



Routeways To Employment:

For People With Learning Difficulties And Or Other Disabilities

“The Routeways to Employment project is an ambitious undertaking, which was able to support in the development of skills for sustainable employment for many of its beneficiaries.”

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Background

The Routeways to employment project is an ambitious undertaking, supported through the LSC (as was) and ESF co-financed. The project was initially due to run from May 2008, but began in September 2008 due to late allocation of funds. The programme has been funded for a two year period.

In acknowledgment of the fact that many young adults with learning difficulties and/or other disabilities (LLDD) find themselves excluded from training and employment opportunities, the main aim of the programme is to enhance sustainable employment opportunities for those categorized as LLDD. Sustainable employment within the context of the Routeways project constitutes jobs for over 13 weeks duration.

Building on good practice, working in partnership and operating through 5 key Routeway stages, the programme develops employment skills in young people and adults enabling them to access sustainable employment with employers and businesses from a broad range of sectors. The programme also works alongside current learning and skills providers who deliver to LLDD learners with the aim of identifying progression opportunities into sustainable employment.

Routeways Stages for Adult Learners

In order to reach its ambitious targets linked to learner engagement, employer training, and creating sustainable employment opportunities, the programme is delivered through the following 5 key stages:

- Information, advice and guidance and initial assessment
- Pre-employment training, core skills development and preparation for employment and work placement
- Support for learners who are preparing for work, including developing skills linked to interview readiness
- Additional support to sustain employment including 'on the job' development activities.
- Advice guidance and information linked to career progression and sustainable employment including continued support, where necessary, through to full Level 2.

Focus of the Evaluation

As noted above, the success of the Routeways programme is very much dependent on a number of specific factors, including:

- an effective and pro-active management team,
- robust and tailored learner support, including effective and well resourced Job Coaches
- successful identification of appropriate learning and employment opportunities
- good partnership arrangement with prospective employers
- Good over all take up by prospective employers (and partners) of training opportunities which aim to raise awareness of equality and diversity matters linked to LLDD.

The focus of the evaluation was on the extent to which the routeways programme has realized its initial aims and ambitions. This necessitated employing a range of research, methodologies as identified below, aiming to assess programme success, challenges and impact.

Aims of the evaluation

- To establish how successful the programme has been when set against its original aims and objectives
- To examine processes and specific issues and challenges encountered when working with learners categorized as LLDD
- To assess the impact (if any) of public sector cuts on the Routeways programme
- To high-light best practice through the programme linked to individual learner experience
- To high-light best employment and training practices
- To assess the role and effectiveness of Career Coaches
- To establish the overall effectiveness of partnerships. Including those between programme board members, employers and trainers and support agencies such as Job Centre + and Connexions.

It should be noted that while the evaluation maintained a close focus on its initial aims, as the evaluation progressed it became apparent that some aims necessitated a closer examination than others, the impact of the project set against its original objectives

for example. This was due to two main reasons: firstly, time constraints. There was a limit to what could be achieved given the length of time available to complete the evaluation; secondly, the complexity of the project. The Routeways project is an extensive initiative with a potential for working with up to 500 adult learners and a significant number of partners. However, in order to get a fully rounded picture of how effective the project has been, a range of research methodologies were used to measure the qualitative and quantitative impact of the project and to acquire sample views from a broad range of people, including partners, beneficiaries and project management group.

Research Methodology

A number of research methodologies were employed for this evaluation which can be described as both qualitative and quantitative. Because of the size of the Routeways project and the limitations in relation to the scope of the evaluation, the approach taken was to sample both beneficiaries and partners and to cross reference information gleaned from, for example, focus group meetings with that collated from quantitative methods such as surveys.

Qualitative

1. Two focus group meetings were hosted with adult learners who had benefitted from the Routeways programme.
2. An impromptu focus group meeting was held with a (limited) number of project partners
3. Good practice case studies were drawn from organisations and individuals associated with Routeways. These were identified from focus group meetings and from suggestions made by Routeways project coordinator.
4. A number of semi structured telephone interviews were conducted with project beneficiaries, employers and partners. These have formed the basis of the case studies included in this report.
5. One-to-one interviews were conducted with focus group participants in order to enhance data and acquire further information for case studies.

Quantitative

1. Electronic questionnaires were administered to all past and present beneficiaries through Survey Monkey – given that some Routeways participants have specific learning difficulties, this meant that they were not necessarily in a position to complete on-line questionnaires unassisted. The success of this approach very much depended on certain learners being supported and encouraged to engage in this activity with other group members.
2. A statistical analysis was carried out on information collated from this activity. Participants in focus group meetings were also asked to complete questionnaires. These were analyzed alongside the electronic questionnaires – questions contained in both were the same.

Focus group meetings

Two focus group meetings were held back to back at the Greenbank College; approximately 34 learners were in attendance for these meetings. In addition one Career Coach was in attendance as were a number of other individuals from Mencap and Network Employment who were present in a supportive capacity. Although the focus was on the needs of the learners and their experience, comments and views of support staff were also noted and have been taken into considering in the appropriate sections of this report.

Each focus group meeting ran for approximately 2 hours (see programme appendix 3). The first part of the programme focused on what the Routeways project aimed to achieve, this was important as not all learners were aware of what the Routeways project was, and for some this was bound to be the case since some, while benefiting from training and support and employment opportunities, were not necessarily directly related to the Greenbank project and would not have necessarily known that the project that they were benefitting from was called Routeways.

The introduction to the session was also an opportunity to explain the focus of the evaluation and to explore the following ideas:

1. Distance travelled and exploring the notion that achievement in educational and personal development terms is specific to the individual and has to be measured as such.
2. The extent to which the project, or specific intervention/training opportunity was able to meet specific needs.

It was also an opportunity to gain information on the broad range of training and employment initiatives that participants were involved in.

Focus group members were asked to form into small groups (four groups in each of the two focus group sessions) and to identify one person to take notes and another to report back to the wider group. All responses were recorded and have been presented in the appendices to this report (Appendices 2).

All focus group members were asked the following:

1. What have been the most positive aspects/experiences that you have had as part of the Routeways project
2. Are there any aspects of the Routeways project that can be improved? Do you have any recommendations?

Routeways Benefits

In terms of project benefits, there were approximately 65 responses which fell onto three general categories which were as follows:

- Instrumental - Routeways involvement being a practical means to an instrumental end
- Practical - Routeways offering skills development and opportunities to acquire qualifications
- Social Skills-Routeways offering useful “softer” skill
- Support – this was particularly important given that fact that ALL Routeways participants have a learning difficulty and/or disability

Instrumental

Of all respondents, only 4 identified instrumental reasons as the most important positive aspects of the Routeways project. Also note that these respondents all identified other positive aspects to Routeways in addition to instrumental benefits. After further discussion with these respondents, it was clear that they had all been out of work for significant periods of time, or not been in employment at all. This meant that having a job or being paid a training subsidy helped them to gain a level of self worth. Typical responses were:

“Getting paid through the project helped me to develop a sense of self worth”

“I like my financial independence, I like getting paid and I like the self worth that this has helped me to feel. This new independence has also supported me in developing my social skills”.

“Being on the project has helped me to develop my fund raising skills”.

“I like working and developing every week, I also like getting paid”

Practical

There were approximately 26 responses which could be described as practical. These related to a broad range of situations relating to qualifications and acquiring practical skills in order to carry out specific job related tasks. One of the most important aims of the Routeways project was to help beneficiaries to gain basic skills and qualifications to enable them to better compete for employment opportunities, there was significant evidence that, amongst the focus group sample at least, that this aim had been realized.

Practical responses to the question of the positive value of the Routeways project also illustrated the broad range of education intervention and training opportunities/initiatives that beneficiaries were taking advantage of. Typical responses included the following:

“The most positive aspect of my involvement on the project was gaining my qualifications in English and Maths”.

“I was really pleased that I was able to gain my ECDL and CLAIT qualifications”

“My office experience at the Greenbank was excellent! The training aspect was varied and very beneficial”

“I was able to develop a range of new skills and become more organised”.

“Building up my interview and job search skills and working on my CV”

“I really appreciated the support in getting new qualifications and certificates”.

“Being able to access education and to learn at my own pace”

“To develop my skills in relation to working and the work place, application support and learning about team working – learning new things generally”.

Communication was mentioned by a number of people as being a positive aspect of the Routeways project. Through an in-depth reading of responses, it is clear that communication has a very precise meaning given the specific education needs of the learners in question. Several members of each focus group meeting had hearing impairments and signers were present for each. Therefore, participants identified that developing communication skills was important, in terms of CV writing, giving presentations and in being able to work as part of a team. They also noted the importance of good communication between themselves and various organisations, including the Greenbank College and the

importance of Routeways and various linked initiatives in helping provide support, signers for example, to enable communication and participation.

Social Skills

Approximately 25 respondents identified benefits from Routeways which can broadly be described social skills development. One of the most frequently used words during both focus group meetings was the word “confidence”. Typically, and especially for those participants who had never been in an education or employment setting as an adult, or had not been in these settings for long periods of time, Routeways provided support and opportunities for such adults to interact with others and develop their social skills.

Typical responses in this category related also to opportunities afforded to meet new people, to work with others and to education and training providing an incentive to “get out of bed”, demonstrating both the importance of the Routeways project in combating isolation and the fundamental differences in the starting points of various learners. So that while some Routeways participants were highly qualified people who may have been suffering, or who had recently suffered from a mental disability, others had been isolated as adults and been virtually written off. In this context providing “a reason to get out of bed” becomes a significant measure of progress.

Responses included:

“Being able to talk to new people was really positive for me”

“I was glad to be able to meet new people and to be able to become more independent”

“I was glad of the support and help of others and of the fact that they were interested in me”

“It was good to be in a position to help others”

“I appreciated the fact that I was able to get out of the house and keep myself busy”

“My project helped me to see a way forward...to realise my dreams and potential”

“I liked the continuity and working with people and getting to know them”

Support

Several focus group respondents made reference to the individual support that they had had on the Routeways project, either on the job or in accessing education and training opportunities. A number mentioned the role of the Career Coach. The initial proposal for the Routeways project identified the importance of learner support to the success of the project. And noted:

“(Learner Support) can cover a multitude of issues: learning styles and pace, mentors, transport, portfolio assistance, IAG and access to specialist support depending on need through an understanding of wider issues that may affect the learner”.

The initial project proposal also mentions the importance of Career Coaches and identifies their specific role in supporting learners into education and training (see case study) several focus group members identified that Career Coaches had played an important role in advising of employment and training opportunities and in putting a number of mechanism into place in order to facilitate access. The Career Coach role here ranged from ensuring the availability of transport when it was needed to acting as the main point of contact advocating on the part of the learner in relation to employment and training opportunities.

Typical responses in this area included:

“I had a high level of support from my Coach”

“I had a lot more on the job support as compared to what I have received from other organisations.”

“I had support which meant that I was able to find the right training – I was able to access this and move forward as a result”

“I had various support with my job searches – this helped me to be able to see the wood for the trees”.

Participants from supporting organizations such as Network Employment, Mencap and Neurosupport also commented on how the project had positively impacted on them and on their role. Typical comments were:

“I enjoyed sharing responsibilities between my clients and the service”

“One of the most positive aspects of the project for me has been in seeing people grow in self confidence”

“For me it’s important to see clients grow in self confidence, and I’ve seen a lot of this”

Routeways: Area for Improvement

In terms of areas for improvement, there were approximately 41 responses. These were wide and varied with some contradicting points made in part one of the focus group meeting (lack of communication, not enough qualifications offered etc). Most responses related to support for beneficiaries than any other area, with there being a number of specific areas mentioned. These included more support for people with hearing impairments through the provision of interpreters, and more training for staff in sign language and in understanding deaf culture.

Responses can be broken down into the following categories:

- Instrumental/Practical areas for improvement
- External factors – changes that participants would like, but which are largely beyond the control and scope of the project
- Support – linked to both learning and employment
- Qualifications – areas where the number and or level of qualifications could be broadened.

Instrumental/practical area

One of the important areas of support noted in the initial project plan for Routeways was transport. This was seen as especially important since it was anticipated that a number of beneficiaries would have transport and mobility issues and would therefore need to be provided with support in order to take advantage of education, employment and placement opportunities.

Note that some of the points below need to be read with a note of caution. Some beneficiaries were, for example encouraged to take advantage of public transport to aid in their independence, they were trained in order to prepare them for this. Also some beneficiaries were entitled to support with travel, with bus passes for example, but were not necessarily aware of this.

Note that a significant minority of focus group participants did not think that the project could be improved in any way with one stating:

“It is very difficult to find fault...my specific needs were well met, the support that I had was good too! All the people that I worked with and supported me showed a good level of empathy and understanding”

The following comments refer to were common areas which were identified as being either under-developed, or in need of improvement:

“There could be more transport, this would mean that we could get to placements more easily”

“Bus passes would be useful, it would mean that I could get to the College by myself and be more independent”.

“It would be good if I was paid for what I am doing” (learner at the Greenbank College)

“I think that the project would be better if I had a higher wage” (learner who was employed through the Routeways project.)

External factors

Because it was not possible to have detailed discussions with all respondents, it was not always clear whether an area for improvement could have been facilitated, or enabled through the Routeways project or staff. However, it may be that in some cases Routeways staff; Job Coaches for example, may have been in a position to negotiate working conditions, pay and hours with employers. The following issues were identified:

“I would like to have worked more hours on my job”

“To be treated the same as other workers”

“I don’t think that the facilities at work were very good, I think that they should have been improved”.

“My office could have been better laid out, that way it would have made my work easier”

“Job Centres etc should have better links with the project. It should be more proactive in making people aware of opportunities”

“Too many organisations are outcomes focused. They see the target, but miss the point, what about the individual? Organisations can be too focused on outcomes rather than on the needs of clients. There should be a greater consideration of softer outcomes for a project like this.”

It should be noted that Job Coaches were able to negotiate working conditions in terms of reasonable adjustments for disabled learners (changes in application process, physical barriers and structure of working day) but they had no control over pay rates or contract hours.

Support – linked to both learning and employment

There were 14 comments that related specifically to the need for more support on the project. These were varied and range from support whilst out on placement to support in the classroom to support to meet specific educational needs/requirements. Participants made the following comments:

“More support would be beneficial whilst out on placement”

“There needs to be proper support and guidance whilst out on placement (gardening)

“There should be improved links to people who may be excluded from being on the project through lack of confidence and initiative. The project may not reach all, so better outreach provision would be useful”.

“More support staff in all the relevant boroughs participating in the project would be really useful”

“The project could have had better signposting, to the sports academy for example (Greenbank College) to opportunities to gain more qualifications, training and placements.”

“I think that communications could have been improved (e-mails, letters, telephone etc) this applies to the Greenbank college, and the Future jobs fund”

“I would have liked to have had continued support, even after I gained employment”

Qualifications

One of the main aims of the Routeways project was to support participants in gaining a range of qualifications to support them in accessing sustainable employment. It was, however, clear from the focus group discussion and the points that arose from this that a significant number of people would have liked to have taken advantage of a wide range of learning experiences. It was also apparent from those participants that raised the issue of qualifications that they were interested in having the opportunity of gaining accreditation at the highest level. See below a selection of comments relating to qualifications:

“I would like to have had the opportunity to take advantage of more and better qualifications because this would have led to better employment opportunities”

“More and varied training would have been good”

“I did not have the opportunity of gain ECDL”

“Their should have been more training geared toward meeting individual needs”

“I would have appreciated a greater variety of qualifications”

“More varied training and volunteering which lead to qualifications and better work opportunities”

Beneficiaries

The focus of the following interview was on the relationship between employment and being prepared for jobs, and how the Routeways project was able to meet the needs of individual learners. The following case study has been drawn from the experience of a learner that had previously been in a high profile job. However due to pressure from his job, brought about as a result of the economic recession, he found it difficult to cope in what being came a highly competitive target driven environment. He explains:

Case Study 1

"It sort of came about because I have a nephew who is wheelchair bound and he attends the Greenbank – they have a basket ball team and he got involved in this. He has been involved from a young age, he's 20 now. I used to come along and watch him play. This is how I became aware of what the college does; it's not just a basket ball centre. I have another nephew who has Aspergers Syndrome, he is in his 30s and he does catering. It's through them that I came in touch with the Greenbank.

I have done a number of things through the Greenback College, including doing some voluntary work at Speke Hall for the National Trust – this was for a day a week – this was for about 12 months.

I have been impressed with the support network that has been available for me. This is from a number of service providers including the Greenbank, Retain and Regain (helping people retain their current employment or to gain fresh employment) was also very helpful, as was the local authority.

Greenbank has supported me in gaining new opportunities. My first employment when I left university was in working for Liverpool John Moores University on a technical project, this was administrative. Then I ended up becoming assistant manager – it was funded through the European Regional Development Fund (1995). The job involved supporting a centre out in knowsley which was in the process of developing an IT suit. I was

doing demonstrations on how good e-mail was. Part of the job also included marketing video conferencing and its technical capability and possibilities. I was also promoting e-commerce, and was involved in inviting a local school to witness what this new technology could do, and then in selling it to them! We would explore video conference with NASA and museums around the world.

After this, I went on an IBM course and become very technical, I learned how to manage and run a network. When this project came to an end I was “head-hunted” by a video conferencing company in London. For 9 years I worked for them, demonstrating and selling technical equipment all over Europe. I also got involved in installations etc. Then I went over to marketing this equipment. We then suffered from the recession, our work become more target driven then this became too much pressure for me....it made me very ill.

I was made redundant.....Greenbank made me aware of what they did; they came out and had a chat with me. I was sort of informally interviewed. They have made me aware of job opportunities. They looked at my CV and helped me with that. I was given support in a range of ways, morally, and in terms of skills and in terms of confidence.

At this very point in time I am finding out if I have got a job in Jaguar. I was taken through a five step interview process to get this far. This included psychometric testing, agility etc and a face to face. After I was interviewed I was told that I was in the top 200 of all people who had applied to work in Jaguar. 13,000 people applied to work there, 2000 were interviewed and 1,500 people will be employed, so I am very hopeful. I will know by December and hope to be starting work in January.

I have always had an interest in Jaguar's I have a classic Jaguar in my garage and take it out for a spin occasionallymy Career Coach knew this. I wasn't the kind of thing that I thought I'd go for, but I am really happy with this. I am currently keeping my options open in terms of what I do in the future. The Jaguar thing has been going on for months now what with preparation, tests and interview and I have been focusing on this....but I have had lots of support all the way.

I think that I probably over researched when I went for my final interview, but I think that I had some good questions, and I was definitely ready!”

Learner Case Study 2

Donna (not her real name) suffered from a lack of confidence before she started on the Routeways project, and although she still needs support she manages to come to work on a part time basis every day and does a job of work at the Greenbank College. Donna has been employed for several months and will have completed six months of continuous employment by the time she finishes her contract.

Donna explains:

"I first came on the Greenbank project in August. I was doing the cleaning at first, sinks and things like that. Shelly put me on to this. I knew Shelly from a job in St Thomas's hotel. (She was a cleaner). The Greenbank is much better though. In St Thomas's the people were not as friendly, here they are and I get support every day that I come into work.

I do 25 hours a week for five days, 10.-2.00pm. I work mainly in the sports academy – there are people doing this work with me, two more cleaners. Sometimes the three of us work together, but sometimes one of us is off. It's great to be able to work with other people and having friends and people around me makes the job very interesting. I also get on well with the people who come into the Greenbank project – I take pride in my work.

For me things are much better since I got the job here, I have really enjoyed working with people. It has also had a big impact on how confident I am. I also get paid, this is very useful. This has meant that I have been able to save, with Christmas coming up this has been great.

I am really looking forward to the work Christmas party; this will be a meal and a disco.

I have a Polish support worker, I see her from Monday – Wednesday. I see her from about 10.00am-2.00 pm. While I am doing my job she talks to me and helps when it's necessary.

Because I have been doing this job for a few months, I am used to the routine, but I can honestly say that I look forward to going into work every day. I used to think about work very differently. This is mainly because I had no support and the people I worked with were not friendly."

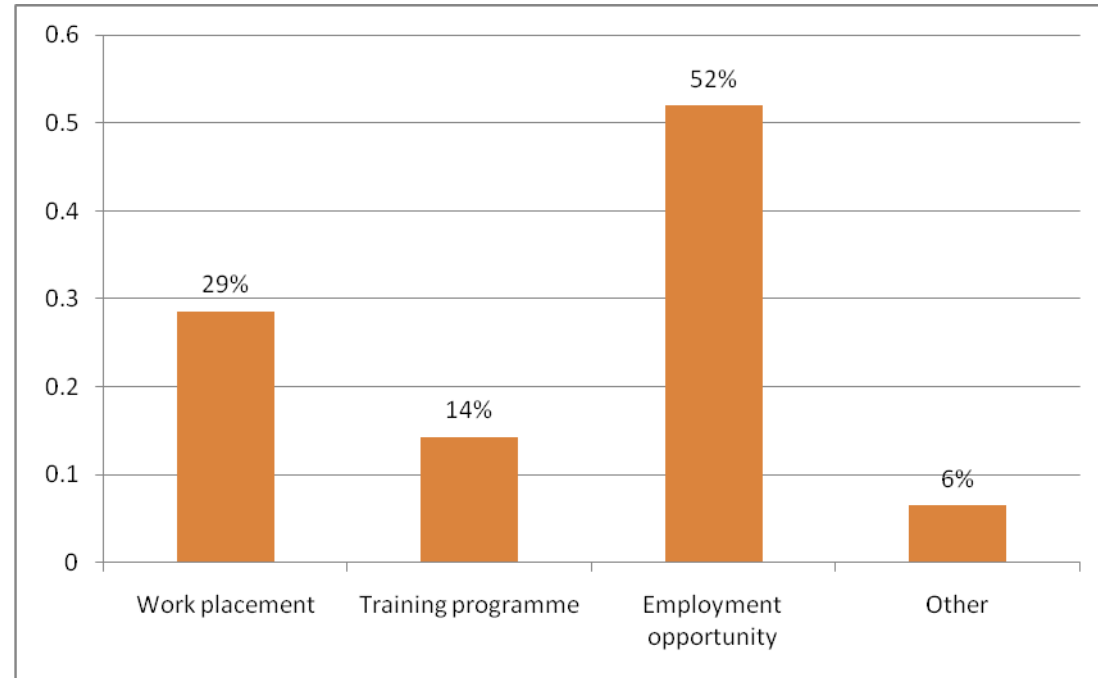
Quantitative research and analysis

As indicated above (research methodology) an important way of gaining meaningful information on the Routeways project was through carrying out quantitative research. This was done over a period of approximately four weeks. The following information and analysis is based on 77 respondents, this represents approximately 25% of all people who participated in the project.

Most of the questions which formed the questionnaire were closed; this meant that it was possible to draw the response to these questions in the form of bar charts. Where questions were open, respondent's comments have been included. Each question is analyzed separately with a number of conclusions being drawn from the total number of questions.

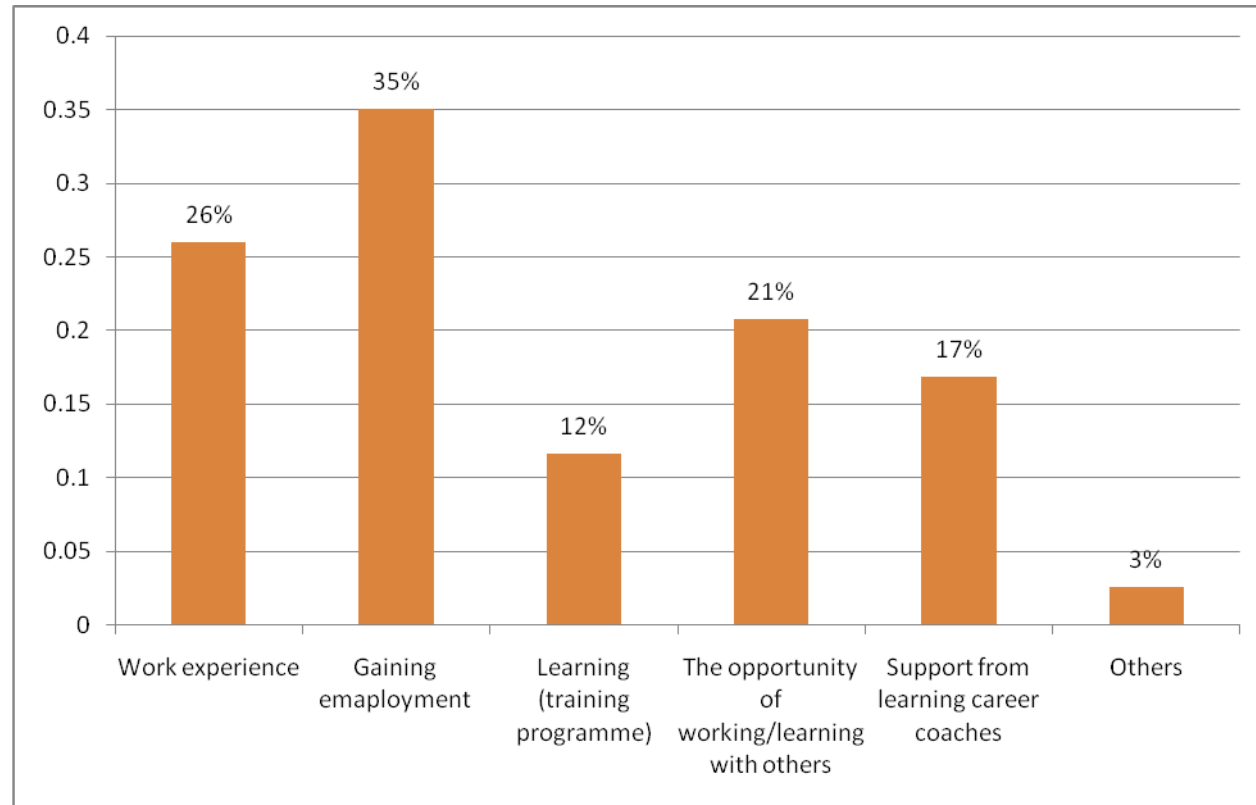
Routeways To Employment:

Total Number of Responses		77	
Question 1	Options	Number	%age
Please identify the programme that you were on	Work placement	22	29%
	Training programme	11	14%
	Employment opportunity	40	52%
	Other	5	6%

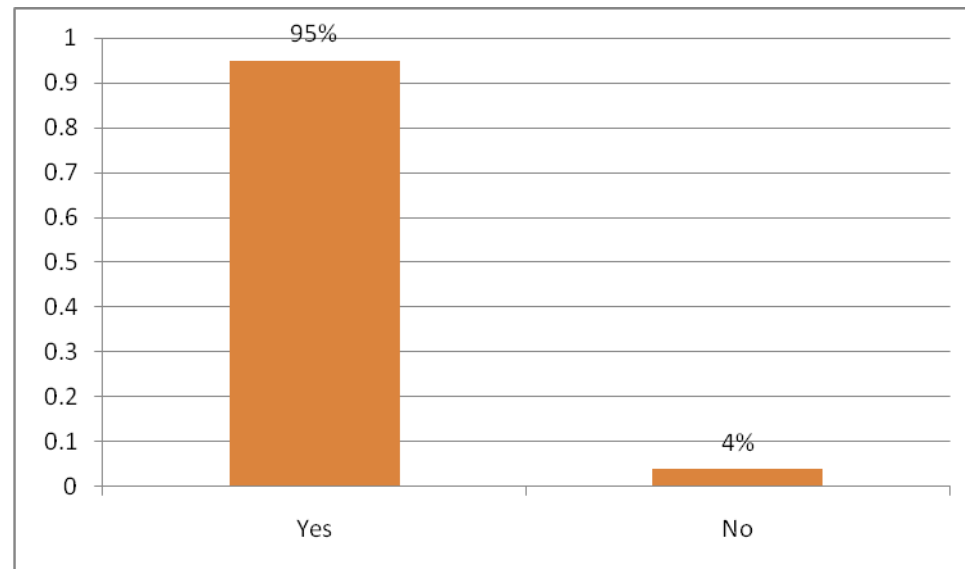


Routeways To Employment:

Question 2	Options	Number	%age
What was the most rewarding/enjoyable aspect of your experience	Work experience	20	26%
	Gaining employment	27	35%
	Learning (training programme)	9	12%
	The opportunity of working/learning with others	16	21%
	Support from learning career coaches	13	17%
	Others	2	3%



Question 3	Options	Number	%age
Did your programme successfully meet your needs and expectations?	Yes	73	95%
	No	3	4%



Question 4 Please explain your answer	I have had the opportunity to rebuild my confidence after leaving education and look into job opportunities
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Routeways To Employment:

I did not have the right clothing for weeks and I was left with a woman's coat for week. Some staff members were laughing at me. I had to work on and in the freezer for 3 weeks without protective clothing
Got paid work
Had work placement
It met all my needs and expectations to be confident in everything I do
Getting to interviews and what to say and how to turn up
I gained employment and gained new skill
Learning How to set up our own Young Persons Group
I gaining work experience and staff have supported me when I have needed
Got me into paid employment & achieve my goal
I have joined MOWLL through Routeways
My needs are ongoing as my objective is to return to work. Therefore, ongoing support from career coaches is important
The course has given me confidence which will be used in all aspects of my life and in future too.
Found everybody really interesting people to work with
Enjoyed some of the work
I have paid job now (25 hours/week). Everyone in Greenbank College treat me with respect
I gained further qualifications & employment
Feeling it's worth and confidence. Learning more
I fee good and confidence
It helped me a lot to develop self confidence and also knowing there are people out there to contact and support when needed and meeting people.
It did meet my needs I would like to have worked on my placement longer
More support may have been helpful
I have successfully attended interview and practical test with a potential employer
Yes the project found me a work placement and employment outcome.

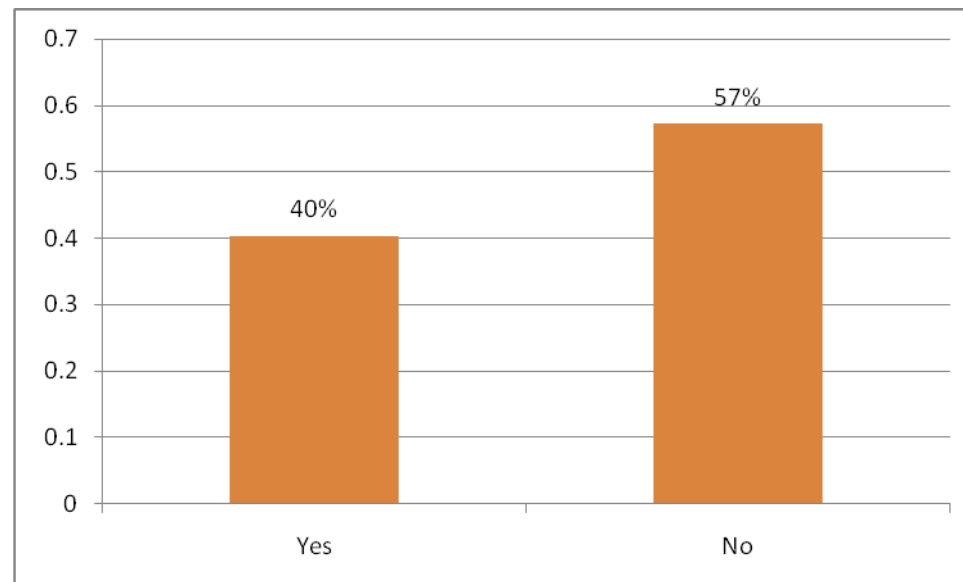
Routeways To Employment:

The project helped me to secure employment with FJF
I felt the support staff within the programme were very supportive and went out of their way to help me achieve my objective.
Yes the programme met my needs and expectations.
I was supported throughout my placement.
Yes, it gave me the opportunity to gain experience on setting up a young persons group from scratch.
Through routeways I was put in touch with Network who worked with myself and my family. Network set up interview and I successfully gained employment
I was supported even better than I expected, and it eventually led to permanent employment.
Helped me to work toward finding work again as I had been out of work due to health reasons for over 3 years and this give a chance to see what it would be like to try out work part time without losing my benefits and having support while trying to see if I could cope with a routine again
Gave me a chance to learn and try out new ways to work. Also just being in a routine again really helped me to prepare for work
I was working for moving on with life and learning via routeways.
Routeways has supported me in many ways to find a job and gave the chance to learn how to fill in application forms and read person spec and follow them when filling in job forms.
Helped prepared me for future employment.
It was very valuable experience. My confidence and self esteem has increased dramatically. I met lots of friendly and helpful people and bonded a lot with the staff who work in the organization. I conquered most challenges of my roles which included basic admin duties and experience on the reception.
I have made a lot of progress in seeking employment. I had my CV updated and it now looks better, which employers are looking at.
The programme has helped me to develop my confidence and skills
It gave me experience and confidence.
It was what I hoped it would be.

Routeways To Employment:

	When I joined the programme I was lacking in self-belief and confidence. The programme has helped me to overcome this.
	I enjoyed the interview experience and I am on a work experience placement at the moment.
	I enjoy working in the cafe and learning good skills for the future.
	It was very good.
	It helped me and was a good experience.
	Yes, because I had been offered work-placements before, they where to do with packing bags in 'Tesco's, as they where unsuitable, as I have cerebral palsy; but now I am on placement at 'The Hope Centre' in the 'Business Administration Department' and it has worked out great
	I now have a job
	I got a work placement

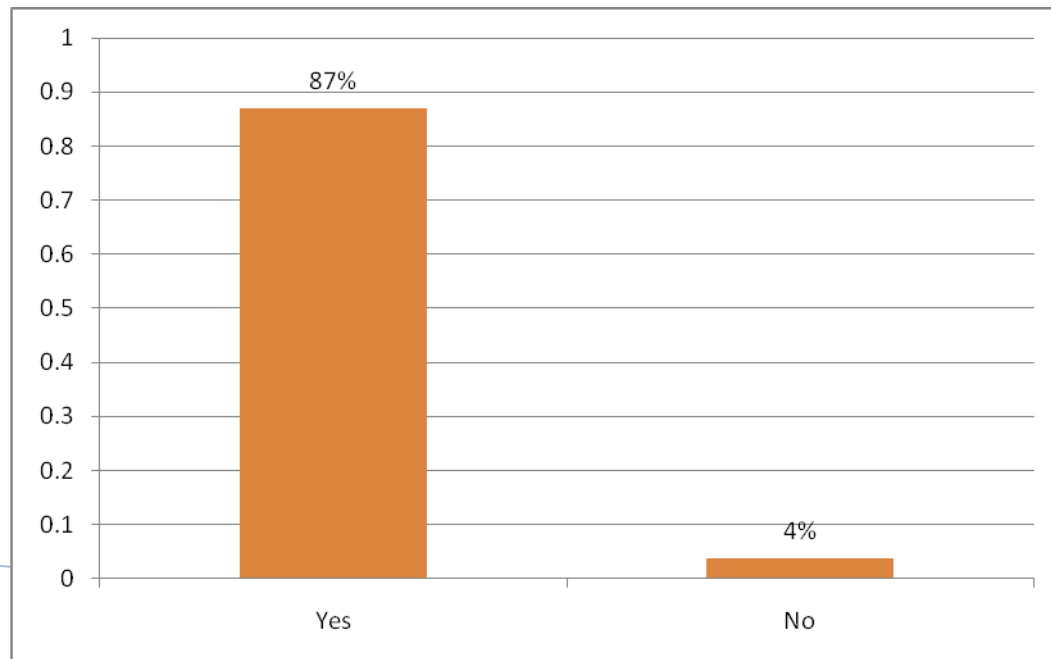
Question 5	Options	Number	%age
Did you have any challenges while you were on the programme	Yes	31	40%
	No	44	57%



Routeways To Employment:

Question 6	Options	Number	%age
If yes, Please describe under one of the following headings	Financial	9	12%
	Not on the right programme	1	1%
	Did not like the course	1	1%
	Issues with trainers / tutors	0	0%
	Did not have enough support	3	4%
	Travel costs	7	9%
	Child care	0	0%
	Did not get employment	3	4%
	Did not like work placement	2	3%
	other	9	12%
Overcoming the barriers associated with being off work through long term illness			
Uniform			

Question 7	Options	Number	%age
Do you think that your disability or specific education needs were met?	Yes	67	87%
	No	3	4%



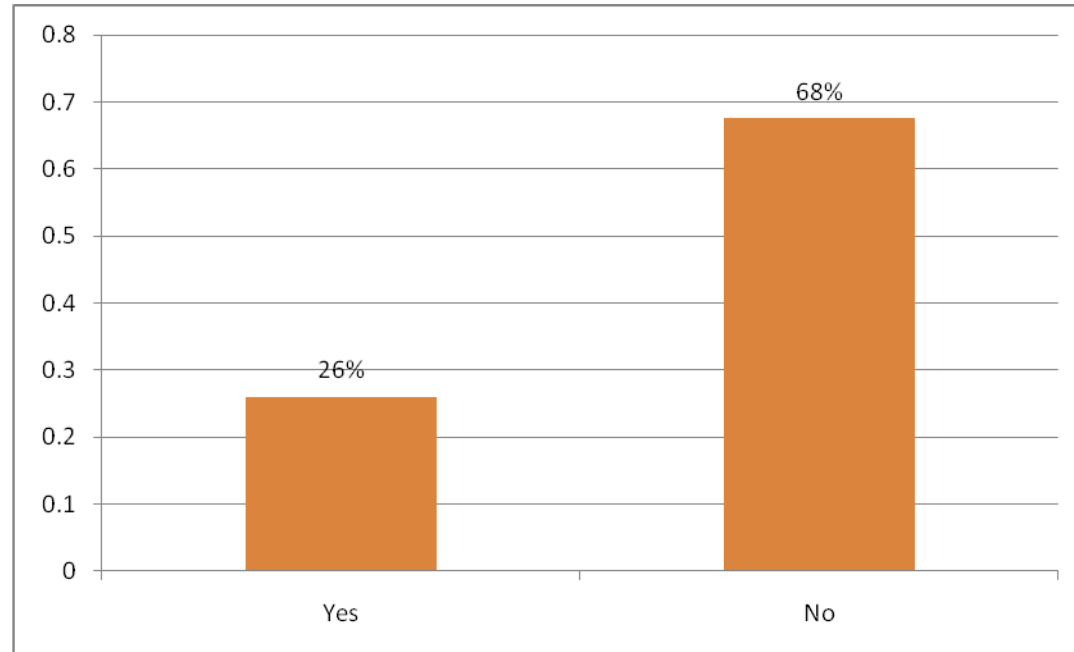
Question 8 Please explain your answer	Transport was arranged to get me to and from interviews
	I was not provided with the right clothing
	Good support
	Placement found
	Good communication with support worker
	It is an equal placement
	There was an understanding of my needs and requirements and a good level of empathy with my situation
	BSL interpreters were provided
	Interpreters (sign language) were provided
	Enjoyed placement in hotel
	I have learning difficulties, but this job, cleaner, that I am doing suits me perfectly
	I have a physical disability and found the college easily accessible and tutors supportive
	Interpreters
	I had interpreters then I had good access
	My health condition was looked into by staff and employers where also informed so they could make sure I was supported on placement.
	Yes, but may need further development
	Staff understood and empathized with my situation
	The project supported me back into education.
	Staff helped me to learn my role, so yes they have been met.
	My disability needs were met and it was the right programme for me to be on
I got support whilst in college	

Routeways To Employment:

I have had very good support of my mentors especially through hard times when I needed time off. Also they have been there to listen when I needed to talk about things
Yes through close work with myself and my family
As I suffer from depression and low self-confidence, I was extremely well-supported and my confidence was boosted a lot.
It was mainly around helping me to deal with my mental health issues and confidence issues
Jason, my coach helped to overcome barriers I had on placement and supported me to speak about them and share new ways to deal with my health issues with other staff I worked with
Not really no.
My needs were covered by staff who asked questions relating to my disability and health issues
Working at my pace and taking into consideration the changes in mood I experience.
I got good reassurance from my colleagues which enabled me to do my work.
All help was made available
I have moderate learning difficulties and the programme took that into account.
My dyslexia was taken into account.
My ADHD was taken into account and catered for.
I have dyslexia and I have been helped to deal with this.
One to one support to learn to use equipment like the coffee machine.
I had support
Yes, because I have a chair without wheels for my balance and a tracker-ball (an upside-down mouse!) The building is accessible.
Some
They gave me confidence and a chance when other people did before

Routeways To Employment:

Question 9	Options	Number	%age
Are there ways in which the service that you receive could have been improved?	Yes	20	26%
	No	52	68%



Question 10 Please explain your answer	Someone official could have checked on me to make sure I am safe and well
	Mencap helped me to find the right job
	The service been very helpful
	More 1 to 1 support
	Maybe more support on outreach programme

Routeways To Employment:

More local
I am sure there is room for improvement but I cannot identify any as my personal experience was a positive one
More training & certificates
Maybe more networking with students on the course
More training (more courses)
Interpreter access. Additional time for disable people in exams & on course
I was not happy with course work because not learned much
I feel happy with course work
They help me as much as they can
I need a bus pass
I don't feel there could be any improvements
More client contact more outreach
Not for me personally
Focus Group 3 Months
Advisors based in my local area.
No it was fine
Contacting mum or dad first to make sure I am ready for appointments at appropriate times
Unsure. (X3)
Only to have equipment that I could use on placement for my back and dyslexia
I'm happy at the moment.
Better options for work placements
I was perfectly satisfied that all of my needs and expectations were met.
Eventually I would like to get a paid role working in a amazing and pleasant friendly organization.
I think everything is spot on
I was very satisfied with the service.
I would like more space and facilities in the learning rooms
I feel that the team has worked hard on my behalf.
Would like to learn more stuff in workplace.

Routeways To Employment:

	I got help getting a job, and I have had a work experience as well in a hotel.
	I was satisfied with the service.
	I wished it lasts longer.
	Perfectly happy.
	It was great

Question 11 Please feel free to add any additional information	
	New open space office
	As a result of my situation and experience with Greenbank I have been educated and enlightened by individuals with differing disabilities with whom I would never have otherwise encountered and this has been a big positive to me
	More training aim for the future
	More training
	Learned quite a bit working in the hotel office
	I felt a rigid approach to earn & course is not appropriate
	Better communication with other organisation so resources can be pooled
	The work experience has helped build my confidence.
	This type of project should be on going.
	I feel it was a rewarding experience and would recommend them to other people.
	Very helpful with preparing for interviews and job applications
	Having been on Routeways I have gained work experience and I am in a temporary paid job through Future Jobs Fund. I Would recommend the Routeways to any other person.
	The project helped and has supported me throughout education and into employment.
	I feel the college has really helped me get back into education.
I have had an enjoyable experience working with the group and hope to be able to carry on	

Routeways To Employment:

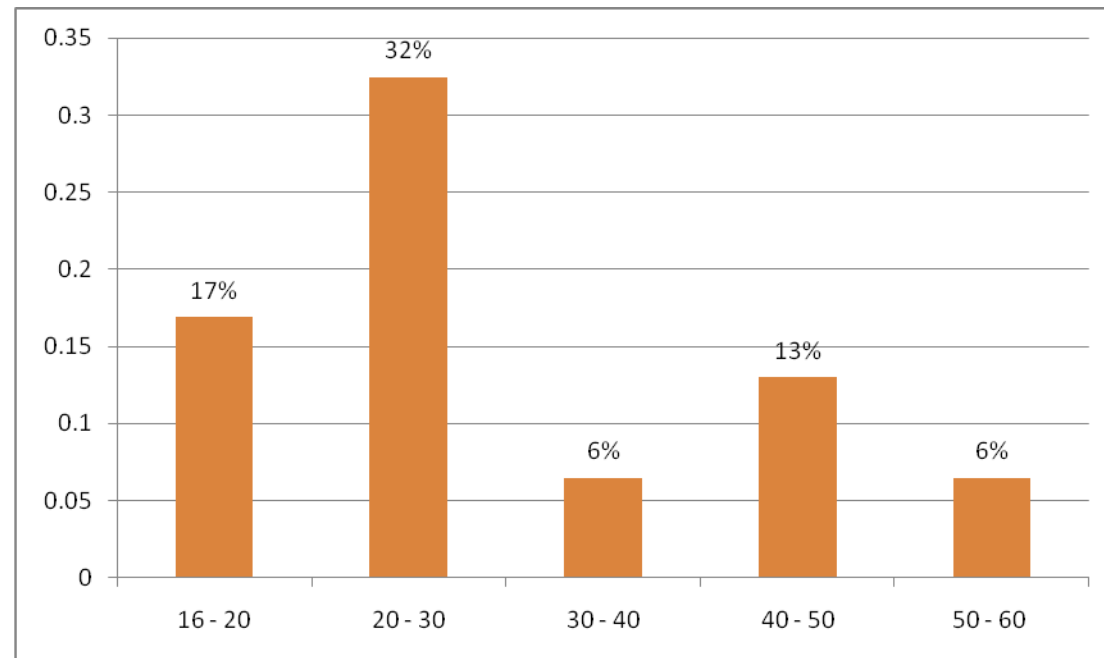
	My mum works closely with my network advisor to make sure all my needs are met
	It was very supportive and flexible
	Nothing
	I like the way job cafes run in my area so I didn't have to travel to Boaler Street all the time
	A very high standard was maintained, with care and attention to all of my needs.
	Friendly support which gave me confidence
	I am especially pleased how I have been able to interact and work with other people.
	I enjoy my job but do find it difficult when customers are rude or say horrible and nasty things to me.
	no comment

General

Please describe your disability	Cerebral Palsy (X6)
	Learning disabilities - ADHD (X7)
	Osteoarthritis
	Dyslexic (X3)
	Epilepsy (X3)
	Learning Difficulties (X3)
	Asperger syndrome (X4)
	Mental Health (X2)
	Deaf (X4)
	Moderate learning difficulties (X2)
	Depression
	Arthritis
	Hearing Impairment
	Physical
	Right side Hemiplegic
	Clinical Depression
	Stress
	I have extreme high anxiety and find it hard interacting with people and bonding with others. I get anxious and irritated at times when things don't feel right.
	Had Stroke

Routeways To Employment:

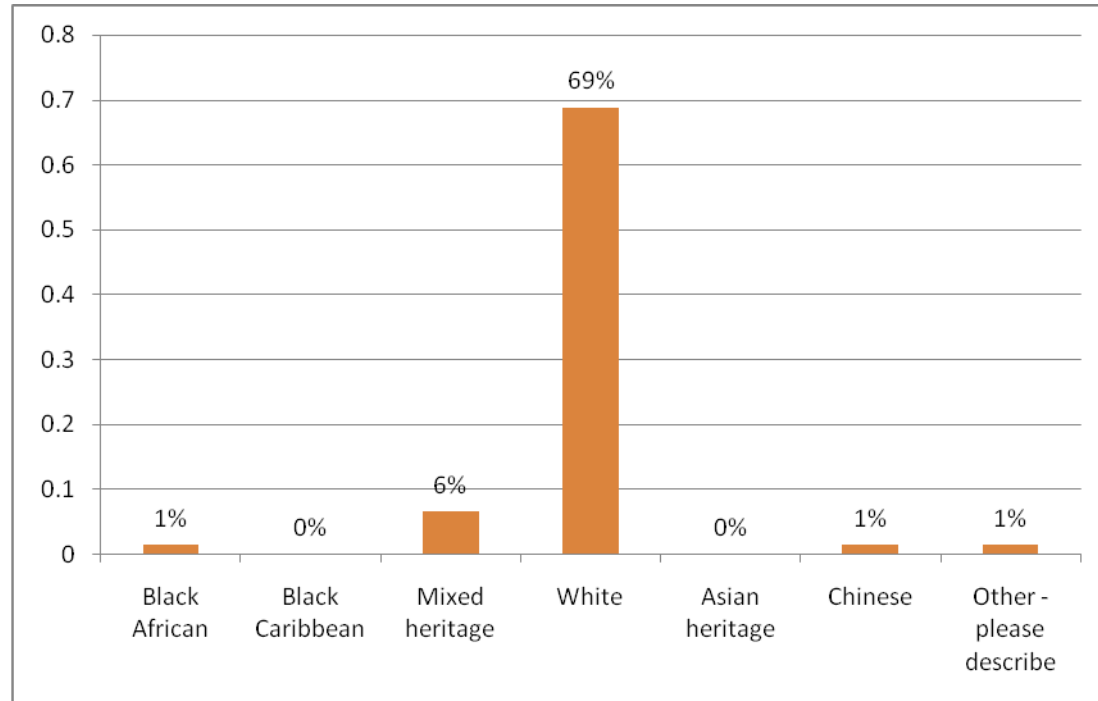
	Options	Number	%age
Pease sate your age - tick one	16 - 20	13	17%
	20 - 30	25	32%
	30 - 40	5	6%
	40 - 50	10	13%
	50 - 60	5	6%



Routeways To Employment:

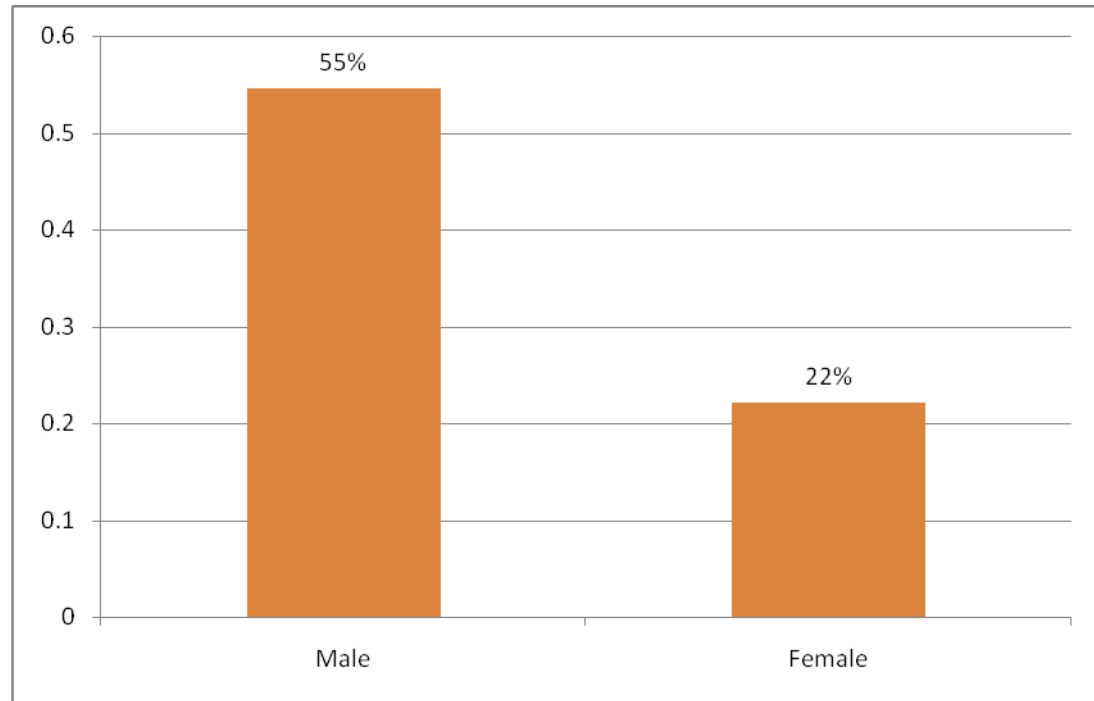
	Options	Number	%age
Please state your ethnicity	Black African	1	1%
	Black Caribbean	0	0%
	Mixed heritage	5	6%
	White	53	69%
	Asian heritage	0	0%
	Chinese	1	1%
	Other - please describe	1	1%

Arabic



Routeways To Employment:

	Options	Number	%age
Please state your gender	Male	42	55%
	Female	17	22%



Questionnaire Analysis

1. By far the largest proportion of respondents had taken advantage of an employment opportunity as part of the Routeways project (52%). This was followed by work placement (29%), training programme (14%) and other (6%)
2. Responses to the question “What was the most rewarding/enjoyable aspect of your experience?” were varied with the overwhelming majority of respondents identifying work related aspects of Routeways including work experience, gaining employment , training and learning and working with others as most important.
3. 95% of all respondents felt that their programme successfully met their needs and expectations. Of those who gave detailed explanations for their answers, responses coincided with those given through focus group meetings, with confidence building playing an especially important part in making Routeways beneficiaries feel satisfied with their course/work experience. One respondent commented:

“It was very valuable experience. My confidence and self esteem has increased dramatically. I met lots of friendly and helpful people and bonded a lot with the staff who work in the organization. I conquered most challenges of my roles which included basic admin duties and experience on the reception”

Others noted that they had gone into paid employment as a direct result of the Routeways project. Because of the bespoke nature of the Routeways project, work placements and opportunities were more varied and flexible, one responded commented:

“Yes (my needs were met) , because I had been offered work-placements before, they where to do with packing bags in 'Tesco's, as they where unsuitable, as I have cerebral palsy; but now I am on placement at 'The Hope Centre' in the 'Business Administration Department' and it has worked out great”

4. However, not all experiences were positive, one respondent noted:

“I did not have the right clothing for weeks and I was left with a woman's coat for a week. Some staff members were laughing at me. I had to work on and in the freezer for 3 weeks without protective clothing.”

While this experience happened whilst on the job, it has clear implications for the Routeways project in relation to making employers aware of what their expectations are and of the needs of the learner. This issue is looked at in more detail under Disability Awareness training.

5. In spite of the fact that 95% of respondents said that their needs were met, 40% said that they had challenges while on the programme. A closer analysis of these responses reveals that financial needs (12%) and travel costs (9%) were the two areas where respondents felt that their needs not been met.
6. 87% of respondents thought that their disability or specific educational needs had been met through Routeways. Of those whose needs had been met a range of responses were given, from good personal support and good placement opportunities, to examples of services been provided to cater for people with hearing impairments such as BSL interpreters. The main thrust of responses indicate that support staff were aware of individual needs and did all that they could to ensure that these needs were met and that “third party” partners and organisations were aware of these too. Typical responses were:

“I have had very good support of my mentors especially through hard times when I needed time off. Also they have been there to listen when I needed to talk about things”.

“Jason, my coach helped to overcome barriers I had on placement and supported me to speak about them and share new ways to deal with my health issues with other staff I worked with”

7. Only 4% said that their needs had not been met, of these none specified how their need was not met, or could have been met. A proportion (9%) chose not to indicate positively or negatively in response to this question.

8. 68% of respondents indicated that their service did not need to be improved. Of the 26% that said that it could be improved, responses included the following:
 - Better options for work placements
 - Advisors based in local areas
 - More client contact and outreach
 - Opportunity to do more course work and learn more
 - More training and certificates
 - More one-to-one support

9. As part of the on-line questionnaire, respondents were encouraged to add any comments where they felt areas had not been covered by general questions. There were a significant number of responses to this question, all very varied. The main points emerging from the additional information section are as follows:
 - A desire for more training, and a general feeling that “work like this must go on”
 - People had generally had very rewarding experience and appreciated the opportunity to learn new skills, gain in confidence and earn money.
 - People would recommend their course to others
 - General feeling of fulfilment and achievement

One respondent summed the positives of the project up by saying:

“As a result of my situation and experience with Greenbank I have been educated and enlightened by individuals with differing disabilities with whom I would never have otherwise encountered and this has been a big positive to me.”

General

In terms of disability, those who completed the questionnaire had a wide range of needs with the largest cohorts being made up of respondents who had learning disabilities (7), Cerebral Palsy (6), Asperger Syndrome (4), hearing impaired (4).

The largest age cohort was 20-30 at 32% followed by 16-20 at 17%. Of the remaining respondents who stated their age the smallest cohorts were 30-40 and 50-60 with 6% each. 13% of all respondents were in the 40-50 cohort.

The biggest cohort of participants who stated their ethnicity described themselves as white, 69%. 1% described themselves as Black African and 1% as Chinese. 6% were of mixed heritage with 1% describing themselves as other.

55% of respondents indicated that they were male with 22% indicating female

Project Partners

As has been indicated in a number of areas in this evaluation report, the Routeways project was significant in terms of its ambitions, particularly in relation to the number of beneficiaries who were targeted to engage with education, training and employment opportunities and the number of partners, and partnerships necessary in order to ensure the successful running of the project and that individual beneficiary needs were met.

In the initial tender for the Routeways project it is noted that a partnership approach would be needed in order to organize agreed support for the individual once he or she was employed and that this would mean the involvement of support workers, mentors and carers throughout this process. The success of the Routeways project has also been dependent on:

- Strong working relationships with employers and their representative bodies
- Effective communication, aiming to ensure that all partners are in contact frequently in the spirit of openness and cooperation - learners and mentors should also be a part of this process.
- Clear boundaries in terms of responsibilities and task setting, identifying what partners are to do, and by when.

It was also anticipated that professional development would be an important element of this partnership process aimed at supporting all those involved in the Routeways project in effectively meeting the needs of learners with learning disabilities and/or disabilities.

This section focuses on the main (13) project partners

A short discussion took place with a limited number of the project partner steering group. The main purpose of the meeting was to:

- Give an indication to partners as to how far evaluation was progressing and to identify early findings/trends
- To discuss the concept of distance travelled for Routeways beneficiaries
- To identify any model employers
- To assess the quality of partnership
- To identify ways in which the project might be improved and to give participants the opportunity to consider any recommendations that they may want to make for the final report
- To share some of the early findings from partner questionnaires
- To give group members the opportunity to contribute towards the evaluation and to share their ideas in relation to the impact of the project.

Outcomes from the discussions

As indicated, the Routeways project was led by a group of 13 partners, a proportion of this group contributed toward the discussion outlined below, these were Greenbank, ELECT, MOWLL, Neurosupport and Network Employment. The full list of partners is given below:

- Alt Valley Community Trust
- Daisy UK
- ELECT
- Greenbank Project
- Independence Initiative
- Liverpool ADHD Foundation
- Merseyside Society for Deaf People
- Merseyside Welfare Rights
- Moving on With Life & Learning
- Network Employment
- Neurosupport
- Royal Mencap

Much of the discussion focused on the impact of the recession on the Routeways project. Several members of the group noted that it had been challenging to place learners into sustainable employment during a time when many employers were scaling back their workforce. Others noted that during times of economic uncertainty partners and employers are not likely to participate in innovative projects in areas which might have cost implications. Participation, it was noted, was even less likely when organisations were cutting back on staff and on training.

It was also noted that there were many instances where the expectations of beneficiaries were very different to those of employers and that in some instances employers were not best placed to meet the needs of learners and/or trainees. It was suggested that this was often down to lack of awareness and that, unfortunately, fewer employers than was anticipated took advantage of disability awareness training. Again this was put down to time limitations and economic issues with employers. So that while training, for example was free, there was still an expectation that employers would make time for staff to take advantage of training, thus having a cost implication to the organisation.

An example of good practice was given which saw an employer paying for part time staff to take advantage of a short disability awareness course which was run during the evening.

A discussion took place around employer motivations, “why do employers get involved in project such as Routeways, what’s in it for them?” Some group members suggested that this was a tick box exercise, and that involvement in Routeways enabled employers to demonstrate that they had met their minimum statutory obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. Few group members could think of instances where employers had gone beyond compliance and in so doing engaging in good practice, and for the right reasons. Routeways project coordinator was, however, able to identify a number of employers who he thought were models of best practice in terms of employing and supporting adults with learning disabilities (see case studies).

The main recommendations to come from this meeting were as follows:

1. Disability awareness training is a must and all organisations working with people with disabilities should take advantage of this.

Where possible such training should be delivered to several members of staff from any given organisation to ensure that it has a positive impact on organisational ethos.

It was also agreed that such training was necessary even in organisations that did not have people with disabilities (although it was noted that many disabilities were hidden and that employers would not necessarily be aware of disabled employees) in order that they were well prepared to employ people with disabilities. This, it was felt, would also aid them in engaging in objective recruitment and selection procedures.

2. All provision and support for learners with learning disabilities and or disabilities should be learner centered. It was noted that this was particularly important on the Routeways project given the wide range of needs and disabilities that beneficiaries had.

Routeways To Employment:

3. Partners have an important role to play in participating in job fairs – this, it was agreed, would provide an opportunity to raise awareness in employers around the positive benefits of having a diverse workforce. It would also provide an opportunity to discuss the importance of formal training, cost etc.
4. Partners also discussed the role of referral agencies and noted that there were a number of government funded initiatives currently in competition with the Routeways programme, including the Future Jobs Fund. The recommendation here was that agencies such as Job Center+ should advocate all programmes, job opportunities and training initiatives equally and not in any kind of ranked order.

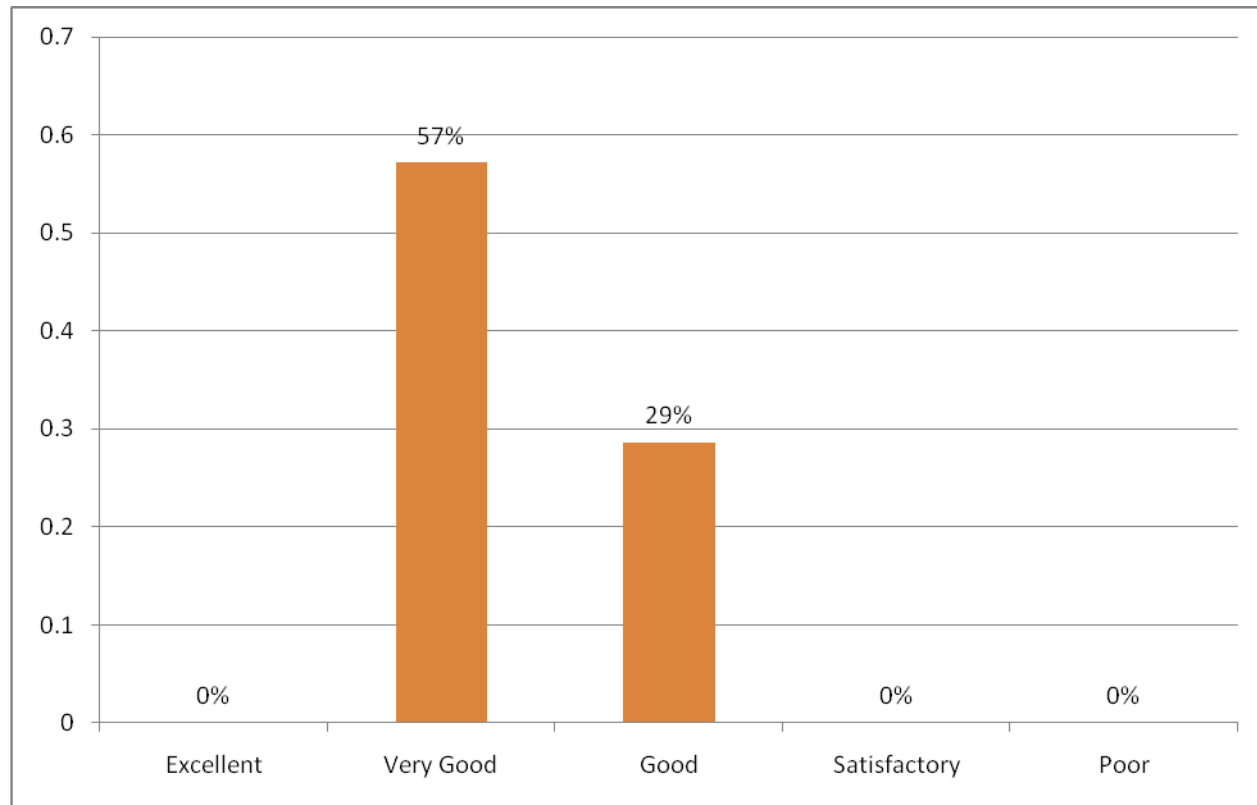
Routeway To Employment For People With Learning Difficulties And/Or Disabilities - Partners

Total Number of Responses	7
Question 1	Responses
Please explain the nature of your relationship with the Routeways project	We are a partnering the project
	Partners
	Partner organisation
	Sub contractor/delivery partner
	Sub contractor
	Attend partnership meetings
	I am a partner on the Routeways Project. My role is a coordinator.

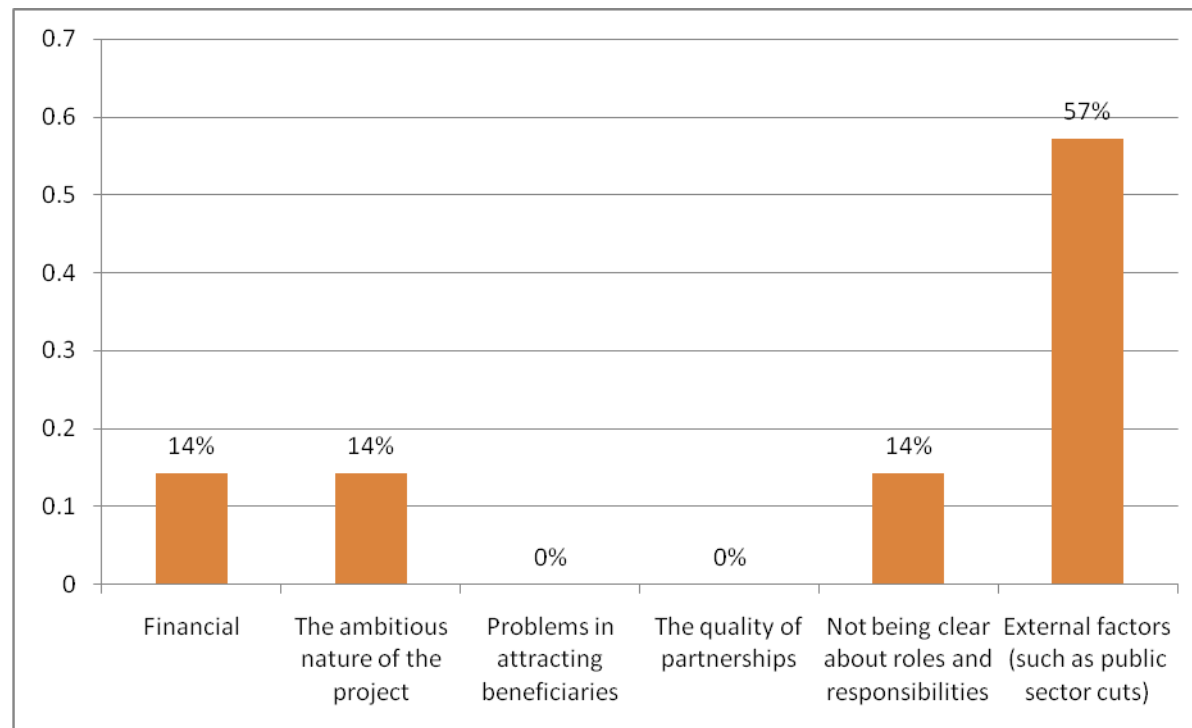
Question 2	Responses
Please describe the role that your organisation played in the partnership	Our role is to provide Benefit debt and housing advice to those entering employment or full time training. any impact volunteering may have on students
	Support to people with Neurological conditions to prepare and support to paid sustained employment, Deliver brain injury awareness training to employers
	Our role was to sign up people in Liverpool and knowsley area with learning disabilities. Our aim is to progress people into employment via further learning and employment training.
	Training and supporting 10 trainees with label of learning disability and mental health in improving skills and confidence for potential paid/voluntary employment
	Finding employment for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems using a supported employment model
	Delivery of employment support service ranging from engagement and delivery of IAG through to assistance into employment/ self employment
	Employer and training provider

Routeways To Employment:

Question	Options	Number	%age
Please describe your overall experience of the Routeways project	Excellent	0	0%
	Very Good	4	57%
	Good	2	29%
	Satisfactory	0	0%
	Poor	0	0%

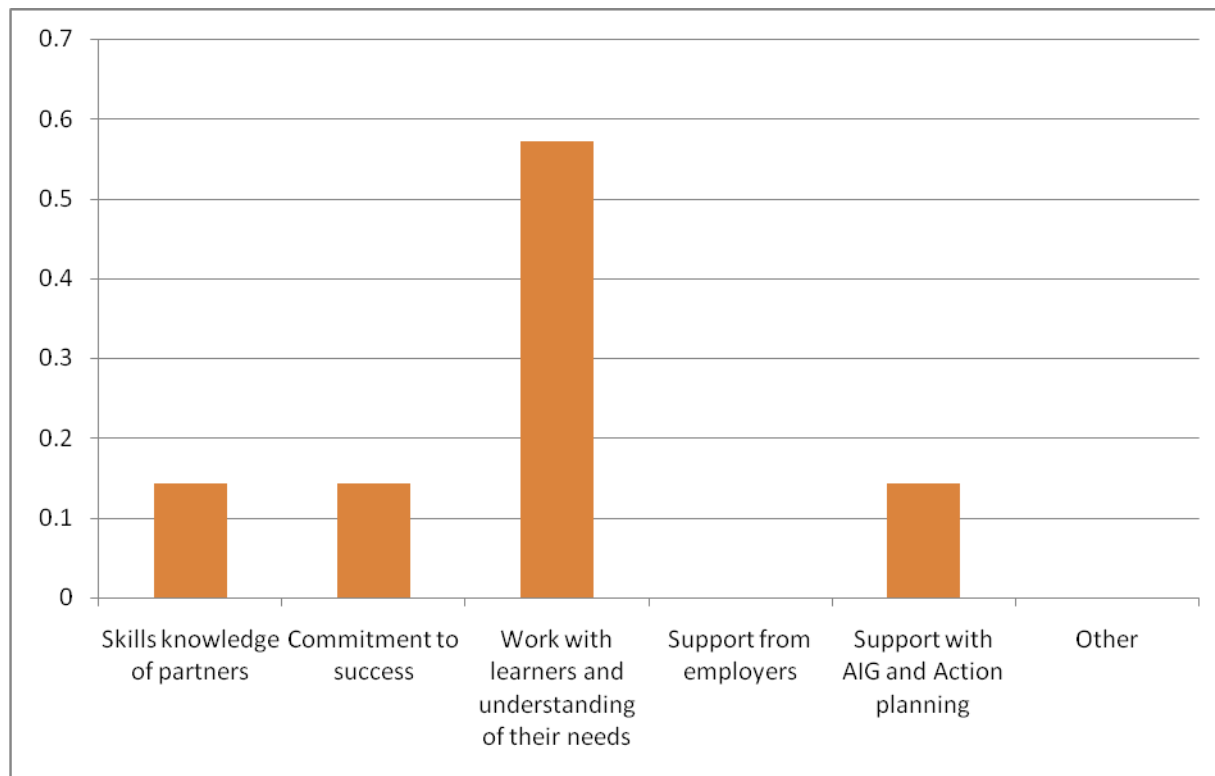


Question	Options	Number	%age
What do you see as the biggest challenges for the project?	Financial	1	14%
	The ambitious nature of the project	1	14%
	Problems in attracting beneficiaries	0	0%
	The quality of partnerships	0	0%
	Not being clear about roles and responsibilities	1	14%
	External factors (such as public sector cuts)	4	57%



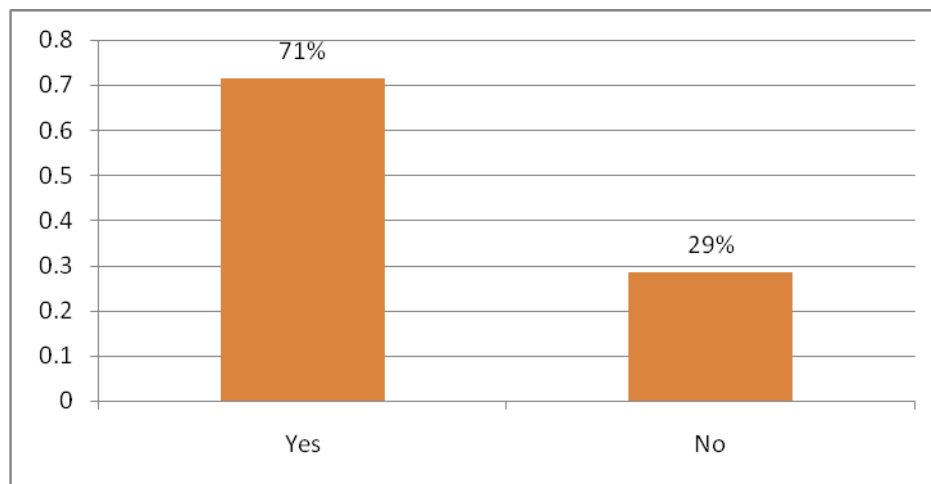
Routeways To Employment:

	Options	Number	%age
What were the most productive aspects of your partnership?	Skills knowledge of partners	1	14%
	Commitment to success	1	14%
	Work with learners and understanding of their needs	4	57%
	Support from employers	0	0%
	Support with IAG and Action planning	1	14%
	Other	0	0%



Routeways To Employment:

<p>Was your organisation able to effectively perform its role and realise any outputs? Please explain</p>	<p>Yes, but we did not have output in the way other partners did. we provided surgeries in several of the offices</p>		
	<p>With continued support from Greenbank throughout the program we have managed to meet our outputs to date. employers training has led to partner organisations requiring access to the workshops</p>		
	<p>At the start of the programme our organisation was effectively performing but due to job losses the outputs where not meeting targets and the figures had to be revised.</p>		
	<p>Yes, we recruited 10 trainees to the project and have so far supported 2 into paid employment</p>		
	<p>Difficulty achieving outputs due to economic climate, this is improving and it feels like given more time and a longer project the targets would have been more realistic.</p>		
	<p>Yes. As we have had a lot of previous experience in delivering employment contracts and are currently contracted by the same funder to deliver our own programmes this has helped us deliver this programme and subsequently achieve outputs.</p>		
	<p>Only partially. Proved very difficult in the economic climate.</p>		
	Options	Number	%age
<p>Can you identify any ways in which the project could be improved?</p>	Yes	5	71%
	No	2	29%



Routeways To Employment:

Please identify improvements	Partners could be more supportive in providing each other beneficiaries with opportunities
	Capacity building as a partnership
	Payment on outcomes mitigates against cross referrals and joint working, there would be benefits from being able to refer beneficiaries to other partners for specialist input then also allow referrals back
	Better working relationships between consortium members- clearer understanding of each other's roles and what they can contribute to the programme from the start.
	Greater 'buy in' from all partners involved i.e. attendance at meetings and involving the appropriate people within their organisations in attending meetings and in delivery.
	Clearer communications. More practical support from the lead organisation. Better split of strengths of individual organisations (e.g. liaison with employers, training of job seekers etc)

Questionnaire Analysis

1. Seven partners responded to the questionnaire, some of whom were sub contracted to provide various training and support services to the Routeways project.
2. The responses to this question demonstrate that the role of the partnership group was largely fulfilled as its main purpose was to orientate the project, making sure that it was on track and that it delivered on its initial objectives, but also to offer expertise in the form of:
 - Support services to beneficiaries, information advice and guidance on housing and dept management for example
 - Supporting people with neurological conditions – in order for them to take full advantage of Routeways opportunities
 - Signposting targeted groups towards Routeways courses and employment opportunities (in Knowsley and Liverpool)
 - Leading on skills development and increasing levels of confidence for learners
 - Finding employment opportunities and liaising directly with potential employers
3. Of all respondents to the question “what was the most enjoyable/rewarding aspect of your experience” (managing the Routeways project) 57% of respondents said that their experiences on the Routeways project were very good, 29% said that they were good.
4. A number of challenges were identified, all of which participants thought had impacted on the Routeways project. These included financial (14%) and not being clear about roles and responsibilities (14%), but by far the biggest challenges were linked to external factors such as public sector cuts (57%)
5. All participants thought that they were effectively able to perform their roles on the project, although one indicated that this was performed only partially due to “very difficult economic climate”. Comments included:

“With continued support from Greenbank throughout the programme we have managed to meet our outputs to date. Employers training has led to partner organisations requiring access to the workshops”

“At the start of the programme our organisation was effectively performing but due to job losses the outputs where not meeting targets and the figures had to be revised.”

“As we have had a lot of previous experience in delivering employment contracts and are currently contracted by the same funder to deliver our own programmes this has helped us deliver this programme and subsequently achieve outputs.”

6. Of those who responded to this question, “can you identify ways in which the project could be improved?” 71% thought that improvements could be made, these included:

“Payment on outcomes mitigates against cross referrals and joint working, there would be benefits from being able to refer beneficiaries to other partners for specialist input then also allow referrals back”.

“Greater 'buy in' from all partners involved i.e. attendance at meetings and involving the appropriate people within their organisations in attending meetings and in delivery”

“Clearer communications, more practical support from the lead organisation, better split of strengths of individual organisations (e.g. liaison with employers, training of job seekers etc).”

Training Providers – Case study 1

Telephone interview with David from Daisy training

Daisy training focuses on delivering courses examining visual impairments, providing bespoke training which is particularly geared to making employers aware of the basic facts, issues and challenges in working with and providing services for people with visual impairments.

Given that the Routeways project's main focus was on providing education, training and work placement opportunities for people with disabilities, training and awareness raising in relation to working with people who have disabilities was a significant part of this project, with project coordinators anticipating that employers and trainers would take advantage of a wide range of training opportunities in relation to, for example deaf awareness and working with adults with visual impairments.

My main contact at Daisy was David lead trainer who explained “we run several courses from the centre, one for sport, for example, and one for education. We run a number of courses which are tailored to meet the needs of various organisations. We support people in developing their working practices with a range of people with visual impairments ranging from BI, people who are profoundly blind with little or no vision, to B4 who are people with moderate visual impairments”.

“Our programme for Routeways focused on the workplace, we designed the course to meet the needs of employers. We concentrated specifically on access in the workplace and meeting individual needs. We also touched on legislation, including the DDA. We find that some of the fundamentals are very useful for people who have not had experience of working with those with visual impairments; this includes matters like putting chairs safely. We also make people aware that many people who are registered being, do have some vision, this has implications for their practice and is very important since we were supporting employers in ensuring that they got the most out of visually impaired people. The number of people on our courses varied from 10-20 and we could often have a cohort of people from the same organisation and between 4-5 organisations represented on any one programme – this helps to ensure that what is learned is actively taken forward in each organisation. One of our main messages is that people should not be afraid of disability. My personal approach is to engage people and to focus as much on the practical issues as the theoretical. But most importantly, we try to get people to empathise, to get them to understand things from the position of the visually impaired person. We get people to go through routines with their eyes closed and we do what we call a talk and walk – this often has a profound impact on people who tend to think about the experiences and needs of the visually impaired very differently after the training.

In terms of our impact, it has to be said that what we do works, people gain insights and develop new practical skills. I know this through correspondence, e-mails etc. People often tell me that they are more confident in working with people with disabilities after they have been on my courses. This means that they tend to help people more; they don't think that this is someone else's responsibility; they know that it's up to

them to change things and make experiences better for the visually impaired. I feel that there are benefits from our courses in terms of supporting people in the work place, but there are much wider benefits, these are the things that change people's lives and get them to view the world in very different ways.

On a very practical point, we like to find out exactly what people learn from our courses, that's why we have a communication quiz at the end of each one. We are especially interested in finding out whether people have learned their ABC, this is A for audio, B for buddies and C for communication. If an employer can get all of these things right then there's a good likely hood of a rich and varied set of experiences for the visually impaired learner or employee. For the partially sighted are message is CCCS, Colour, Contrast, Communication and Size – get these things right and again, we know from experience that experiences for learners and employees will be high quality.

In terms of how things might have been better, I do feel that the recession had a big impact on our training and meant that it was difficult for some employers to let their staff out to participate on our courses.

My recommendation for further activity in this work would be around providing opportunities to further develop training models for the visually impaired. I am particularly interested in offering transition course, aimed at supporting the visually impaired into education and employment”

Support Agencies/Partners – Network Employment (NHS)

Network employment is part of NHS employers. Caroline explains:

“We have existed since the mid 1990s. We find employment for people who use secondary adult mental health services. We use individual placement and support model (the old supported employment model). The work that we do is very intensive. Normally people would be referred through clinicians....but with Routeways referrals are self-referrals – we don’t have enough information often until we connect with clinicians, sometimes we don’t have clinical information.

We have two types of referrals, people with mental health problems which are severe and enduring (could be bipolar or schizophrenia) we also work with people who have mild mental health problems and learning difficulties. Some of the people we work with are known to the social services, in this case they will probably have a team working around them – others don’t!

We like to work with people in an open way and support them in and build up their dreams and aspirations.

The Routeways project enabled us to employ more staff to join our very over stretched team. It mean an extra 1.5 posts, we have 8 in total. We have about 150 people on our books, and we may work what them for long periods of time. We make an open ended commitment to employers. Our average period of working is about 18 months, it’s rare for it to be less than a year but sometimes it is considerably longer, say 4-5 years.

“I go to partnership meetings; we get good feedback and get access to training. In terms of the day to day work of the employment advisers board involvement means more targets and more paper work. The reality of the job and what happens to our clients is quite different to what happens in board room meetings.”

How effective do you think partnership arrangements were? What would you say to funders about the challenges of working with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?

“The people that we pitch ourselves at are the people who fall through the net and don’t get serviced by Job Centre+ or colleges. These people require a more intensive resources/support. However if you can put this resources in and you are committed to making sure that it works, then you can make long term savings....3-5 years support would be right. This would give more time to work with people, support them in their development and help them to be self sufficient.”

What was your greatest success, and how do you measure this?

“We use a tool called Recovery Star. It’s a distance travelled measurement tool. People rate where they are on a scale of 1-10 and we use this as a measurement tool, it charts a person’s recovery journey. We are seeing some quite good results around this certainly in terms of relationships, trust and esteem.....we have already had 4 job starts. Two will be to starting this month. As a service as a whole we have had 22 people into paid employment. We are very proud of these people, and our achievements

One of our clients had depression and was very fragile; she had loads of skills and talents. She went for an interview for a four hour post and she had a panic attack, as a result she did not get the job. We had to take a step back and found her voluntary work in a healthy living centre; she really blossomed and started to do some more training. She stopped smoking, went to weight lost, and did her ECDL. She then went for an interview for a full time post and was unsuccessful, went a second time and was successful....she is full time as a health trainer now. We teach people that there are difficulties for us all to overcome. Having a mental health problem is not the end of the world, people do recover and we can help with strategies so that people can manage their difficulties

In what ways could the project have run better?

I think there were some teething difficulties which may be of our making as a Trust; this involved getting contracts out etc. It also took a while for the partnership to bed down. This may be the nature of having large partnerships. Some of the paper work requirements have meant extra work and extra pressure”.

Support Agencies/Partners -The Independence Initiative

The following case is from an organisation which is one of the partners on the Routeways to employment project. The case study demonstrates a number of important points including, the value of working in partnership and the advantages that can come from this in terms of sharing expertise and employment and training opportunities from which learners can benefit.

The case study has been derived from a telephone interview with an employee working for a service called The Independence Initiative.

“We were involved in a consortium bid (we work with people who are substance abusers but also those who have mental problems) we bid in to work with 15 people over two years stating that we would give seven jobs, in the end we got four people into sustainable employment”.

The Nature of service

“We deliver person-centred plans over a 12 week period; we look at what skills gaps our clients have, and aim to provide opportunities for them to bridge these. We offer skills for life and a range of other courses and subject. We have excellent partnerships and work closely with the voluntary and community sector and local colleges. Clients can access up to 16 hours – this develops confidence and self esteem and supports them in employment, or at least placements – since we have to be realistic about what we do. Many of our clients are taking their first tentative steps into structured education and training environments – we aim to get them ready for the job market by improving their ability to be punctual, reliable and ready to meet the challenges of regular employment”..

Main aim of the organisation

“We aim to integrate people back into mainstream society, as soon as the action plan allows we will place people back into their community – we also want to get people into pre employment as well as training and employment. We work closely with a number of partners and services including: community drug teams, housing services and GPS. As long as a client has an ongoing programme we can work with them – they have to be known to the system and referred by an agency, we can't take self-referrals.

We pride ourselves on our ability to offer a wide range of education and training opportunities and we try to fulfil as many requests as possible once our client knows what they want to do or knows what their educational interests are.

We run cookery, art and guitar lessons amongst many other things. These courses help people to build up skills diary, punctuality. This is a small step approach to prepare for what comes next. We have a lot of tutors who attend our centre; they are from all over Merseyside. We have good

links with the Community College, and our local college; we are on every mailing in the city for lifelong learning and we link into adult education services offered through the Local Authority.

Our service is unique; we get the client to take responsibility for their programme of activity. We talk to people about expectation and aspiration, not about some of the challenges that they have faced in their past, we are very much forward looking. We believe that all the people that we work with have potential, and many have show this through their amazing achievement, many people just need to be given a chance to prove themselves.

Success through Routeways

“Everyone who has got a job with us, supported through Routeways has had sustainable employment. Routeways has enabled us to provide structured pathways towards employment. We have had a number of people who have become qualified substance misuse workers. We have also had one person who went onto a future jobs Programme (into employment for at least six months) – this was someone who had been in sustainable employment supported through Routeways.

Our clients go into different areas of employment and they are from very diverse background. We a had someone who had been out of nursing for a long time, we supported this person and they recently got a job as managerial job in the NHS

One of the most valuable aspects to the project was the support, and the training was fantastic. This made me more aware of some the barriers that learners from a broad range of backgrounds face. It was also very rewarding to see the actual reality of people transcend their problems. It has also allowed “moveability” giving people the chance to look at transferable skills.

Were partnerships effective?

I think partnerships were effective and I liked the fact that the partnership for Routeways was so diverse, and that it was led well – people had a broad range of skills and experience that they could share. We were able to across fertilise each other/cross refer clients

The biggest impact of the project as far as I am concerned was in its ability to empower the beneficiaries, the whole project was beneficiary lead with a clear pathway. Also the work with employers has been amazing.

What recommendations would you make for the future?

Routeways To Employment:

"I think that it would be a real shame to lose this pathway, it is a distinct and clear pathway with an emphasis on one to one and education and training as well as links to employment.

Employers

As part of the evaluation a selected number of employers were identified and written to. An explanation was given as to the background of the evaluation, the main aims of it and how employers might be able to contribute towards this process. The following case studies focus on the number of learners taken on by employers, the impact of their placement on personal development, how the learner/trainee added value to the organisation and what specific skills staff needed in order to successfully meet the needs of learners.

Case Study 1

Question - How many learners did you take on? "We have taken on three learners over the last 12 months, at different times"

What they did/do? "Worked with our Admin/Reception team but each undertook different tasks depending on their skills & abilities and where they wished to gain experience. One learner was very proficient on a pc so wanted to put this into practice in an office environment, using spreadsheets, preparing presentations etc. Another wanted to gain experience in dealing with customers so worked alongside the Reception team in dealing with customer enquiries both face to face and over the phone. Our current learner is looking to build her confidence so has been working with the team on pc skills but also shadowing the team when they conduct interviews"

Question: How long was this person in employment? "Again, this has differed for each learner. The first learner was with us for over a year as she was gaining experience whilst completing an NVQ. The second was a short-term placement to help the learner maintain her skills while she applied for paid work (which she obtained approx 2 months after starting with us). Our current learner has been with us for approx 6 weeks and this placement will continue until she feels confident enough to apply for paid work."

Question: How did the person you took on add value to the organisation? "They have helped the team to develop an awareness of and respect for people with disabilities. Although the office is in theory DDA compliant, it is only through having learners in the office who have disabilities that the team have been able to see for themselves some of the challenges they face (e.g. the location of our stationary store made it difficult for a person using a wheelchair to access it, so we made changes to the layout). One of our team members has become disabled recently after an accident and as a result of working with the learners, her colleagues are very supportive of her and have helped and encouraged her back to work. Additionally, having the learners in the office has enabled members of the team to take on new responsibilities and expand their own skills – for example, one of the Reception team has taken on the role of mentor for our current learner, something she would not otherwise have had the opportunity to do."

Routeways To Employment:

Question: What skills did you needed to work with this person? “There has been patience required from all parties. The learners have had to acknowledge that it takes time for other members of the team to understand their disability and this limitations this may have and the team have had to be patient whilst the learner gets to grips with our systems and methods of working and finds their feet in what may be their first foray into the workplace.”

Question: Did you take advantage of disability awareness course? “Several members of the team have attended disability awareness courses offered through the college.”

Question: “How supportive was Routeways project? “Very – regular meetings with the learner and mentor/myself to review progress and also to keep me up to date as the learners have been applying for employment.”

The Role of the Career Coach (Case study)

Four Learning Coaches were employed on the Routeways project through the Greenbank College. However, each partner had their own separate allocation of staff, according to the size of their contract.

Three Greenbank coaches worked across the Liverpool area, with one allocated exclusively for the Borough of Knowsley, but assisted by Greenbank Co-ordinators. What follows is a short interview with one of the Job coaches. The focus of this interview was on what has been achieved through the project in terms of hard (and some) outcomes and outputs, how the project could be improved. It was also an opportunity to get an insight into the nature of the work.

“I was taken on to do the guidance for the project, to produce action plans etc. Because of the funding we had to make what we produce achievable. I had to show in the action plan that all participants had disabilities. By the time I started, the project had been established for 6 months. We have four job coaches, I do mostly Knowsley and the others do mostly Liverpool.....

Part of my work was to establish links in Knowsley with Job Centre +, Tomorrows People, Kirkby Unemployment Centre, Colleges and Learning Shops. I also met lots of people from Knowsley Council. I was able to engage hundreds of people in the project in this way.

I had to establish links with learning support teams in colleges and explain what the project was about. We were a logical next step for some learners who had been on ASDAN for example.

I found that for employers work experience was essential. It was important to have a direct interface with employers. I had to make employers aware of the benefits of the project. Once I meet people they stay in my head and I think about them when particular employment opportunities come along.”

Impact

1. “We have had some real impact. We managed to get a person into the Hilton who is profoundly deaf. They also took the opportunity to train some of the staff up so that they could communicate with their new deaf employee. They clearly understood the importance of this for customer care. He did a front of house job.
2. I signed someone up the other month who was in his 50s. We seen a job and went for it. He’s doing the park and ride at John Lennon Airport. However, he could not multitask, his job required good computer skills and for staff to be able to carry out a number of quite complicated tasks simultaneously. I found out that his problem was down to his glasses! I would not have found out that he needed glasses if it wasn’t for the regular reviews that I carry out, he wasn’t prepared to put his problems down to eyesight and needed

someone to encourage him to have an eye test.....this is an example of how regular reviews are useful. He has vary-focals now and it has changed his whole world

3. Another woman who had a stroke was able to pass an IT course with our help and encouragement. She also went for an interview to work with people who had had strokes.
4. We had a person who worked in the local college, he had challenges in his personal life and had mental health problems, through Routeways we were able to get him back into work and back as a college lecturer”

“I make sure that I have detailed talks with prospective employers so that they are aware of the needs of people and can look at how to meet these. I also have a responsibility for writing up individual action plans so I know what people need. For some, for example, routine is very important. I also know the aspirations and goals of the people that I am working with.....I make it my business to have a face to face with employers where possible. I also want people to be interviewed when they go for jobs; I think this is good thing, part of growing up.

I recently I did a bit of interview preparation for three people who were interested in working at McDonalds , two were successful , the other did not have what it took to meet the particular job role, so we supported him in developing his skills for work in the future.

I find that where there is support there is more of likelihood of people staying on task and of employment being sustained. So I have regular reviews for both learners/trainees and employers. However, “it’s a fine balance between support and in enabling people to develop the skills needed to be independent”.

Training – the Future for Learners with disabilities

“Disability awareness training is very important – many employers have limited knowledge as to what constitutes a disability. The training is a valuable tool which makes everyone aware of individuals needs and what disability means. People change their views about disability after they have taken advantage of training.

I am not sure where we will go from here after Routeways? I know there are lots of people who are getting benefit from it at the moment. Do we take another step back and wait? In my view the project should be ongoing and available 24-7,365 days of the year!

The impact of what we do is immeasurable, it is on the achievements of individuals and this means different things for different people - developmental needs and achievements vary greatly. Through our reviews and action plans we have been able to ensure that what we do is learner focussed and meets individual needs.

Routeways To Employment:

I think that without Routeways some of our successful people will fall through the net, it will depend on the extent of the support that they need, how independent they are and the challenges that are likely to face them in the future”.

Value for Money

Any assessment of the value for money demonstrated through the Routeways to employment project has to be measured against the initial aims and objective of the project. These were very closely linked to a number of specified outcomes and out puts for beneficiaries. What follows highlights the number of beneficiaries who benefit for education, training, work placements and sustainable employment.

1. 497 beneficiaries engaged with (371 profiled) 126 supported for no extra funding. This will increase further over the next 3 months, as more people are signed up.
2. It was accepted that many of the people supported through Routeways would not be in a position to gain employment in the project timescales, but they are now much closer to the labour market than before.
3. Increased levels of confidence, independence, self worth, awareness of benefits, support and debt advice were all important project outputs which are directly linked to employment. Though not fundable SFA outputs
4. 10 week delivery of STAR award to a group of Knowsley learners with profound learning disabilities forged effective partnership working with Knowsley Community College and provided insight into how the award can be adapted to ensure that disabled learners can identify skills abilities, ambitions for the fulfillment of life goals.
5. Effective employer forum group established which can be utilized after the Routeways programme ends.
6. Lead organisation (Greenbank) was able to support small voluntary sector organisations involved in the consortium, to enable them to effectively safeguard learners, prepare for inspection (if appropriate), partnership working, engage with employers and challenge discriminatory practices. Thereby increasing sustainability of these organisations.
7. Effective partnership working is now in place with other third sector organisations to promote new joint initiatives, widen the support for employers seeking support with disabled employees / applicants.
8. Extremely credible employment output and vocational placement returns, despite the economic downturn and other political barriers.
9. A number of learners supported into more than one job, without further funding for this support.

Routeways To Employment:

10. Support given to learners on future job initiatives (FJI) – despite consortium members knowing that they would not be paid for that support. The main focus was to ensure that each FJI opportunity was meaningful and gave each learner the chance to access paid employment (without it being a claimable Routeways output).

Routeways Outcomes

Despite of the challenges that many associated with Routeways had in engaging with employers, this was primarily due to the impact of the recession on local businesses, the programme still managed well in relation to its targets. The Routeways programme managed to engage more beneficiaries on all aspects of its programmes than had initially been profiled. Below is a summary of the achievement of the Routeways programme against its main targets.

Current outputs delivered:

- To date Routeways managed to engage 499 beneficiaries overall, 371 had been initially profiled
- Of the 497 beneficiaries identified above, 402 are Liverpool residents engaged, 275 profiled, and 97 Knowsley residents engaged with 96 profiled
- 210 beneficiaries participated on vocational placements. 215 were initially profiled
- 142 beneficiaries gained employment, set against 226 initially profiled
- 90 learners stayed on in employment for 13 weeks or more (sustainable). This was set against 156 initially profiled
- 185 employers provided written commitment to supporting learners, 177 were initially profiled
- 499 beneficiaries participated in and completed non accredited learning courses
- 80 beneficiaries completed accredited learning and gained qualifications

Report Conclusions

By far the overwhelming majority of participants on the Routeways project were satisfied with their experience and indicated that their programme had met with their expectations. It was apparent from focus group meetings that they relished the opportunity of taking advantage of employment and training opportunities and of meeting others and of gaining new skills and having new experiences.

Above all, and for those who had been out of the labour market for significant periods of time (or never been in it) the “softer” outcomes of the Routeways project were particularly valuable. The most frequently used phrases expressed by participants in the evaluation during focus group meetings, one-to-one interviews, telephone interviews and questionnaires contained the word confidence: “the programme made me more confident” “working with other boosted my confidence”, “having support from my job coach increased my confidence”

It should also be acknowledged that delivery partners on the Routeways project were very diverse in terms of their core business, size and experience in working with employers and supporting learners in accessing education, training and employment opportunities. The net effect of this wealth of experience was to provide a wide range of support for Routeways learners; however because of this and the size of the contract to be delivered, there may have been at times a lack of consistency to the partnership and expectations may have varied.

This has been highlighted by some of the comments made by learners such as ‘provision of bus passes would have helped to get to placements’. Clearly there was provision as part of Routeways for this and utilized by some partners, but it appears that not all partners had sufficiently large enough funds to provide passes for the duration of the programme and messages to this effect may have not successfully travelled along all communication routes leading to both learners and employers.

Having said this, over all, and as indicated above, the vast majority of those sampled and interviewed were happy with how the project operated and, with its outcomes and outputs. This included learners, partners, employers and sign posting services.

From discussions with a wide range of people associated with the Routeways project including job Coaches, employers, partners and trainers the following points are apparent and were referred to on several occasions:

1. The project has had a significant impact on the lives and employment prospects of a significant number of people – the opportunities afforded through the project including learner support, review meetings, support and training if not available, or if withdrawn would have had adverse effect on those currently associated with the project.

2. The role of the Career Coach has been essential to the success of Routeways, particularly in the interface role with prospective employers, referral agencies and training organisations. Most importantly the role of the job coach is essential in assessing the needs of the learner/project beneficiary and in assessing their progress whilst in the work place or in training.
3. The success of the Routeways project has been dependent on committee staff members that have been aware of the needs and aspirations of learners and have been in a position to offer tailored support through Job Coaches and through working with specialist support agencies.
4. The project has been successful in attracting a wide range of beneficiaries and has been able to demonstrate the need for tailored provision and a learner centered approach in order to ensure that specific needs are being met. The success of this approach has been demonstrated in:
 - The number of people who have taken advantage of learning and training
 - Project partners and their direct involvement in the project (in providing special support advice and guidance and in steering the project through the partnership group)
 - The number of people who have benefitted from employment opportunities, including sustainable employment
 - The level of satisfaction of learners, marked as both good and excellent through Survey Monkey questionnaire/survey and through focus group meetings and case studies.

Main recommendations from partners:

2. Disability awareness training is a must and all organisations working with people with disabilities should take advantage of this. Where possible such training should be delivered to several members of staff from any given organisation to ensure that it has a positive impact on organisational ethos. It was also agreed that such training was necessary even in organisations that did not have people with disabilities (although it was noted that many disabilities were hidden and that employers would not necessarily be aware of disabled employees) in order that they were well prepared to employ people with disabilities. This, it was felt, would also aid them in engaging in objective recruitment and selection procedures.
3. All provision and support for learners with learning disabilities and or disabilities should be learner centered. It was noted that this was particularly important on the Routeways project given the wide range of needs and disabilities that beneficiaries had.

Routeways To Employment:

4. Partners have an important role to play in participating in job fairs – this, it was agreed, would provide an opportunity to raise awareness in employers around the positive benefits of having a diverse workforce. It would also provide an opportunity to discuss the importance of formal training, cost etc.
5. Because there are a number of programmes currently in competition with the Routeways programme, including the Future Jobs fund. Agencies such as Job Center+ should advocate all programmes, job opportunities and training initiatives equally.

Appendices

Survey monkey Questionnaire – Beneficiaries

Survey Monkey questionnaire – Partners

Parameters for Focus Group Meetings

Parameters for Telephone Interviews