning points for your project from your transnational work to date? What are the main benefits expected by the end? Explore for:
- Inputs to trialling innovations?
 - New links and new relationships?
 - Experience of transnational working?
- 1.4.6 What have been the main benefits for your transnational partners?
(Identify the project's main transnational partner, collect contact details for interview).
- 1.4.7 How did your transnational work, and the benefits of it, compare to your initial expectations?

1.4.8 In this context, were the benefits of your transnational work worth the resources expended? If not, explain.

1.4.9 Could your innovative activity have been developed without the transnational element of the project? If No, was the transnational element a) essential, or b) not essential but helpful?

1.5 Mainstreaming

1.5.1 What dissemination activities have you been involved in? Probe for information sharing via:

- Attending Thematic Group events – if so which years, which events in 2011 and any involvement with European-level Thematic Networks?
- Engaging directly with national policy influencers – i.e. from Govt Departments and agencies – describe and collect contact details
- Engaging directly with local policy influencers – describe and collect contact details
- Producing and distributing documents/via a project website, etc – if so who/what types of organisations were these distributed to?
- Other routes?

1.5.2 What have been the outcomes of your dissemination activities to date? Probe and explore in detail any mainstreaming impacts achieved or reasonably expected in terms of:

- Influencing national, EU, local or regional policy development?
- Influencing national, EU, local or regional policy delivery?
- Other mainstream impacts.

(Collect contact details for each mainstream impact, for subsequent follow-up).

1.5.3 If no mainstreaming impacts have been identified to date, what does the project expect to achieve in this area by the end of their activities?

1.5.4 To what extent do you consider that these impacts would have been achieved without ITM funding?

1.5.5 What will happen to your project when funding ends? Will any of it be continued, and if so:

- What will be continued/what will be its influences on local delivery?
- Who will deliver what is continued, and how will this be funded?

1.5.6 Are there any plans to continue working with your partners after your project ends? (Esp those you had not worked with before?)

1.5.7 Please describe your experience of the structures established to support projects' mainstreaming efforts – the Thematic Groups. To include:

- The numbers of events attended – from 2009 to 2011;
- Views on their effectiveness as a forum for showcasing projects' achievements;

- Specifically their views on the 2011 events in terms of policy focus
- Whether the Thematic Groups are an effective way of supporting mainstreaming, and could anything about them be improved?

1.5.8 From your experience, what do you consider to be the key challenges to, and key success factors for, effective dissemination and mainstreaming?

1.6 The Role of the ITM Unit

1.6.1 Please summarise your interactions with the ITM Support Unit – what support have they provided to you to date? Provide examples, and explore how/the extent to which the Unit:

- supported/contributed to your innovative approach(es)?.
- supported/contributed to your transnational work?
- supported/contributed to your mainstreaming work (above Thematic Network events)?

1.6.2 Overall, how would you characterise their role in relation to your project – was it to provide support to projects, monitor their performance, or both?

1.6.3 Were you clear on the roles played by the Unit, GO staff and DWP throughout?

1.6.4 How useful were the policy updates? Provide an example of them influencing your work.

1.6.5 Would additional support in any area have been helpful to you?

1.7 And Finally

1.7.1 Across all the areas discussed, and looking to the future, what are the key success factors for programmes seeking to:

- Trial innovative approaches;
- Work on a transnational basis; and
- Influence policy development and delivery

1.7.2 What for you are the main lessons emerging from your ITM experience that should be considered in planning similar activities in the future?

1.7.3 With hindsight, what would you do differently in developing the programme?

Thank and close

Final UK Project Partner Checklist

This checklist has been developed for use with key UK partners in the case study projects. Again, the questions will be contextualised on the basis of the specific project, delivery model and partner inputs identified in the project lead/staff interviews.

ITM Project	
UK Partner	
Interviewer	
Date	

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Introduce the study, the purpose of the interview and explain confidentiality.
- 1.1.2 Have you been involved in any similar ‘innovative/demonstration’ projects in the past?
- 1.1.3 What do you understand as the main objectives of the ITM strand? What is it seeking to achieve?

1.2 Initial Engagement

- 1.2.1 Please briefly describe how you came to be involved in the project – to include:
 - How you first heard of it
 - When did you first hear of it (re. involvement in project development, below)
 - Whether you had worked with the project lead (and other) partners previously
 - What did you expect to contribute to the project – in terms of knowledge, experience, time and resources?
- 1.2.2 What benefits did you expect to realise from your participation?
- 1.2.3 What was your main reason for joining the partnership?

1.3 Involvement to Date

- 1.3.1 What has been your involvement with the project to date? To include:
 - Involvement in developing the project concept/activities prior to project start;
 - Their role in delivery/trialling activities – in detail;
 - Involvement in dissemination/mainstreaming activities – local, national and beyond, attending thematic events, and any contact with individual policy influencers.
 - Any other involvement
- 1.3.2 On the basis of your involvement, what do you consider to be the main innovations that the project is trialling?
- 1.3.3 Do you think that any of the innovations trialled would have been taken forward, wholly or in part, without ITM funding?

- 1.3.4 Have any of the project innovations shown themselves to be effective to date?
- If Yes, describe, and on what evidence is this claim based?
 - If No, do you expect any of the innovations to prove themselves before the end of the project?
- 1.3.5 What has been your involvement in the transnational aspect of the project to date?
- 1.3.6 Could the project’s innovative activity have been developed without the transnational element of the project? If No, was the transnational element a) essential, or b) not essential but helpful?
- 1.3.7 From your perspective, what have been the key inputs to the project, and the benefits attributable to, transnational working?

1.4 Benefits and Impacts

- 1.4.1 Overall, what do you consider to have been the main benefits and impacts resulting from the project to date? In terms of
- Innovation;
 - Transnational working; and
 - Mainstreaming.
- 1.4.2 What have been the main benefits of participation in the project for you to date? To include:
- Learning from participation in project activities;
 - Change/or expected change in your organisation’s operations or policy focus;
 - New partnerships/collaborative relationships formed;
 - Any other benefits.
- 1.4.3 Are any additional benefits expected (overall or for you) before the project ends?
- 1.4.4 Has participation to date resulted in the benefits you expected at the outset?

1.5 Effective Practice, Issues and Challenges

- 1.5.1 From your perspective, which parts of the project worked well and which less so?
- 1.5.2 What were the main challenges experienced, and what were the main enablers?
- 1.5.3 What do you think represent key success factors for innovative transnational programmes such as ITM?

1.6 And Finally

- 1.6.1 (If appropriate) How does your experience of ITM compare to involvement in similar projects previously?
- 1.6.2 If you were starting your project again:
- Is there anything that you would do differently (in terms of your own inputs to the project)?
- Would you change any aspects of the overall programme – and if so which and why?

Thank and close

Final Transnational Partner Checklist

This checklist is to be used in telephone interviews with one transnational partner in each case study project. Where more than one transnational partner has been involved in the project, the partner with the greatest level of involvement to date will be selected.

ITM Project	
Transnational Partner	(include Member State)
Interviewer	
Date	

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Introduce the study, the purpose of the interview and explain confidentiality.
- 1.1.2 Please provide a brief overview of your organisation, its objectives and key activities.
- 1.1.3 Have you been involved in previous ‘demonstration/innovation’ projects before, under ESF or otherwise? If so briefly summarise (e.g. under Equal etc).
- 1.1.4 Have you been involved in previous transnational partnership activities, under ESF or otherwise? If so briefly summarise.

1.2 Initial Engagement – How Did You Come to be Involved?

- 1.2.1 Please summarise how your involvement with the <NAME> project came about. To include:
 - How did you first hear of the <NAME> project? – Probe for when contacted, who by
 - Were you aware of the project, or members of the project partnership, previously? – if so, probe for any previous transnational or other collaborative links.
 - Where you contacted ‘cold’ by the project, or was the relationship brokered by the ITM Unit or others, etc?
- 1.2.2 How does your work relate to the <NAME> project?
- 1.2.3 What were your expectations of involvement with the project at the outset? To include:
 - What benefits did you expect to result?
 - What type and level of input did you expect would be required? – to include level of time, resources, etc
 - What the nature of the partnership activity would be – i.e. were ambitions set at exchanging information, or higher level such as co-production?
 - What did you think the main benefits of your involvement to be for the UK partners?

1.3 Involvement to Date

1.3.1 Please summarise your involvement with the project to date. To include:

- Transnational partnership meetings attended – number, topic coverage and views of effectiveness;
- Visits hosted in home country/attended in the UK;
- Less formal exchange of ideas/learning/experience with the UK partners.

1.3.2 How were your transnational partnership activities resourced?

(Probe for own resources, cash/in-kind support from UK partnership, participation in other Member State-based project activity, etc – and any issues...)

1.4 Benefits and Impacts

1.4.1 What have been the main benefits to you so far from your transnational activities? Are any additional benefits expected before the end of the project?

Describe, probing for impacts including changes to policy/service delivery etc.

1.4.2 Have the benefits realised to date/expected by the end of the project met your expectations? Describe, and why?

1.4.3 What do you consider to have been the main benefits of your involvement for your UK partners? What do you think they got out of it?

1.4.4 Based on both realised and expected benefits, do you consider that your participation in the project was worthwhile compared to the time and resources invested in it?

1.5 Effective Practice

1.5.1 Looking back across your involvement with the project, what do you consider:

- Worked particularly well?
- Worked less well?

1.5.2 *(Depending on the process followed)* How effective did you find the ‘transnational partner’ identification and development process to be?

1.5.3 In your experience, what were the main challenges to your transnational activities?

1.5.4 What were the main enablers?

1.5.5 Do you consider that more could be done to maximise the benefits for all sides of transnational collaboration in programmes such as ITM?

1.6 And Finally

1.6.1 (Where involved in innovation/transnational projects previously) How does your experience under ITM compare to previous experience of similar programmes?

Identify comparative strengths and weaknesses.

1.6.2 If you were developing an innovation-focused programme like ITM in future, what should be its key features from the transnational partnership perspective?

Thank and close

Final Project Participant Checklist

This checklist will be applied in interviews with project participants available on the day of the case study visit. It provides a list of ‘generic’ questions which will be delivered in the context of the individual project, and the participant’s interaction with it.

ITM Project	
Participant	
Interviewer	
Date	

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Introduce the study, the purpose of the interview and explain confidentiality.

1.2 Initial Engagement

1.2.1 How did you first hear of the project?

1.2.2 How did you come to be involved in it? What attracted you to the project initially?

1.2.3 What did you expect to gain from your involvement at the outset?

1.3 Activities to Date

1.3.1 What activities have you undertaken with the project to date?

1.3.2 What inputs/services have been received to date – probing for:

- Their start and expected end dates;
- The nature of the inputs/services received – by:
 - Provision;
 - Support;
 - IAG;
 - Progression;
 - Other.
- Perceptions of the appropriateness and quality of service received; and
- Any issues or challenges experienced.

(If appropriate/relevant to the innovation being trialled, this can be summarised with a concise review of the ‘customer journey’, from initial engagement to time of interview).

1.4 Benefits and Impacts

1.4.1 What have been the main benefits resulting from your involvement with the project to date?

(Set in context of expected outcomes/what is being trialled)

- 1.4.2 Do you expect to gain additional benefits before your involvement with the project ends?
- 1.4.3 Would these benefits/outcomes have been achieved without being involved in the project?
- 1.4.4 How do you expect the benefits realised to be of value in future?
(Contextualise for project activities/known engagement with them – e.g. such as individual progression into/towards work, benefits for organisations, etc.)
- 1.4.5 To what extent have the benefits resulting from your involvement with the project met your initial expectations?

1.5 And Finally

- 1.5.1 Looking back across your involvement with your project:
- What do you think worked well/was most useful to you?
 - What worked less well/was less useful to you?
- 1.5.2 If you were running the project, what would you change about it?
- 1.5.3 What do you think was the main single benefit resulting/expected to result from your involvement?
- 1.5.4 Would you recommend the project to friends or colleagues?

Thanks and Close

A1.3 Project influencers checklists

These checklists have been developed for use with policy influencers either:

- Attending Thematic Group events; or
- Who have engaged directly with projects as part of their dissemination activities.

The checklists share a common introduction, before being presented separately below.

1.1 Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. GHK have been commissioned by DWP to undertake an evaluation of the Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming strand of the ESF 2007-13 programme.

The main aim of the study is to: “...examine the impacts of each of the (ITM) projects, to see what works in terms of moving people closer to the labour market, and whether this is influencing future mainstream policy and policymakers.” Key questions within this broad study aim include:

- How is the ITM strand being delivered – what works well and what could be improved?
- Has the ITM strand as a whole been effective in generating new ideas and influencing policy and delivery?
- What are the key lessons for future innovation and transnational work in the next round of ESF?

The findings from the study will help inform whether this strand has met its objective of influencing policy and delivery development. The results will help to inform how innovative and transnational activity might be taken forward in any future ESF programme, especially in the light of budgetary constraints.

Check contact details:

Name:

Job title:

Organisation:

2 Policy Influencers Attending Thematic Group Events

This checklist will be used with a sample of individuals attending thematic group events, although they will also capture any other information provided through direct contact with projects or via the ITM Unit.

2.1 Understanding of the ITM Strand

2.1.1 Please briefly describe your role and the policy interests of the organisation you represent.

2.1.2 Which of the six themes have you been most interested in?

2.1.3 What did you expect to gain from your involvement?

2.1.4 How do you define innovation? What did you expect the strand to deliver in this regard?

2.1.5 Based on your knowledge of the programme, what are your views on the following:

- The degree of innovation offered by the ITM projects – which do you consider to be particularly innovative? Please provide examples of particularly innovative approaches and what they comprised.
- The role of transnational collaboration in stimulating and facilitating innovation?

2.2 Thematic Group Events and Other Dissemination Work

2.2.1 How many, and which, previous ITM events have you attended? (Check against records)

2.2.2 Have you received information on learning from the ITM projects in any other ways?

Probe for papers received from the ITM Unit, distributed by projects, etc.

2.2.3 Have you engaged directly with any projects – to collect specific learning, visit their trial activities in action, etc? Please describe, including the project name and what the engagement comprised.

2.2.4 Have you been involved in the European Thematic Group work?

2.3 The Information Received

2.3.1 What is your view of the **overall quality** of the information received (through presentations, discussions, papers etc) on the activities of the ITM projects?

2.3.2 In the context of your information needs, is the information received:

- Robust – i.e. evidence based?
- Relevant?
- Appropriate?

- 2.3.3 To what extent does the information received have the potential to:
- Inform the development of new policy?
 - Inform the refinement of existing policy?
 - Inform practice/policy implementation?
 - Inform the wider body of knowledge (i.e. have no immediate utilisation but provides useful information for the future)?
 - Provide new approaches which could be replicated in future?

Collect examples for each.

2.4 Impacts to Date/Mainstreaming

2.4.1 Based on the information received, what have been the main impacts of your involvement to date?

2.4.2 Can you provide any examples where lessons from ITM projects have:

- Informed the development of new policy?
- Informed the amendment/refinement of existing policy?
- Informed the implementation of new or existing policy?
- Led to a new approach being replicated?

Probe each impact cited and confirm the information source (which projects), how acquired (attending events, information from ITM Unit, engaging with projects) and detail the outcome.

2.4.3 What were your expectations of the ITM strand in this regard? Did it exceed or fall below them?

2.4.4 Apart from receiving information from projects, have there been any other benefits from your engagement with the ITM strand? (E.g. new links with organisations/across Departments?)

2.4.5 What are your expectations for the remainder of the ITM strand's activities, in terms of additional information and mainstreaming potential?

2.4.6 To what extent do you consider the transnational aspect of the programme has added value to the work of the projects? Provide examples where available.

2.5 Lessons for the Future

2.5.1 How effective do you think the ITM strand as a whole has been in establishing a series of innovative projects, and effectively communicating their lessons and outcomes?

2.5.2 How effective do you think the Thematic Groups have been in capturing and sharing project lessons to support mainstreaming?

2.5.3 To what extent do you consider that the transnational partnerships fostered under ITM have contributed to the individual project and overall strand activities?

2.5.4 From your perspective, what has worked well, and what less well in terms of the effective sharing of project learning? How could this process be improved?

2.5.5 What are the key lessons from the development and delivery of the ITM strand which could usefully inform future programming?

2.6 And Finally

2.6.1 What future involvement do you expect to have with the ITM programme/individual projects, to ensure all useful learning is collected?

Thank you for your time

3 Policy Influencers – Contact with Projects

This checklist will be used in interviews with local, regional and national policy influencers reported by the projects to have either received information on their activities, or engaged directly with them to capture the lessons from the activities trialled.

The sample development process will allow us to identify where policy influencers have also attended ITM Events (in which case they will be included in the Thematic Group attendee sample).

3.1 Introduction and Awareness

We understand that you have received information from/visited/engaged with (as appropriate) the (NAME) project, led by (LEAD PARTNER, OR CONTACT IF DIFFERENT).

3.1.1 Could you tell me how you first heard about the (NAME) ITM project?

3.1.2 Please briefly describe your role and the policy interests of the organisation you represent.

(Try to align to the six ITM themes)

3.1.3 Have you been involved with any other ITM projects? If so please summarise your links with them (received information, met with project, involved in development/delivery etc).

3.2 Your Involvement with the Project

3.2.1 Please describe your involvement with the (NAME) project, and particularly the information you have received from them.

- What has your involvement been – receiving information; involvement in delivery; etc.
- How did you receive the information from the project – presentations, reports/papers, discussions etc?
- What did the information received cover – policy/activity focus, content etc?
- Have you been involved in any of the transnational work in anyway? Were you aware of the transnational element? If so, and to the best of your knowledge, what did the transnational element contribute to the project and its outcomes to date?

3.2.2 What is your view of the quality of the information received from the project? In the context of your information needs, is the information received:

- Robust – i.e. evidence based?
- Relevant?
- Appropriate?

3.2.3 Please describe the extent to which you consider the project is being truly innovative. Describe how/where the innovation lies, and the extent to which you consider their innovation has proved to be effective.

3.2.4 In your view, to what extent do the lessons from the project have the potential to:

- Inform the development of new policy?
- Inform the refinement of existing policy?

- Inform practice/policy delivery?
- Inform the wider body of knowledge (i.e. have no immediate utilisation but provides useful information for the future)?
- Provide new approaches which could be replicated in future?

Collect examples for each.

3.3 Impacts to Date/Mainstreaming

3.3.1 What have been the impacts of the information received/your involvement to date? How have you used the information received?

3.3.2 Can you provide any examples where lessons from the project have:

- Informed the development of new policy?
- Informed the amendment/refinement of existing policy?
- Informed the delivery of new or existing policy?
- Led to a new approach being replicated?

Probe each impact cited and confirm the information source (which projects), how acquired (attending events, information from ITM Unit, engaging with projects) and detail the outcome.

3.3.3 Apart from the information received, have there been any other benefits resulting you're your involvement with the project? If so please describe (e.g. new contacts/partnerships, awareness raising on specific issues, etc)?

3.3.4 What are your expectations for the remainder of the project's activities, in terms of additional information and mainstreaming potential?

3.3.5 To what extent do you consider that the transnational element of the project has added value and supported any innovation resulting? Provide illustrations/examples.

3.4 Lessons for the Future

3.4.1 How effective has the (NAME) project been in communicating its lessons and outcomes?

- To your knowledge, have they been contacting the right people?
- Was their communication with you effective?
- Could anything be improved?

3.4.2 To your knowledge, how effective do you consider that the ITM programme has been overall in helping projects to mainstream new approaches which are considered to be effective?

Thank you for your time

Appendix B

Project performance data

Table B.1 ITM projects – Priority 1 and 4 – participation and achievements at November 2011

Theme	Project Title	Participation/Characteristics				Achievements		
		Total Participation	Unemployed	Economically Inactive	14-19 NEET	In Work on Leaving	14-19 NEET into EET	
Active Inclusion (AI)	Target	356	248, 70%	108, 30%	0, 0%	89, 25%	0, 0%	
	Achieved	298	98, 33%	157, 53%	10, 3%	25, 21%	2, 25%	
New Pathways to Work in West London	Target	1,180	118, 10%	1,062, 90%	0, 0%	130, 11%	0, 0%	
	Achieved	818	533, 65%	207, 25%	42, 5%	15, 16%	3, 100%	
Working Better (Merseyside)	Target	1,325	475, 36%	725, 55%	79, 6%	390, 29%	113, 143%	
	Achieved	1,087	934, 86%	42, 4%	24, 2%	97, 16%	4, 29%	
What Works	Target	1,500	1,125, 75%	375, 25%	0, 0%	450, 30%	0, 0%	
	Achieved	511	425, 83%	66, 13%	17, 3%	98, 72%	2, 67%	
The Aim Partnership	Target	100	100, 100%	100, 100%	10, 10%	20, 20%	8, 80%	
	Achieved	29	19, 66%	1, 3%	2, 7%	13, 59%	1, 50%	
Demographic Change (DC)	Target	854	157, 18%	308, 36%	0, 0%	44, 5%	0, 0%	
	Achieved	184	137, 74%	14, 8%	0, 0%	31, 100%	0, 0%	
	Target	225	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
	Achieved	382	111, 29%	52, 14%	0, 0%	212, 59%	0, 0%	
Flexible Lives for Older Workers	Target	170	20, 12%	10, 6%	0, 0%	160, 94%	0, 0%	
	Achieved	188	20, 11%	13, 7%	0, 0%	102, 80%	0, 0%	
WorkAge – Extending Working Lives	Target	315	135, 43%	105, 33%	0, 0%	48, 15%	0, 0%	
	Achieved	378	301, 80%	33, 9%	0, 0%	45, 13%	0, 0%	

Continued

Table B.1 Continued

Theme	Project Title	Participation/Characteristics				Achievements		
		Total Participation	Unemployed	Economically Inactive	14-19 NEET	In Work on Leaving	14-19 NEET into EET	
Engaging with Employers (EE)	Host Borough Employment Offer	Target	2,800	1,440, 51%	1,440, 51%	0, 0%	1,152, 41%	0, 0%
		Achieved	2,589	2,080, 80%	287, 11%	198, 8%	752, 100%	93, 100%
	Employer Engagement and Leadership	Target	200	200, 100%	50, 25%	50, 25%	160, 80%	40, 80%
		Achieved	235	199, 85%	1, 0%	26, 11%	27, 100%	4, 100%
	The Virtual Jobs Hub – no data available	Target						
		Achieved						
	Graduate Employability Support Programme	Target	1,597	145, 9%	1,452, 91%	0, 0%	464, 29%	0, 0%
		Achieved	1,665	406, 24%	789, 47%	19, 1%	125, 50%	0, 0%
	Employers for Employment Project	Target	1,143	955, 84%	83, 7%	105, 9%	293, 26%	35, 33%
		Achieved	1,053	740, 70%	50, 5%	165, 16%	135, 52%	20, 47%
ICT and the Digital Divide (ICT)	The Digital Activist Inclusion Network (DAIN)	Target	100	50, 50%	0, 0%	15, 15%	30, 30%	12, 80%
		Achieved	1,850	874, 47%	658, 36%	18, 1%	0, 0%	0, 0%
	Target	1,300	195, 15%	260, 20%	65, 5%	780, 60%	15, 23%	
	Achieved	3,892	1,711, 44%	1,067, 27%	139, 4%	152, 6%	89, 79%	

Continued

Table B.1 Continued

Theme	Project Title	Participation/Characteristics				Achievements		
		Total Participation	Unemployed	Economically Inactive	14-19 NEET	In Work on Leaving	14-19 NEET into EET	
Social Enterprise (SE)	Employment, Education and Enterprise in Northamptonshire	Target	1,200	1,152, 96%	48, 4%	396, 33%	480, 40%	277, 70%
		Achieved	1,060	718, 68%	53, 5%	242, 23%	268, 41%	68, 46%
	Steps to Success (Merseyside)	Target	500	400, 80%	95, 19%	5, 1%	250, 50%	4, 80%
		Achieved	502	278, 55%	2, 0%	22, 4%	202, 56%	3, 21%
	Catalyst Pluss	Target	129	45, 35%	84, 65%	13, 10%	39, 30%	11, 85%
		Achieved	66	35, 53%	14, 21%	2, 3%	11, 34%	0, 0%

Source: ESF Monitoring Data to November 2011, where data is available and including Cornwall Convergence projects.

Table B.2 ITM projects – Priority 2 and 5 – participation and achievements at November 2011

Theme	Project Title	Total Participation	Participation/Characteristics				Achievements		
			With basic skills needs	Without Level 2 qualification	Without Level 3 qualification	Gained basic skills	Gained Level 2 qualification	Gained Level 3 qualification	
Demographic Change (DC)	Cornwall Works 50+ Cares	70	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
		410	63, 15%	30, 7%	48, 12%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
	Changing People	400	50, 13%	50, 13%	30, 8%	20, 40%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
		473	52, 11%	16, 3%	68, 14%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
	Ageless at Work	300	40, 13%	50, 17%	150, 50%	0, 0%	110, 220%	0, 0%	
		138	4, 3%	0, 0%	4, 3%	0, 0%	4, 100%	0, 0%	
Engaging with Employers (EE)	The Essex Apprentice	120	20, 17%	120, 100%	120, 100%	20, 100%	100, 83%	10, 8%	
		165	1, 1%	72, 44%	70, 42%	0, 0%	136, 100%	0, 0%	
	New Employer Engagement/DUAL System (Merseyside)	119	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
		32	0, 0%	1, 3%	1, 3%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
ICT and the Digital Divide (ICT)	Creating E Business Champions	200	0, 0%	0, 0%	100, 50%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
		122	12, 10%	4, 3%	13, 11%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	

Continued

Table B.2 Continued

Theme	Project Title	Target	Total Participation	Participation/Characteristics				Achievements		
				With basic skills needs	Without Level 2 qualification	Without Level 3 qualification	Gained basic skills	Gained Level 2 qualification	Gained Level 3 qualification	
Skills for Climate Change (SCC)	Clear About Carbon	Target	110	0, 0%	10, 9%	15, 14%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
		Achieved	159	2, 1%	0, 0%	1, 1%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
	Skills for Climate Change W M	Target	940	97, 10%	110, 12%	305, 32%	0, 0%	30, 27%	120, 39%	
		Achieved	283	78, 28%	5, 2%	28, 10%	0, 0%	159, 100%	63, 100%	
	GreenWays to Work	Target	310	30, 10%	50, 16%	30, 10%	40, 133%	65, 130%	0, 0%	
		Achieved	1,261	31, 2%	51, 4%	78, 6%	0, 0%	276, 100%	54, 70%	
(Newham)	Eco Advantage	Target	720	480, 67%	432, 60%	504, 70%	144, 30%	36, 8%	36, 7%	
		Achieved	474	46, 10%	96, 20%	46, 10%	0, 0%	17, 13%	0, 0%	
	Skills for Climate Change									
	Target	300	0, 0%	120, 40%	0, 0%	0, 0%	60, 50%	30, 0%	0, 0%	
	Low Carbon Living and Working									
	Achieved	72	72	4, 6%	30, 42%	38, 53%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
Social Enterprise (SE)	Social Enterprise Leadership Project	Target	500	150, 30%	225, 45%	75, 15%	115, 77%	58, 26%	75, 100%	
		Achieved	42	13, 31%	29, 69%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
	Social Enterprise Leadership Project	Target	24	0	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	
		Achieved	25	0	2, 8%	2, 8%	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	

Source: ESF Monitoring Data to November 2011, where data is available and including Cornwall Convergence projects.

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand of the 2007 to 2013 European Social Fund (ESF) programme for England and Gibraltar. The report is based on the findings of a telephone survey of 20 ITM projects and in-depth case study fieldwork with the remaining 12, and a programme of stakeholder and policy influencer interviews.

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For more information see: www.esf.gov.uk

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