

FINAL EVALUATION

PROJECT: WAKEFIELD PEAT CLLD PROJECT

PREPARED FOR: WAKEFIELD COUNCIL

DATE: DECEMBER 2022



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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The PEAT Project

The People Enabling Area Transformation Project (referred to as ‘the programme’ throughout) was a £3.48m Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programme funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

CLLD is a bottom-up approach to addressing local issues. It aimed to link people from the most deprived parts of Wakefield to local economic opportunities, through support, training, employment, and enterprise. It was a five-year programme, running from October 2017 to December 2022.

Wakefield Council delivered the programme in partnership with 14 local delivery partners, who delivered 19 projects. The programme was led by a Local Action Group (LAG), made up of individuals from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, and local residents.

The programme covered six neighbourhoods across Wakefield Five Towns and the South East Coalfield Area. They are all former coal mining communities with high levels of deprivation.

About the Evaluation

The evaluation is required to understand learning and impact, inform future policy development and direct future funding decisions. Wakefield Council appointed Forever Consulting in February 2021 as the independent evaluation partner for the programme. This included

the development of a Mid-Term Evaluation Report (issued in August 2021) and this Final Evaluation Report (issued in November 2022).

This report presents a final evaluation of the programme as it nears completion. It is in line with relevant technical guidance.

Approach

Evaluation evidence was collected through:

- ∞ A review of funding documents and programme monitoring data including Evolutive (the programme’s CRM) to further understand participants’ demographics, barriers and support received.
- ∞ Analysis of secondary datasets to review the changing local socio-economic conditions in which the programme operated.
- ∞ An analysis of the logic chain to map the relationship between the rationale for the intervention, the aims and objectives, the resource inputs, activities delivered, and the intended outputs and outcomes.
- ∞ A focus group with the PEAT Project team.
- ∞ Five one-to-one discussions with LAG Board Members.
- ∞ Consultation with 12 project delivery partners through a mixture of focus groups and one-to-one discussions.
- ∞ Ten case studies with programme participants.
- ∞ An economic evaluation assessing the Value for Money using Social Return on Investment analysis and cost per outputs.

SECTION 2: CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The PEAT Project aimed to reduce worklessness in the most deprived communities of Wakefield. Activity was focussed on unemployed, economically inactive, and NEET (not in education, employment or training) individuals. Specific target groups identified included: long-term unemployed, those aged over 50, people living in jobless households, people with disabilities and ethnically diverse people.

Activity was also aimed at businesses. More specifically this included micro-businesses, SMEs, and female entrepreneurs.

In 2017, when the programme began, rates of worklessness (including both unemployment and economic inactivity) were notably higher in the PEAT Project area than across the rest of Wakefield, regionally and nationally, hence the need for the programme.

Workless people often face multiple and complex barriers to employment, including barriers beyond the influence of the programme. The programme was already operating in a challenging context, which has dramatically worsened since Covid-19 and Brexit.

This section demonstrates the local context in which the programme operated and how it changed over the delivery period. There is a focus on the target groups identified above.

Economic inactivity initially decreased but is rising again...

The Wakefield PEAT Project area saw economic inactivity rates fall from 24.2%, when the programme began in 2017, to 18.1% in 2019. However, it has increased each year since. It now stands at 25.4%¹.

The economic inactivity rate in the PEAT Project area is higher than the average for Wakefield (by 2.1%), Yorkshire (3.2%) and nationally (4.2%).

The gap between the economic inactivity rate in the PEAT Project area and the regional and national rates has grown since the programme began.

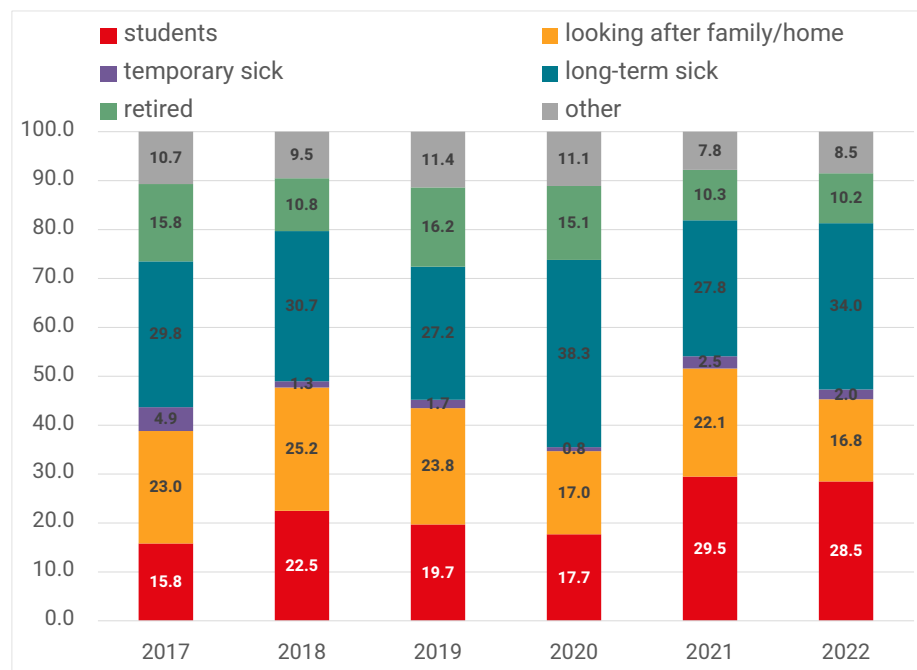
Figure 2.1 illustrates the breakdown of the economically inactive by reason across Wakefield (data not robust at PEAT Project area level) and how this has changed since the programme's inception. The biggest change has been the significant increase of economically inactive students: 6,900 more since 2017. This is probably due to Covid-19 and its disproportionate impact on younger people. There has been an increase here nationally – although not as significant.

¹ Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, March 2022

The second biggest change is the increase in those who are economically inactive due to long-term sickness. Again, potentially a result of Covid-19. Here the increase since 2017 equates to an additional 3,400 people across Wakefield.

On the other hand, there has been a decrease of economically inactive people who are looking after their home/family and who are retired. Both groups have seen a decrease of around 2,000 people since 2017. A possible explanation is that these groups have entered part-time employment. There has been an increase here in part-time employment in Wakefield since 2017.

Figure 2.1: Proportion of Wakefield's Economically Inactive who are...



Unemployment in the PEAT Project area increased more significantly after Covid-19 than elsewhere, but the gap has decreased significantly in recent months...

We have used the claimant count as the main measure of unemployment. The claimant count measures the number of people receiving a benefit mainly for the reason of being unemployed but it also includes those on low incomes.

This rate gradually increased across the PEAT Project area following the introduction of Universal Credit in 2019. Then, like the rest of the country, unemployment rose sharply after Covid-19 and then rates have been falling gradually since the start of 2021 (see **Figure 2.3**). Other points to highlight here include:

- ∞ The PEAT Project area currently has a claimant rate of 4.2% which is higher than the averages for Wakefield (3.6%), the region (4.1%) and nationally (3.8%).
- ∞ The gap between the unemployment rates in the PEAT Project area and Wakefield, the region and nationally are similar to what they were at the start of the programme. This is despite the gap growing significantly after Covid-19. For example, the difference between the unemployment rate of the PEAT Project area and nationally was 0.6% in October 2017, this rose to 1.6% in April 2020, and now stands at 0.4% (July 2022). However, all unemployment rates are higher now than in October 2017.
- ∞ Younger people (16 to 24) have been disproportionately affected. In the PEAT Project area, the claimant count rate for this group has

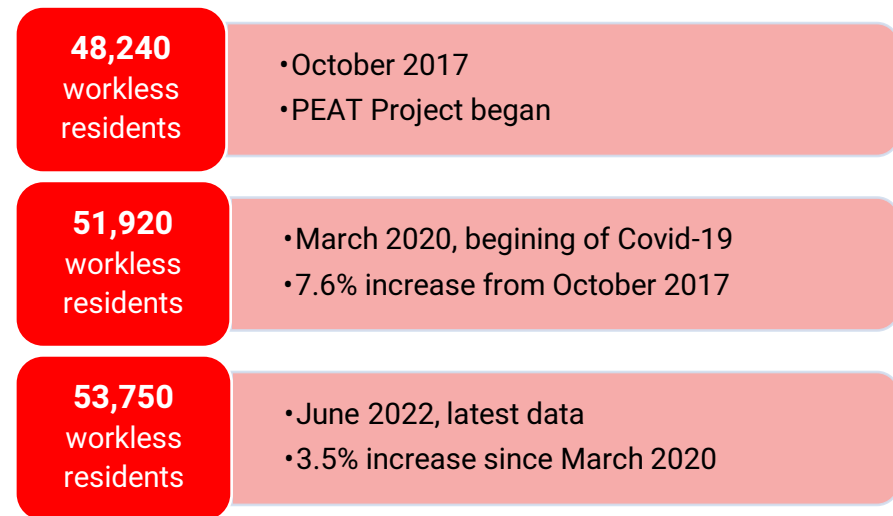
increased by 2.3% since the programme began. This compares to increases of 1.8% in Wakefield, 1.3% regionally and 1.4% nationally.

∞ Whereas, older (50+) residents fared much better. In the PEAT Project area the claimant count rate for this group only increased by 1.0% between 2017 and 2022 (compared to an average of 1.9% across all age groups).

Worklessness has continued to increase ...

As demonstrated in **Figure 2.2**, the number of workless residents² has increased by around 5,500 people since the PEAT Project began.

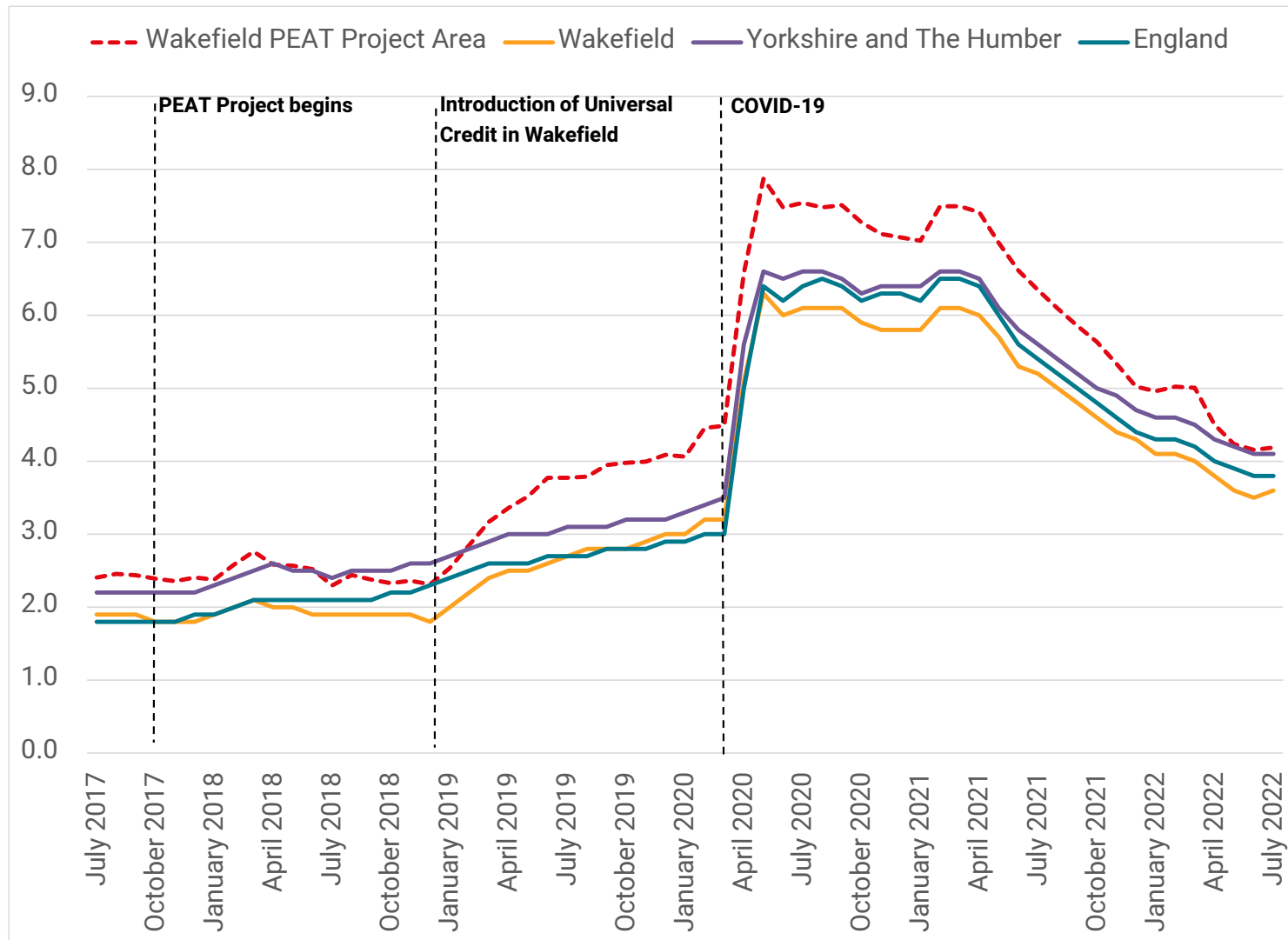
Figure 2.2: Wakefield Workless Residents 2017-2022



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey and Claimant Count, June 2022

² Worklessness is defined as economically inactive plus those on claimant count. Therefore, it includes some people in employment on low incomes. Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey and Claimant Count, December 2020

Figure 2.3: Claimant Count Rates, July 2017 to July 2022



Source: Claimant Count, ONS, July 2022. Rate as a % of the working age population (16 to 64)

A huge increase in people who are unable to work due to disabilities...

The proportion of those aged 16-64 who are EA core or work-limiting disabled³ has increased significantly in Wakefield since 2017 and at a faster rate than elsewhere.

This rate increased from 23.9% in 2017 to 29.2% in 2022 across Wakefield. This equates to an increase of 5.3% or a further 11,000 people unable to work due to a disability⁴.

This compares to a regional rate which has increased by 4.0% to 25.3% and a national rate which has increased by 3.8% to 23.4%.

Employment rate of ethnically diverse people has grown significantly in Wakefield...

The employment rate of ethnically diverse people in Wakefield (69.4%) has increased much faster since 2017 than regionally and nationally and is now above both (62.1% and 69.0% respectively) ⁵.

Although the overall employment rate in Wakefield has grown over the same period, it has done so at a much slower rate (increase of 1.8%

³ EA Core disabled includes those who have a long-term disability which substantially limits their day-to-day activities. Work-limiting disabled includes those who have a long-term disability which affects the kind or amount of work they might do.

compared to 8.5% among ethnically diverse people). Having said that, the ethnically diverse rate is still below the overall rate of 74.9%.

Although the employment rate is increasing this is in part due to increases in part-time employment. There may exist in-work poverty among those in part-time employment.

Self-employment rates are falling faster in Wakefield than nationally...

Self-employment is an indicator of enterprise. Self-employment rates⁶ in Wakefield were 12.9% in 2017 and have fallen to 10.1% in 2022. Although rates across the region and nationally have fallen over the same period, they have not fallen as much and remain higher. Across the region self-employment has fallen by 1.9% over the same period to 11.9%. Whereas, nationally, the rate fell by 2.1% to 13.4%⁷.

Female entrepreneurs were a target group for the programme. The proportion of females in employment who are self-employed in Wakefield has fallen over the lifetime of PEAT, this is similar to the national picture. However, the rate in Wakefield (5.4%), remains well below the regional (7.9%) and national (9.1%) rates.

⁴ Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, June 2022

⁵ Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, June 2022

⁶ % of those in employment who are self-employed

⁷ Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, June 2022

High growth of micro businesses in Wakefield...

The overall business base in Wakefield has grown by 4.6% between 2017 and 2021. This has been driven predominantly by micro businesses (0 to 9 employees) which has increased by 5.4% over this period, equating to 525 new micro businesses.

The trend is similar elsewhere but has been more significant in Wakefield. Regionally and nationally the number of micro businesses have grown by 3.5%⁸.

Declining NEETs masks other challenges for young people

The proportion of NEETs⁹ has fallen in Wakefield from 7.5% in 2017 to 4.4% in 2021. This rate is now below the regional (6.3%) and national (5.5%) rates¹⁰.

On one hand, this is good news. There exists substantial evidence suggesting that time spent NEET can have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health, and increase the likelihood of unemployment and low wages¹¹.

Several policies aimed to reduce the number of NEETs including the Kickstart Scheme, further incentives for employers to take on

⁸ Source: ONS, UK Business Counts, 2021

⁹ This is the number of 16 and 17 year olds who are not in employment, education or training

apprentices and trainees, expanded job support for young jobseekers and funding for selected level 2 and 3 qualifications for school or college leavers.

A large reason for the fall in the proportion of NEETs is related to a significant reduction of females who are economically inactive due to looking after their family or home.

Around 44% of young people who are NEET (nationally) were unemployed. These figures mask that long-term unemployment among young people has increased significantly. Therefore, those who are unemployed are likely to be further from the labour market now than previously.

The health of Wakefield residents is worse than nationally across many indicators including mental health and personal well-being and is worsening...

The Health Index¹² is a new measure to better understand the health of the nation. It uses a broad definition of health including: health outcomes; health-related behaviours and personal circumstances; and wider determinants of health that relate to the places people live.

¹⁰ Source: ONS, 2021

¹¹ Source: UK Parliament, Commons Library

¹² Source: ONS, 2022

Data is available from 2015 to 2020. **Table 2.1** illustrates five of the relevant indicators in the context of the PEAT Project. Data is indexed against the national average in 2015. Therefore, any score below 100 is worse than the national average and scores above are better.

Four out of the five indicators in Wakefield are worse than the national average. Mental health and personal well-being (e.g. life satisfaction and anxiety) are significantly lower. These indicators have also worsened since 2017. All these indicators will have likely worsened since 2020 due to Covid-19.

Table 2.1: Wakefield Health Indicators (index 100 = England 2015)

	2017	2020
Difficulties in daily life	97.9	101.3
Mental health	96.4	86.2
Personal well-being	107.3	81.6
Physical health conditions	90.5	92.1
Economic and working conditions	95.1	95.3

Source: Health Index ONS, 2022

Conclusions

This section demonstrates the challenging local circumstances in which the programme has operated. Covid-19 has had a detrimental impact upon the most vulnerable communities. Many of these were the target groups for the programme. Some of the challenges faced which are at least in part a result of Covid-19 include:

- ∞ Increasing economic inactivity rates. This includes significant numbers of students and those who are long-term sick.
- ∞ Unemployment levels have increased everywhere. Positively, the gap with the national rate has closed a little in Wakefield since 2017. Young people are disproportionately affected here.
- ∞ Overall levels of worklessness in Wakefield have increased. Unfortunately, this is still rising.
- ∞ Self-employment rates, including females, are falling.
- ∞ There has also been an increase in the number of people unable to work due to a disability.

Despite this, there are also several positive socio-economic trends that are evident here including:

- ∞ A significant increase in the employment rate of ethnically diverse people. Additionally, the overall employment rate has increased too.
- ∞ Growth in the overall number of micro-businesses.
- ∞ Falling numbers of young people who are NEET.
- ∞ As a target group, over 50s have fared better than other age groups.

However, some of the positivity should be treated with some caution as it may mask other challenges. This includes in-work poverty and high levels of long-term unemployment among young people.

Overall, the need and demand for a programme similar to the PEAT Project is even greater today than it was in 2017.

SECTION 3: THE PEAT PROJECT

This section assesses the programme design through a logic chain analysis.

Rationale

The PEAT Project Local Development Strategy (LDS) identified several former coal mining communities where intervention would be aimed. As set out in the LDS, they covered around 50,000 people and were characterised by:

- ∞ 30 lower super output areas (LSOAs), of which 23 are within the 20% most deprived nationally.
- ∞ Relatively low skill levels and an over reliance on elementary occupations for employment. Poor health also excludes many from the labour market.
- ∞ Significant areas of social housing.
- ∞ Small numbers of ethnically diverse residents, and growth in the number of EU migrant workers. They are predominantly living in private rented accommodation and engaged in low wage, low skilled employment in industrial areas.
- ∞ Long lasting family and community ties. There exists multi-generational unemployment with few positive role models of people working.
- ∞ High levels of worklessness.

- ∞ A history of regeneration being done 'to them' over a long period of time which has had little success in improving levels of deprivation.

These communities have been 'left behind' following the transformation of traditional industries and although there has been significant investment, many residents have been beyond the reach of these employment and learning programmes.

As identified in the LDS, the rationale for the programme was to *"provide a 'ladder' of solutions to address issues across this continuum of need. Aligned interventions will take place to address individual resident need across all of the areas. Creating a journey pathway for developing skills and aspirations will recognise that residents will start at different points of need and that projects and programmes will need to seamlessly integrate to ensure this journey is both recognised and addressed."*

As highlighted in Section 2, most of the socio-economic conditions have worsened since the programme began. This appears to be largely down to Covid-19 and outside the control of the programme.

Objectives

The programme had five Strategic Objectives:

- ∞ **Objective 1: Business Support and Workforce Development:** To support the development of more local business and social enterprises, by delivering targeted support to business and local people in the form of mentoring, coaching, information advice and

guidance. This should lead to the development of existing businesses and the creation of new businesses with a specific focus on workforce development leading to more economic activity in the PEAT Project area.

- ∞ **Objective 2: Connecting by Removing Barriers:** To connect residents, businesses and communities to local, regional and national opportunities by removing barriers such as information failure (e.g. not being aware of provision), physical barriers and poor transport links.
- ∞ **Objective 3: Hard to Reach Engagement:** To engage hard to reach individuals/groups and inspire and motivate them through the provision of creative solutions to education, skills and development needs. This has the overall aim of supporting progress towards and transition into employment and self-employment.
- ∞ **Objective 4: Developing Third Sector Capacity:** To develop the capacity of the third sector and build on local community assets and resources through the introduction of a programme of activity to support the third sector to become more enterprising and sustainable.
- ∞ **Objective 5: Innovative Solutions Fund:** To encourage new and previously innovative solutions to long term issues identified in the LDS by funding a number of different ideas/concepts through a test and learn principle. This will allow the LAG to be reactive to the changing environment.

Inputs

Wakefield Council secured £3.48m of funds from ESF and ERDF to spend from October 2017 to December 2022.

Activities

The LDS sets out the typical project activity as:

ESF:

- ∞ **Developing a programme of holistic support for individuals on a one-to-one basis** to identify progression routes and services, build confidence, communication skills and move individuals towards training/employment.
- ∞ **Providing a drop-in advice service** managed out of local community hubs.
- ∞ **Removing physical barriers** including disability awareness for businesses.
- ∞ The **development of a small-scale travel subsidy** for residents newly engaged in employment.

ERDF:

- ∞ **Targeted business support advice** - business support officers working from local community hubs to support businesses within the PEAT Project boundaries, developing a peer support programme and signposting to wider business support provision, including the provision of small grants and focusing on workforce development, inclusive recruitment and in-work support.

∞ **Bespoke training packages** - developing a bespoke toolbox for entrepreneurs covering marketing, accountancy, leadership skills etc. and delivering a series of training events on business basics with the aim of building confidence for self-employment and business creation. Materials held electronically to deliver a legacy package for future re-use.

∞ **Business network and supply chain programme** - a series of networking and supply chain development events developed for new and existing business to encourage local trade.

Target participants

The LDS defined the target participants as:

ESF:

∞ Unemployed, inactive, not in education employment or training, people of working age and those above 50 years of age, participants who live in jobless households (with or without dependent children) and ethnically diverse people.

ERDF:

∞ Micro-businesses, SMEs, female entrepreneurs and people with disabilities.

Intended outputs

Programme outputs were originally defined in the LDS. Wakefield Council submitted a Project Change Request (PCR) to DWP and MHCLG on 31st July 2021. This was to cover compensatory contract reductions due to Covid-19. The PCR for the ESF element was declined

and as such Wakefield Council were bound by the original targets. Whereas, the ERDF aspect was approved and as such the targets were lowered.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the final ESF and ERDF targets.

Table 3.1: ESF Output Targets

Outputs		Target
O1	Total participants	1067
CO01	Unemployed including long term	748
CO03	Inactive participants	267
O4	Participants over 50 years of age	181
CO5	Participants who are ethnically diverse	393
CO16	Participants with disabilities	254

Table 3.2: ERDF Output Targets

Outputs		Target
C1	Number of enterprises receiving support	45
C5	Number of new enterprises supported	30
C8	Employment increase in supported enterprises	39
P11	Potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	76
Total outputs		190

End results

Table 3.3: ESF End Result Targets

Results		Target
CR02	Participants in education or training upon leaving	203
R1	Unemployed participants into employment (including self-employment) upon leaving	120
R2	Inactive participants into employment or job search upon leaving	77
Total results		400

Conclusions on programme design

The programme aimed to provide a holistic and tailored approach to supporting individuals with complex and multiple barriers into education, training and employment, living in the most deprived areas of Wakefield. The ERDF element of the programme aimed to support potential entrepreneurs, new businesses and SMEs in Wakefield to create additional jobs, improve productivity and match local people into work.

There was a strong rationale for the programme. Wakefield has a history of industrial decline and has been negatively impacted by long term structural economic changes. As such, Wakefield had above average levels of economic inactivity, unemployment and a low enterprise culture. There is not a strong social enterprise economy locally.

The overall programme logic and theory of change is clear. However, there are wider external challenges and barriers to employment and enterprise which are beyond the scope and influence of the programme. For example:

- ∞ Transportation and the location of jobs to and from workless communities (i.e. poor public transport links)
- ∞ Digital access and skills which became increasingly important throughout Covid-19
- ∞ Childcare costs
- ∞ Availability of sustainable jobs

- ∞ Roll out of Universal Credit
- ∞ Structural economic changes
- ∞ Economic and political uncertainty (including Brexit)

The delivery model appeared sensible based on its initial design. However, several challenges occurred in practice. Eligibility of participants was based on selected post code areas. This was particularly difficult for SMEs who may have different addresses for their registered address, their place of business or their home address. Or they might be out of the area, but employing people from the target area. Delivery partners often turned many people away which was frustrating and didn't make sense to the public. Further, some areas became more deprived following Covid-19 but were not eligible.

Selecting delivery partners who were trusted in the local community was a good move. Their relationships, reputation, and level of trust in the business community is important. The PEAT Project was designed to allow for a greater number of lower value projects rather than a few larger projects. This was useful as it enabled smaller organisations to engage with the programme (due to lower match funding requirements). However, it did create operational challenges. This included hyperlocal competition, with several project delivery partners highlighting there were a few similar providers in the same area often competing for participants/outputs. It may have also meant inefficiencies in service delivery locally.

Outputs and outcomes were clearly defined using ESF and ERDF output and results indicators. They are relevant to some of the

proposed activity. However, they were narrowly defined and did not capture the full range of outcomes and impacts achieved.

Target participants often face complex and multiple barriers and there is a need for longer-term intervention. Much of the support is soft outcome focused (such as confidence building). This type of support increased during Covid-19 (including a greater focus on IT / digital skills and barriers) and project delivery partners cannot demonstrate progress against these softer outcomes despite investing significant resource here.

Likewise, if a business took less than 12 hours support, they could not be counted. Others did not match the local circumstances, for example, reaching ethnically diverse participants in an area with low representation was challenging.

Key contextual changes occurred during delivery including the roll out of Universal Credit, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. Most notably, Brexit and Covid-19 have impacted significantly on worklessness (including the profile of who is workless has changed) and businesses, and anecdotally have reduced people's attitudes to risk, investment and enterprise. Socio-economic data shows worklessness, economic inactivity and self-employment has worsened because of Covid-19. This means the need for the programme is likely to be greater now.

It also means delivery was hit hard. As a result, meeting some targets has been understandably difficult.

SECTION 4: PROGRAMME PROGRESS

This section summarises progress against output and funding targets.

Funding

In October 2017, Wakefield Council secured £1.9m of ESF funding and £1.58m of ERDF funding, totalling an overall fund of £3.48m.

Table 4.1 illustrates that almost 86% of ESF funding and 91% of ERDF funding has been spent. This totals to 88% of the total programme spend, equating to an underspend of £420,616.

The Management & Admin costs did align with the original target. However, Wakefield Council were limited to claim back a maximum of 25% of public expenditure. This meant the eligible costs were capped. This was also impacted by the refusal to extend the ESF element beyond March. If this had been extended then it would have been possible to spend more of the ESF grants, resulting in more of the Management & Admin budget being available.

The reason behind the underspend is Covid-19. Whilst project partners were effective in adapting to online ways of delivering, it was harder to reach people, particularly in an area where people and businesses are less digitally enabled. It meant they couldn't offer the anticipated level of support.

Additionally, the needs of individuals and businesses changed. For example, many people suffered with isolation and mental health issues. Delivery partners supported these people, but they were unable to claim for these interventions through the programme.

Table 4.1: PEAT Project Funding and Spend

	Target	Spend	%
ESF - Revenue Projects	£1,900,000	£1,626,210	85.6%
ERDF - Capital Grants	£200,000	£190,010	95.0%
ERDF - Revenue Projects	£532,500	£484,500	91.0%
ERDF - Management & Admin	£850,836	£762,000	89.6%
TOTAL	£3,483,336	£3,062,720	87.9%

Source: Wakefield Council, November 2022

Outputs

Tables 4.2 and **4.3** illustrate performance against output and results targets.

568 workless residents were engaged. This is just over half of the original target. 318 participants have achieved a positive results outcome, with the majority going into education or training. This equates to 56% of engaged participants having a positive outcome. This is higher than the 37% target.

The number of participants with disabilities supported is the only ESF output that is close to target. The number of ethnically diverse people supported is very low. This is due to the low make up of this demographic in Wakefield. Fewer than 2% of the population is from an ethnically diverse background.

ERDF outputs have fared better with the number of enterprises supported above target and new enterprises supported just below. However, the two other outputs are well below target.

Further explanation of performance is set out below.

Table 4.2: PEAT Project Outputs

Outputs		Target	Achieved	%
ESF Outputs				
O1	Total participants	1067	568	53.2%
CO01	Unemployed inc. long term	748	436	58.3%
CO03	Inactive participants	267	130	48.7%
O4	Participants over 50 years old	181	123	68.0%
CO5	Ethnically diverse participants	393	21	5.3%
CO16	Participants with disabilities	254	249	98.0%
ERDF Outputs				
C1	Enterprises receiving support	45	50	111.1%
C5	New enterprises supported	30	24	80.0%
C8	Employment increase in supported enterprises	39	9	23.1%
P11	Potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	76	39	51.3%

Source: Wakefield Council, November 2022

Table 4.3: PEAT Project Results

Results		Target	Achieved	%
CR02	Participants in education or training upon leaving	203	251	123.6%
R1	Unemployed participants into employment (including self-employment) upon leaving	120	46	38.3%
R2	Inactive participants into employment or job search upon leaving	77	21	27.3%
Total results		400	318	79.5%

Source: Wakefield Council, November 2022

Covid-19 was a major factor behind under performance...

As stated above, the main reason for the underperformance is related to Covid-19. It led to a reduced operation across delivery partners as a direct result of social distancing measures. It made engaging new participants more difficult. Other factors include:

- ∞ Several project delivery partners temporarily furloughed their staff or were on hold temporarily. This meant they could not operate or needed to operate at a lower capacity for some months.

- ∞ Many project delivery partners moved to online approaches to engage participants. Although this was effective in some cases, it is a challenge for many in Wakefield where digital exclusion is prevalent. For many, issues like the cost of data packages, access to hardware and a lack of ICT skills limit their ability to engage with services in a digital way.
- ∞ Partner organisations closing or slowing activity has also impacted on delivery partners. Many of them had to find alternative training and work experience venues.
- ∞ There were fewer referrals from other sources, most notably Jobcentre Plus (JCP). This was due to changing priorities (e.g. focus on getting those closest to the labour market back to work) or closing. Anecdotally, JCP placed less pressure on people to access employment during lockdown.
- ∞ Project delivery partners focussed on supporting existing participants with emerging priority needs during Covid-19, such as general well-being and emotional support, which took priority during this period. They have also provided access to food, supported financial issues and mental health issues, using other funding sources or paid from their own resources.

In terms of the ERDF outputs:

- ∞ Some delivery partners expressed the importance of one to one and face to face support for SMEs which was not possible for a considerable time during delivery. Other activities were also cancelled, for example trade fairs and exhibitions, which delivery partners had targeted as a mechanism to reach businesses.

- ∞ Many potential entrepreneurs and SMEs were thought to have changed their priorities because of Covid-19. For example, people were more risk averse and less likely to invest in a new business, and had more of a focus on survival rather than growth.
- ∞ Conversely, some participants considered self-employment simply because they couldn't get a job. However, when they sat down with an advisor and worked through their business plan, it became apparent that their business would be a riskier way of earning a living than benefits or low paid employment. Helping somebody decide with insight that running a business was not for them is a better outcome than setting them up to fail.
- ∞ Further, some of the participants who were supported to be enterprise ready were then armed with information and decided they needed more work experience or additional skills and went onto employment or training, although these outputs were not counted under the ERDF element of the programme.

All delivery partners suggested they would have achieved much more if it wasn't for Covid-19.

Other factors played a role too...

Progress against targets is only a good measure of performance if targets were appropriate. It is suggested that the output and results targets set at the outset were challenging given:

- ∞ The difficult and changing local contextual issues.
- ∞ The complex and multiple barriers faced by participants and the need for long-term intervention.

- ∞ The nature of support was often focussed on softer outcomes (such as confidence building) which wasn't captured in the targets. As demonstrated in Section 6, performance here is good.
- ∞ Project staff also found it difficult to meet the evidence requirements and were unable to count some achievements.
- ∞ Wider barriers to employment exist, which are beyond the influence of this programme. For example, fewer jobs available with greater competition, existing challenges around the benefits trap and Universal Credit.

Based on this evidence, we suggest that the result targets were extremely difficult to achieve and the underperformance here should not be a negative reflection on the PEAT Project.

SECTION 5: PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT

This section explores programme delivery and management. Feedback from consultees informs this aspect of the evaluation.

The programme has been led by a Local Action Group (LAG), made up of representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, and local residents, while Wakefield Council was the Accountable Body.

Largely, feedback on the programme delivery and management has been positive but with some identified areas for improvement.

A very helpful project management team...

The most common feedback here was around the usefulness of the PEAT Project Team at Wakefield Council. The following comments are typical of the feedback here:

- ∞ *"The PEAT team were very helpful."*
- ∞ *"We felt like they were working with us."*
- ∞ *"Staff at Wakefield couldn't be more helpful and welcoming."*

There were a few comments about the turnover of staff at Wakefield Council. Although it was recognised that this was unforeseeable, it did cause some confusion with delivery partners not always aware of who to contact.

Despite this, project delivery partners have been very positive about the level of support and communication they had, and reported that communication was efficient and effective.

The LAG Board provided effective governance...

A LAG Board was established to ensure effective governance of the PEAT project. The feedback suggests this largely happened. The board also appears to represent a diverse mix of stakeholders and interests.

However, some board members are also a delivery partner. This is not uncommon and is evident in other CLLD programmes. Although there was no evidence of this it could have created a challenge about where their priorities should lie (i.e. the programme or their project).

Delivery partners did feel pressure to achieve output targets...

Some delivery partners felt pressure to achieve output targets. Although ERDF outputs were reduced, this was reported by both ESF and ERDF delivery partners. The LAG board did contact the Managing Authorities to express concern over the lack of flexibility and the impact on delivery partners.

Despite this, the Audit and Monitoring sub-group of the LAG board did play a role tackling underperformance and identified projects that needed to implement recovery plans or terminate early if they were not able to get back on track.

This caused a huge amount of pressure for project delivery partners to achieve what could be perceived as unachievable targets in challenging circumstances.

The support people and businesses needed changed because of Covid-19 and the programme would not flex. Some organisations felt pressured to deliver outputs at all cost, which may have been to the detriment of the intended service users.

Beneficiaries were appropriate...

The targeting of the project beneficiaries was broadly appropriate, except for the postcode eligibility which was detrimental to the overall impact. Individuals, existing businesses and potential entrepreneurs were harder to reach and engage during Covid-19.

Entrepreneurs are generally difficult to reach because there is no natural 'hang out' place for them. However, the grant element was the main hook for engaging SMEs and gathering evidence to validate results.

Need for a more strategic approach for selecting delivery partners...

One of the main lessons highlighted for improving delivery for similar future programmes is the need for a more strategic approach to selecting delivery partners. Delivery partners were often competing and targeting the same people in the same area. This made delivery more difficult and sometimes abortive time was spent. There were examples of users trying to register and receive support with two PEAT Project providers. Both providers spent time with the user but only one was able to claim.

Operating it district wide, where users met certain criteria, would have also led to a more cohesive programme rather than operating in targeted post codes.

Likewise, the introduction of 'Step Up' (Wakefield Council's Employment and Skills Service) duplicated the ESF activity. It was a larger programme with greater resource (every resident in Wakefield was sent a leaflet about this), and activity was focussed on the PEAT Project area. PEAT project delivery partners were asked to avoid contacting local employers for training and employment opportunities as Step Up wanted to be the only gateway. Additionally, part of the Step Up team were based in The Hut in Airedale – a key hub within the PEAT area, which was discounted as an option for the PEAT Project partners.

This not only led to further unfair competition, making it more difficult for some PEAT project delivery partners to engage new participants but also created disharmony across the two programmes.

The PEAT Project delivered across the horizontal principles...

The PEAT Project delivered well on the horizontal principles relating to fairness and equality. This includes delivering support for disadvantaged and marginalised communities. There was recognition of, and delivery targeted to, groups including: the most deprived communities of Wakefield, people with disabilities, ethnically diverse people, female entrepreneurs and older workers.

Although there was no evidence of any projects that were harmful to the local environment or the communities served, it was difficult to implement the sustainability principle in a significant way due to the nature of the projects funded.

SECTION 6: OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The section explores the difference the programme has made to individuals, businesses, delivery partners and overall.

Individual level impacts

The programme supported 568 workless residents. Many lacked qualifications, skills, or experience, or had qualifications gained overseas that were not valid in the UK. Many participants also experienced multiple and complex issues that acted as additional barriers to gaining employment, such as acute lack of confidence, mental health issues, disabilities, caring responsibilities, and the benefits trap.

The project delivery partners supported participants at various stages on their route to education, training or employment.

Who was attracted to the programme?

Table 6.1 summarises the demographic profile of (ESF) participants. Where possible, data is compared to the demographic profile of the communities covered by the programme. The final column of the table compares the two and illustrates whether a particular demographic is over or under-represented. A score of 1 represents an expected number of participants. Key points include:

- ∞ The programme was more likely to attract males than females
- ∞ 26 to 34 and 35 to 44 year-olds made up almost half of all participants. This is more than would be expected. Although only

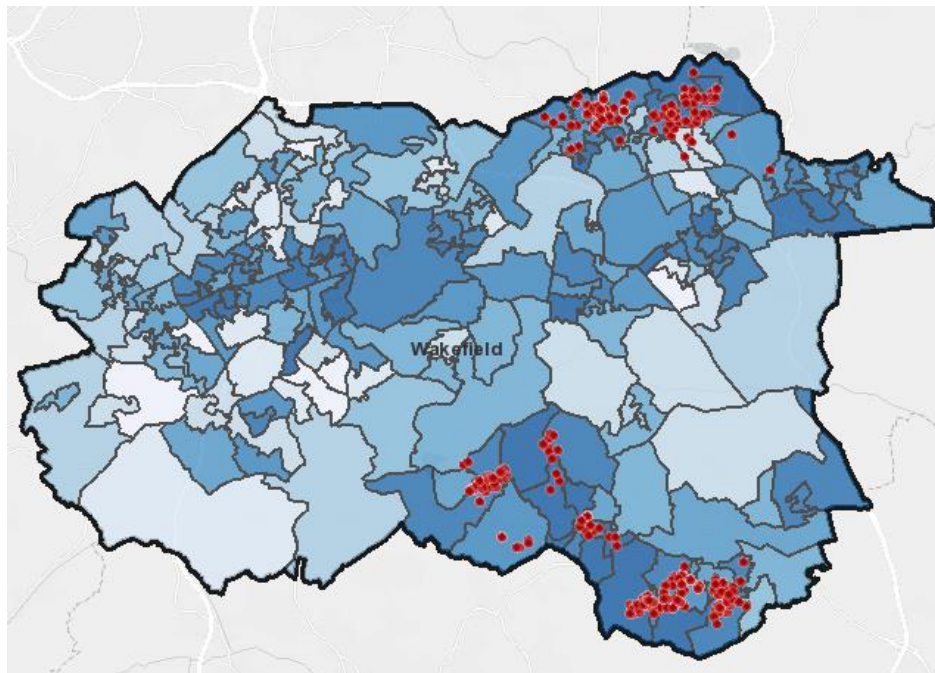
10% of participants were from the youngest (17 to 20) age group – this was over twice the expected amount for this group.

- ∞ Ethnically diverse people and those with a disability were over-represented.
- ∞ There was a high proportion of participants who were ex-offenders, homeless, from the most deprived communities (see **Figure 6.1**), and lone parents. Although they were not over-represented this is still a positive outcome as it is typically more difficult to engage people from these groups.
- ∞ Overall, the programme attracted people from marginalised communities.

Table 6.1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic	% of participants (excluding unknowns)	% of PEAT Project Area	Over/under-represented (1 = expected amount)
Gender			
Male	53.5%	48.9%	1.09
Female	46.5%	51.1%	0.91
Age			
17 to 20	10.0%	4.9%	2.06
21 to 25	9.1%	7.5%	1.22
26 to 34	23.1%	17.7%	1.30
35 to 44	26.1%	15.5%	1.69
45 to 54	18.6%	16.6%	1.12
55 to 64	10.3%	16.0%	0.65
65+	2.8%	21.9%	0.13
Ethnicity			
Asian/Asian British	0.7%	0.6%	1.17
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0.9%	0.4%	2.19
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	1.6%	0.7%	2.26
White	96.8%	98.2%	0.99
Other			
Disability	43.9%	37.3%	1.18
Lone parents	15.7%	16.1%	0.98
Ex-offender	39.5%	unknown	n/a
20% most deprived communities	86.8%	90.0%	0.96

Figure 6.1: Where participants live by deprivation*



**illustrated by the darker blue*

Who was most likely to receive a 'positive outcome'?

Over half (56%) of participants received a 'positive outcome' i.e. went into employment, education or training. This equates to 318 people. Demographic groups were analysed to understand which groups were most likely to receive a positive outcome once accounting for the size of the group.

The groups who were most likely to receive a positive outcome (once accounting for the size of the group) were: Asian/ Asian British, ex-offenders, 35 to 44 year olds, males and those with a disability.

The groups who were least likely to receive a positive outcome (once accounting for the size of the group) were: the oldest and youngest groups (65+ and 17 to 20 year olds), Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, lone parents, and females.

The remaining groups achieved an 'expected' level of positive outcomes.

Participant G previously attended the youth club and became a volunteer at the centre whilst completing a college course in Childcare. The organisation supported G in creating a CV and in applying for job vacancies. G was successful in gaining employment in a local residential care home and has maintained employment for more than a year. She is now on maternity leave after giving birth to her first child in November.

G stays in contact with staff at the project and calls in for social visits and advice as and when.

Participants acquired new skills...

A key part of the support for participants on the route to employment was helping them to acquire new skills. This included formal qualifications, and softer skills.

Outcome and 'distance travelled' data shows that:

- ∞ 203 participants improved their digital skills
- ∞ 13 took part in volunteering activities
- ∞ 2 ethnically diverse participants gained enhanced English language skills
- ∞ 51 participants gained level 2 qualifications
- ∞ 3 participants gained level 3 or above qualifications

Like increased confidence and motivation, we recognise that for many participants, there are several hurdles to overcome before contemplating developing a new skill, but that every hurdle overcome is an important step on the route to employment.

"We spend a significant amount of resource just getting someone to the start line [through the door]. It can then take a couple of hours a week for a number of months or even years to get someone into employment." (Project Delivery Partner)

Most participants gained a range of softer skills...

A significant amount of time spent with individuals aimed to increase their confidence. Project delivery partners recognise this is crucial to accessing the labour market, and would also help other areas of the participants' lives. Several cited a lack of confidence as a barrier to people accessing employment, particularly young people because of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns.

"Lockdown destroyed people's confidence and those who were hard to reach became even harder to reach" (Project Delivery Partner)

Based on conversations with project delivery partners and some participants, we estimate that around one in twelve participants' confidence increased in relation to employment.

Many of the participants we interviewed cited increased confidence as one of the things they have benefited from the most.

"Two of our former participants have successfully gone on to volunteer with the CAB [Citizen Advice Bureau]. They have reported that the centre has given the confidence to go onto the next step and will be receiving training to become CAB advisors which should open up their employment opportunities. Both of these people want to work with people in some capacity in the social sector so this is a really positive outcome for them and for us." (Project Delivery Partner)

"The project has recently worked with a participant aged over 50 and unemployed, who was down on his luck. The project supported him from sign up through to CV creation, interview skills, soft skill development right through to final job interview, and successful appointment as a security officer with a local employer." (Project Delivery Partner)

Additionally, project delivery partners supported participants to overcome their unique set of barriers to the labour market in other ways, for example:

- ∞ Ensuring they are receiving all the benefits and government support they are entitled to
- ∞ Helping them to use public transport
- ∞ Searching for jobs
- ∞ Writing CVs and application forms
- ∞ Preparing for interviews – in person and online
- ∞ Helping them find housing solutions
- ∞ Provision of basic living supplies such as clothing, food and feminine hygiene products

Often, these types of support are not available from traditional employment services, and yet they are really valued by participants.

Delivery partners may have saved lives...

The flexible nature of the support also meant that delivery partners were able to support participants with other concerns beyond that of employment and training. For example, helping them register with a GP, getting prescriptions, ensuring they were receiving all the benefits they're entitled to.

The programme supported some of the most vulnerable people in Wakefield. Many were cut-off from their communities. Covid-19 made this even worse.

"Staff are invested in the areas, and they live locally too. They genuinely care about the place and the people." (Project Delivery Partner)

Delivery partners became a lifeline for some very lonely people with low self-esteem who had no support from elsewhere. Some of these people would go weeks without seeing anyone else. Delivery partners recognised this and went out of their way to keep them engaged. This included door knocking, going for a walk with them and making phone calls through lockdown restrictions.

It was suggested by at least two delivery partners that they are not sure if certain individuals would have still been here today if it wasn't for this support offered.

"We called him on a regular basis and made sure he wasn't alone and whether we could help him. Sometimes we took him for a walk to get him out the house. Without the support he received from us, I don't know if he would still be here today." (Project Delivery Partner)

Entrepreneurial activity was encouraged and has left a legacy...

The ERDF element provided:

- ∞ 50 existing enterprises with support
- ∞ 24 new enterprises with support
- ∞ This led to 9 new full-time jobs in the supported enterprises. However, this was made up of a larger number of part-time positions and in reality it was around 15 people who took up employment here.
- ∞ 39 potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready

Feedback from project delivery partners suggests that there are likely to be further benefits at a later stage too. Would-be entrepreneurs have had useful support which has encouraged them to undertake further research, preparation, training or gain further experience before setting up a business later. Additionally, some individuals decided to put their plans on hold due to Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis to pursue less risky employment. Again, there is hope that they will later return to their idea and set up a business when they are more financially secure. Others have already moved across to receive next steps support through the Start Up West Yorkshire programme¹³ and with local partners such as NOVA¹⁴ and begun to further progress their original ideas.

All this has helped encourage entrepreneurial activity in an area which has historically had low levels of enterprise.

Further, there were several businesses that benefited from a grant. Several businesses bought equipment which improved their productivity. This will benefit them for years to come, although this was not captured. There appears to be anecdotal evidence of legacy benefits arising for the projects that were simply not captured, or will be realised beyond the programme end.

¹³ a fully funded programme providing business support for people living or starting a business in West Yorkshire

"We listen to the individual and let them lead the process. We create a plan which was bespoke to them to identify the best way forward for that person. We offered one to one support rather than general workshops / events. This approach required more effort and more work but generates better results." (Project Delivery Partner)

Enterprise support also prevented individuals setting up to fail...

There were also individuals who received entrepreneurial activity support who did not pursue their idea, as it no longer seemed viable. This came about in several instances following the development of a business plan or testing different scenarios with their advisor. This saved individuals money and time and individuals felt it was a better outcome rather than setting up to fail.

Project level impacts

Delivering the PEAT Project means partners are now more resilient, better known and have a greater awareness of other similar organisations...

Project delivery partners commonly reported that participating in the PEAT Project has enabled them to continue their service offer, increase the number and type of participants they support and

¹⁴ A support agency for Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise organisations in Wakefield

enhance their offer. Furthermore, new roles at programme and project level have been created / safeguarded to deliver the PEAT Project.

The programme has also created opportunities for smaller VCSE organisations to deliver employment programmes – something that has historically been the preserve of larger VCSE organisations or other sectors.

Feedback from project delivery partners suggest, that because of the PEAT Project, they are now:

- ∞ More resilient. It enabled some to work with different groups to their usual provision. Two project delivery partners highlighted that they have secured further funding due to their experiences of delivering employment support through PEAT. All partners changed to online delivery during Covid-19. Several have maintained this had made them more efficient with a more varied offering.
- ∞ Better known in their local communities. The PEAT Project allowed them to market to a wider group of people. One delivery partner said that “*PEAT has put us on the map...*”.
- ∞ More aware of their partners and similar organisations. Some partners worked with each other for the first time, whereas, others have a better understanding of which organisations do what. This will be useful for future partnership working.
- ∞ Better aware of how to deliver (and how not to deliver) projects like PEAT. These lessons have been applied in further funding bids.

The staff and volunteers who worked on the PEAT Project highlight many positive experiences...

The project managers, mentors, advisers and volunteers we spoke to enjoyed working on the PEAT Project. They appreciated the way the programme was designed, as much as the participants. Aspects that particularly gave them job satisfaction included:

- ∞ Providing meaningful support to people with multiple barriers and complex needs.
- ∞ Offering support that extended way beyond employment, training and enterprise advice.
- ∞ Smaller caseloads and more contact, so they could develop a relationship with participants, get to know them and how best to support them.
- ∞ Being creative with the support they provide. For example, some cited group activities as something they tried but didn’t work and so they moved to one-to-one support.

Although some issues impacted staff enjoyment...

However, there were some issues raised by project delivery staff that have hampered their ability to deliver, claim outcomes and results, as well as their enjoyment of the PEAT Project.

For example, staff are skilled at engaging the target communities, but can take a while to become familiar and comfortable with the intricacies of delivering an ESF programme. Many felt frustrated that the progress they made with participants wasn’t always recognised

within the monitoring framework. There was an acceptance that they were “*better with people than paperwork.*”

Furthermore, based on our wider experience, we recognise there are inherent risks associated with funding programmes of this nature:

- ∞ Employment created to deliver the programme may be temporary due to the time limited nature of the funding.
- ∞ Staff turnover tends to be high towards the end of the programme as employees’ jobs may not be secure.
- ∞ This results in loss of capacity to the organisation and potentially to the local area, if the employee isn’t retained locally.
- ∞ This can also create challenges during the final delivery stages, and in turn, the final data collection and reporting periods.

“Although there were a lot of difficulties such as Covid-19 and the amount of paperwork, I really enjoyed this role. It gave me so much satisfaction helping others who hadn’t had any luck elsewhere.” (Project Delivery Partner)

Programme level impacts

The PEAT Project has made excellent progress of moving those furthest from the labour market, nearer to, and into, employment.

As highlighted in Section 2, economic inactivity, unemployment and worklessness have increased over the course of the PEAT Project. At the same time, self-employment has fallen. Despite this, the situation would likely be a lot worse without the PEAT Project’s intervention.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the impact of the PEAT Project on participants’ pathway to employment. This demonstrates more people are closer to the labour market and progressing towards the employment pathway. The people supported were furthest from the labour market with multiple and complex barriers.

Summary

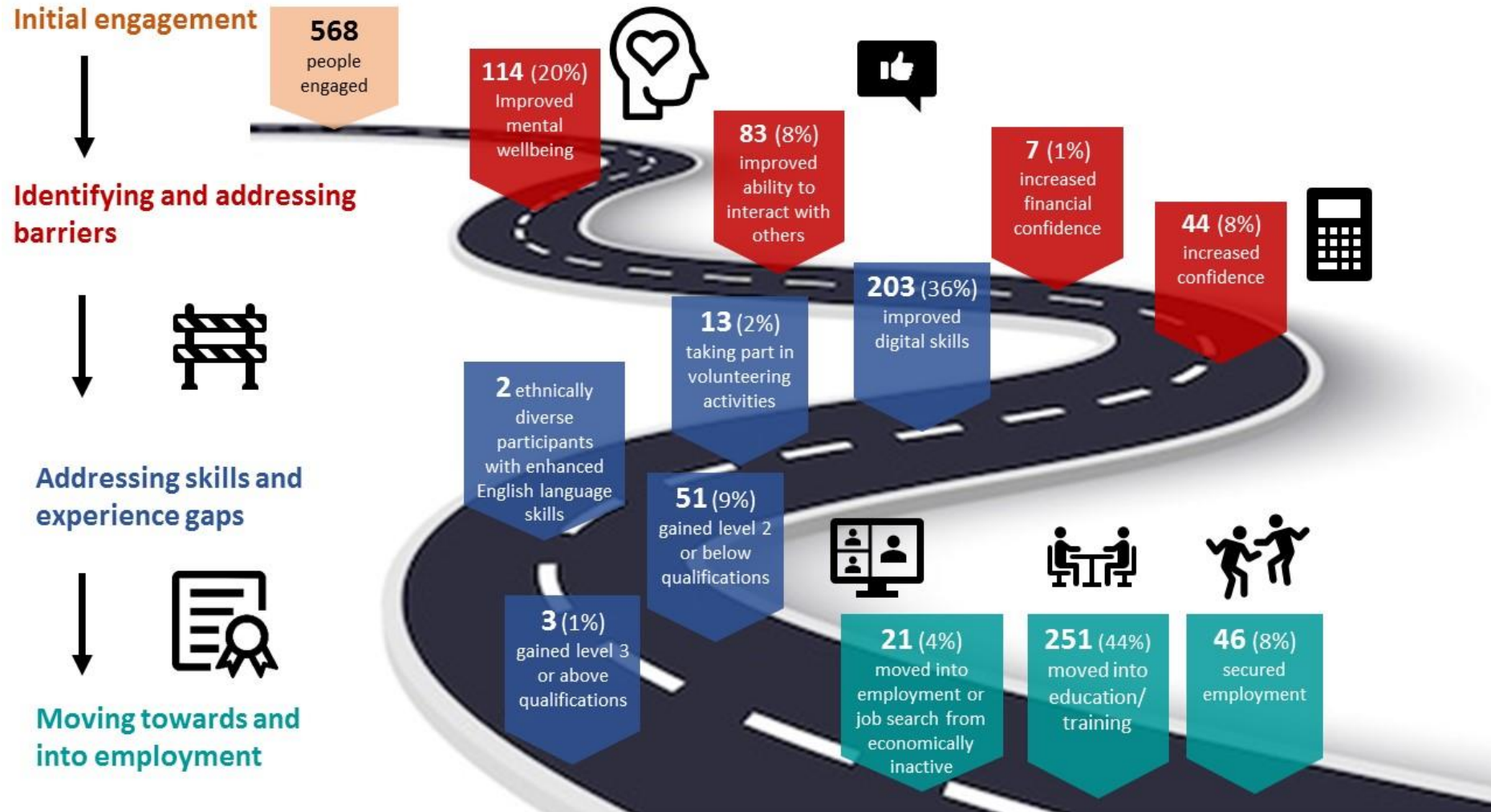
Assessing impact by looking at performance against targets is only useful if the targets were appropriate in the first instance. We have assessed the results targets to be challenging given:

- ∞ The multiple and complex barriers faced by participants;
- ∞ The level of results which were not counted due to claiming a result early, or other evidence and compliance issues;
- ∞ The timescales for realising the benefits may be longer than the programme (i.e. some participants may achieve an employment result after the programme has finished); and
- ∞ Local and national external factors which are beyond the influence of the PEAT.

We favour a ‘theory of change’ approach to determining impact. The evidence shows a clear relationship between the role of the programme in engaging people with multiple and complex barriers who are furthest from the labour market, helping them overcome their personal obstacles and increasing their confidence, whilst supporting them to gain skills and experience to move them into education, training or employment.

We surmise that the PEAT Project has made significant progress towards its overriding aim. Our research has highlighted several significant positive impacts for participants, staff and their organisations.

Figure 6.1: PEAT Project impact on employment pathway (net impacts)



SECTION 7: PROJECT VALUE FOR MONEY

Value for money has been assessed using the Social Return on Investment (SRoI) approach for ESF related outputs, outcomes and expenditure. This involved defining, quantifying, and monetising programme benefits compared against costs to determine the ratio of social return per £1 of investment.

The SRoI was conducted in line with the Cabinet Office Guide to Social Return on Investment (2012) and wider technical guidance where relevant.

ESF

Costs

Costs are based on actual spend of £1,626,210.

Benefits

Benefits have been identified using programme monitoring data and through consultation with project delivery partners and participants. The SRoI analysis is based on several monetised programme benefits, which include (but not limited to):

- ∞ 251 participants moving into education or training
- ∞ 51 participants moving into employment (including self employment)
- ∞ 16 participants supported with job searches
- ∞ 51 participants gaining level 2 or below qualification

- ∞ 44 participants supported with increased confidence
- ∞ 83 participants supported with an improved ability to interact with other people
- ∞ 114 participants supported with improved mental wellbeing
- ∞ 203 participants supported with improved computer/digital skills
- ∞ 13 participants supported with taking part in volunteering opportunities

Adjustments

The gross benefits were adjusted to account for additionality and derive net impacts. This means estimating the level of impact that would have occurred anyway without the activities funded by the PEAT Project. The following factors were applied:

- ∞ Deadweight – a measure of the amount of outcome that would have happened even if the activity had not taken place.
- ∞ Displacement – an assessment of how much of the outcome was displaced from elsewhere.
- ∞ Attribution – an assessment of how much the outcome was caused by the project versus the contribution of other organisations or people.
- ∞ Drop off – the deterioration of an outcome over time.

Valuations were applied to each benefit based on relevant benchmarks taken from several accepted sources.

Other adjustments made in line with HM Treasury and Cabinet Office SROI guidance include:

- ∞ Adjusting all values to reflect 2022 prices.
- ∞ Discounting values using a 3.5% discount rate, as advised by HM Treasury.
- ∞ The timescale of impact and duration of the effects.

Results

The analysis shows that **the programme gave a social return of £5.20 per £1** of public investment.

We estimate the public cost of moving a workless person into employment through the PEAT Project to be £31,886.

Table 7.1 shows how the PEAT Projects’ SROI and cost per employed participant compares to other employment programmes (inflated to 2022 prices).

It shows that the overall SROI is good but the cost per employed participant isn’t performing as well as the comparable benchmarks. However, most of the comparable benchmarks were much less impacted in terms of Covid-19 with less delivery occurring in this period.

Table 7.1 SROI Comparisons (ESF only)

Programme	SROI	Cost per employed participant
Tideway Ex-offender: Working with charities to employ one person with convictions per 100 workers on the Thames Tideway Tunnel.	£7.14	£13,594
Community Matters BBO: Aimed at people with additional barriers to accessing employment.	£6.65	£12,554
Hull CLLD: Aims to link people from the most deprived parts of Hull to economic opportunities, through support, training, employment and self-enterprise.	£5.24	£20,980
Family Matters: Voluntary sector-led employment programme focusing on people furthest away from the labour market, based in the Black Country.	£4.87	£22,817

Note: Values have been inflated to 2022 prices. Sources for benchmarks and the values used are provided in Appendix 2

ERDF

Value for money for the ERDF outputs are based on the cost per enterprise supported.

Costs

Costs are based on actual spend of £674,510 (excluding Management and Admin costs).

Benefits

Benefits used here include:

- ∞ 50 enterprises supported
- ∞ 24 new enterprises supported
- ∞ 39 potential entrepreneurs supported

Adjustments

Similar adjustments were made as per the ESF outputs.

Results

The analysis shows that the PEAT Project cost £5,969 per enterprise supported. This compares very well to benchmarks.

Table 7.2 Cost per Enterprise Supported (ERDF only)

Programme	Cost per enterprise supported
Hastings CHART CLLD project: A CLLD programme delivered in Hastings and Rother	£4,731
Hull CLLD project: A CLLD programme delivered in Hull	£7,679

Note: The outputs and evaluations for both these projects are still being finalised, as such these figures will likely change a little. Values have been inflated to 2022 prices. Sources for benchmarks are provided in Appendix 2

SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

This section presents the conclusions in terms of strengths and successes, as well as weaknesses and challenges. This informs the lessons that can be learned to inform future programmes.

Strengths and successes

- ∞ The PEAT Project was well designed, with a clear logic chain between the rationale, activities funded and end outputs and outcomes. The programme design included a selection of delivery partners who could operate at the community level and this has brought lots of benefits to the programme.
- ∞ It was well managed and organised. This has been well-reported by project delivery partners. Wakefield Council team members were commonly referred to as helpful and supportive. They have spent significant resource providing training and advice around ERDF/ESF issues.
- ∞ Project delivery partners invested significant time getting to know participants and building relationships with them. This led to a genuinely tailored and bespoke service, often offering holistic support and addressing multiple needs.
- ∞ The nature of support was alternative and additional to mainstream services. People could self-refer to projects and often did.
- ∞ Delivery partners are well connected to local employers. They worked with them to raise awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships, about the need for local engagement among the workforce and future labour market in schools, colleges, and the benefits of community engagement. This also means that job-specific training, qualifications and volunteering delivered tended to align with local employers' needs.
- ∞ Project delivery partners operated an 'open door policy'. Regardless of a participant's situation or eligibility, people were not turned away. Staff were there to help in whichever way they could.
- ∞ Project delivery partners offered a warm, welcoming, supportive, and engaging environment which made it easier and less intimidating to participants, many of which had low confidence and poor social skills.
- ∞ Delivery partners worked with vulnerable people and recognised that a person needs to function well in life before they can function well in the labour market. This meant they invested considerably in addressing issues such as health, wellbeing, isolation, confidence, financial management, before moving onto employability issues.
- ∞ The project delivery partners were known and trusted in their community, meaning they reached people not engaged with other services. Delivery in the community setting also meant project delivery partners were local and accessible to the target participants.
- ∞ Delivery partners tended to be flexible and agile. They demonstrated their ability to adapt their offering quickly during

Covid-19. Many moved away from achieving outputs to supporting what their local community needed. This included food banks, baby banks, clothing, financial and mental health support. This has been a lifeline for many vulnerable groups at a very difficult time.

- ∞ Project delivery partners reported many examples of project staff and volunteers going beyond the call of duty in difficult circumstances. For example, turning up at a participant's home if they were unable to reach them by phone.
- ∞ There was some very good partnership working and signposting between organisations. This included sharing of job vacancies, working with foodbanks and community centres, housing agencies, and doing shared leaflet drops.
- ∞ The extent individuals have achieved softer outcomes, and are therefore closer to the labour market, is one of the strongest successes of the programme. The PEAT Project has also equipped many with 'life skills', such as improved confidence and self-esteem, which means they will be better equipped to tackle life's challenges, whilst still having the time and energy to focus on plans for their future education, training or employment.
- ∞ Of the 568 people engaged to date, 8% have secured employment and 44% gone into further education or training. This compares very well against relevant benchmarks.
- ∞ Delivery partners were commonly resourceful, operate on tight budgets and often have low overhead costs. This means they offered greater value for money than mainstream services or larger

organisations. This is demonstrated by the very good outcomes from the SRol and cost per enterprise supported assessments.

Weaknesses and challenges

- ∞ Progress against outputs has been very challenging. They were already difficult due to the complex barriers faced by participants and wider external barriers. Covid-19 exacerbated some of these existing challenges:
 - There was no additional funding available to account for additional costs. This included paying rent for the hire of venues or rooms over a longer period i.e. space they couldn't use.
 - The 'hard to reach' became 'even harder to reach' (in some cases extremely difficult to reach) with more people suffering mental health issues (such as anxiety, loneliness, and depression) and being less likely to socialise or leave their house. They already required significant resource just to engage them before Covid-19.
 - Most activity that remained throughout the pandemic was online. This further highlighted the levels of digital exclusion which existed in many of the deprived communities of Wakefield. This was in terms of both access to technology such as broadband and laptops, but also the skills needed to engage online. There was frustration that the funding couldn't be used more flexibly to provide digital access to those who needed it.

- Most the support delivered was with existing participants and supporting additional needs. It was difficult to engage new participants.
 - JCP and other agencies were not referring participants as much as previously as their priorities changed with more people closer to the labour market suddenly needing employment.
 - Delivery partners reported a big dilemma throughout Covid-19. They knew they had to carry on supporting people who were becoming increasingly vulnerable. However, the type of support provided couldn't be funded.
 - Although some did use the furlough scheme, it was limited to ensure that there was staff available to answer phone calls and provide what support they could. This meant they missed out on potential cost savings and will have increased the intervention costs. If delivery partners had known how many lockdowns there would be and how long restrictions would last they may have decided to furlough staff to save on these costs.
 - The socio-economic context worsened. This includes: increasing economic inactivity rates, unemployment and worklessness, falling levels of self-employment, and an increase in the number of people unable to work due to a disability.
- ∞ Some participants could potentially choose from a range of PEAT projects to access support. With delivery partners required to meet participant targets this created an element of competition.
 - ∞ PEAT Project partners suggested that 'Step Up' (Wakefield Council's Employment and Skills Service) duplicated the ESF activity. It was a larger programme with greater resource (every resident in Wakefield was sent a leaflet about this), and activity was focussed on the PEAT Project area. PEAT project delivery partners were asked to avoid contacting local employers for training and employment opportunities as Step Up wanted to be the only gateway. Additionally, part of the Step Up team were based in The Hut in Airedale – a key hub within the PEAT area, which was discounted as an option for the PEAT Project partners.
 - ∞ The level of administration required and risks around achieving compliance with programme regulations created a large cost to VCSE organisations.
 - ∞ Performance monitoring requirements were stringent and meant that some results weren't counted because the evidence base was not compliant. For example, ERDF required wet signatures which were difficult to gain especially in lockdown. This often meant impacts were missed.
 - ∞ The original intention of the programme was to fund up to ten projects, this ended up being 19. This had an impact on the support that could be offered by the PEAT Project team to individual delivery teams around some of these issues. Additionally, some of the delivery partners needed more intensive support here than was

expected at the outset. The original model of providing one-to-many assistance through events therefore didn't work as planned, with projects requiring more one-to-one support (which hadn't been factored in) for claims and compliance issues.

- ∞ The nature of the target groups meant that some people would take years to resolve their barriers and move into employment and training. The level of support needed to bring them closer to the labour market could be extensive. The results indicators and targets do not reflect the extent of support needed or reflect the smaller wins for people on their journey.
- ∞ Some of the major barriers to employment could not be addressed through the PEAT Project alone. For example, the structural economic change, poor public transport links, high unemployment and competition for jobs, the challenges created by the benefits system, and the prevalence of zero hours contracts.
- ∞ Target participants living outside the defined PEAT Project area tried to access the support. They were signposted elsewhere and sometimes offered some support but could not be counted as eligible participants for funding purposes. These individuals demonstrated many of the same barriers as eligible participants.
- ∞ Several project delivery partners described the Evolutive /CRM system as hard to use. It has been described as "*clunky*", "*inefficient*" and "*doesn't always work properly*".
- ∞ As the support can be required for a long time, the fixed timeline of the funding becomes a challenge especially as the end comes nearer. It leaves staff feeling anxious about their role and whether

further funding is coming and encourages providers to go for 'low hanging fruit' to achieve outputs, which goes against the nature of the programme.

- ∞ Most the resource dedicated by project delivery partners has been on building softer skills. This activity isn't measured which means the effectiveness of the PEAT Project is significantly underplayed, when considering existing ESF and ERDF performance measures.
- ∞ ERDF providers reported that they supported many more individuals than they were able to claim for. Many participants received around 6 to 8 hours support but disengaged from the programme, largely due to Covid-19. These people were still likely to have benefitted but it is not possible to claim as they had not received the full 12 hours support. It has taken substantial resource to firstly engage the participants, enrol them and start delivery.
- ∞ Some areas became more deprived than in the original PEAT Project area but could not be supported.
- ∞ ERDF providers also highlighted frustration with stringent eligibility criteria. An individual is supported based on whether the business is in the PEAT Project area, rather than where they live. They have had to signpost people elsewhere or turn people away who live in an eligible area (and needed the support) but have a business outside the area. On the other hand, they have supported people who probably didn't need it as much. They suggest that in future, programmes should have a second eligibility check which factors in how long an individual had been unemployed, for example.

- ∞ There did exist some networking events such as an outdoor Picnic hosted in one of the lockdowns and some hosted virtual sessions. Attendance was excellent for the picnic but varied for the virtual sessions. It was difficult to do too much more, but most project delivery partners consulted suggested they would have liked more. Feedback suggests they would have benefitted with more networking and best practice sharing events. For example, how to target and engage participants.
- ∞ Undue stress was put on delivery partners, particularly from community sector organisations, through worry over financial clawbacks. The PEAT Project team also felt this pressure too and there was little more they could've done to lessen this.
- ∞ All project delivery partners, participants and other stakeholders suggested there is still a need for this or a similar programme. However, the PEAT Project legacy is difficult to determine for the following reasons:
 - The impact of Brexit and Covid-19 is not yet fully realised. Furthermore, current issues, such as the Russian war with Ukraine, rising inflation (as manifested by increasing fuel and energy prices, as well as other costs of living) and likely recession, are likely to have a far greater impact on local employment outcomes than the PEAT Project could ever have.
 - Most project delivery partners have moved onto other projects / funding streams. Some people may have lost their job with the funding coming to an end. As most staff

are local, this will add to the unemployed population. It will also result in the loss of knowledge about 'what works, for who, and in what circumstances' amongst delivery partners. Furthermore, individual participants will cease to be supported by the people they have built a trusted relationship with.

- There is a gap between when the European funding ends and when the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is available. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is the lead authority to administer UKSPF locally. WYCA has not been involved in the PEAT Project and so may not be primed to consider VCSE, community-led organisations when making funding decisions.

Lessons

Lessons for grant recipient/ project delivery body

- ∞ Grant recipients generally under-estimated the amount of paperwork required and the impact on resource. It is important that adequate time is built into funding bids for this.
- ∞ There were organisations delivering similar active in the same areas. It could be beneficial to undertake research up front about what is needed, how it should be delivered and who else is active in the same space to ensure the work is adding value.

Lessons for those designing and implementing similar interventions

- ∞ The effectiveness of the project delivery partners is well recognised at programme and project level. However, the impact and learning could be shared with wider stakeholders, including other employment delivery organisations and policy makers, for example, other parts of Wakefield Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Leeds City Region LEP, and JCP/DWP.
- ∞ Delivery partners could be more carefully selected in some places. This includes ensuring there are no other better placed organisation in the area and that there is no/limited cross over in terms of target areas/participants.
- ∞ Ensure new projects/programmes compliment existing activity and they do not duplicate or create competition. This does not only waste resource but can create disharmony.
- ∞ Wherever possible (it was difficult here due to the limited number of interested parties), try to avoid allocating project delivery partners to the Board as it has the potential to create conflict.
- ∞ Consider further synergy in programme design where delivery partners are doing the same work. For example, joint marketing activity (or the development of assets that could be used) or recruitment, or training on compliance.
- ∞ As demonstrated by the PEAT Project, employment support often does not work in isolation from other support. Consider further

synergy with other relevant non-employment support programmes in the area such as mental health services.

- ∞ Consider how cross-referrals could work where all partners involved could claim a 'fair' amount.
- ∞ The targeting or eligibility by postcode is counterproductive - especially for SMEs. It is frustrating for individuals and delivery partners to exclude someone who has similar barriers.
- ∞ It would be beneficial to continually review how success is measured and ensure it is embedded into project delivery.
- ∞ Consider the benefits of regular networking between delivery partners and orchestrating that.
- ∞ Different users prefer different engagement approaches (i.e. online vs face to face). Consider approaches which allow for both.
- ∞ Ensure enough resource is allocated for supporting delivery partners with claims, compliance and other issues.

Lessons for policy makers

- ∞ VCSE and community-led organisations play a valuable role in reaching participants furthest from the labour market, and engaging them in effective and appropriate ways. The bespoke, tailored approach is resource intensive, but delivers good value for money.
- ∞ Consider the implications of short-term funding for delivery organisations. It creates job insecurity for delivery staff and the sustainability of the organisation.

- ∞ Careful consideration of an exit strategy and succession planning beyond programme end is needed.
- ∞ There exists a lot of good practice and success stories from the PEAT Project. It was already flexible offering holistic targeted support. Arguably it became more flexible, holistic, and targeted throughout Covid-19. This is something to build on and could be implemented elsewhere.
- ∞ Benefits in programmes like the PEAT Project are often realised well after the after programme ended. Consider a mechanism for capturing these later.

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTEES

We would like to thank the following people for their support and input to this evaluation.

Organisation	Name
Bridge It Housing	Nathan Collins
Castleford Tigers	Simon Fox
Cert ltd	Neil King
Coalfields Regeneration Trust	Mikayla Harper
Frickley Athletic	Jan Procter
Newground	Koren Knapp
Nova	Julie Baker
RCP21	Karen Harrison
Rycroft leisure	Eleanor Bradbury
Rycroft leisure	Hilary Adamson
SESKU Academy	Adam Redfern
WDH	Natalie Grinsill
LAG Board Member	Ward Richards
LAG Board Member	Cllr Maureen Cummings
LAG Board Member	Cllr Leslie Shaw
LAG Board Member	Michael Dixon
LAG Board Member	Maddy Sutcliffe
Wakefield Council	Helen Purvis
Wakefield Council	Sinead Graham
Wakefield Council	Liz West

APPENDIX 2: VALUE FOR MONEY SOURCES

The following sources were used for the value for money benchmarks:

- ∞ Tideway Ex-offender: Evaluation of Commitment 43, Forever Consulting, 2020
- ∞ Community Matters BBO: Community Matters Final Evaluation, Forever Consulting, 2020
- ∞ Hull CLLD: Hull Community Led Local Development Annual Interim Report (Year 3), Forever Consulting 2021 (final figures may change)
- ∞ Family Matters: Family Matters Evaluation, Forever Consulting, 2022
- ∞ Interim Evaluation of Hastings CHART CLLD Programme, Forever Consulting, 2022 (final figures may change)
- ∞ Year Three Evaluation of Hull CLLD Programme, Forever Consulting, 2021 (final figures may change)

Table A2:1 highlights the values used in the SRoI assessment.

Table A2:1 SRoI Values

Outcomes	Monetised Benefits	Value	Source
Moved into education or training	Annual wellbeing value of taking a part-time adult learning course that improves job prospects	£754	The Social Impact of Housing Providers, Fujiwara, D. (2013)
Moved into employment (including self employment)	Value to the economy (GVA) of a person being in employment	£49,159	ONS Sub regional productivity, GVA per filled job (2020 figures published in 2022) - Table B3. Applied 2020 figure for Wakefield
Moved into job search	Annual Wellbeing value of regular job search or employment support	£1,773	The Social Impact of Community Investment , HACT, 2014. Average annual wellbeing value per person of 'Regular attendance at voluntary or local organisation' - assuming the participant will be attending to conduct job search activities or access employment related support
Participants gained level 2 or below qualification	Average annual economic benefit of gaining a level 2 qualification	£1,012	New Economy Unit Cost Database - Education tab, average of cells M22-M24
Participants gained level 3 or below qualification	Average annual economic benefit of gaining a level 3 qualification	£1,456	New Economy Unit Cost Database - Education tab, average of cells M34-M36
Participants report increased confidence	Annual wellbeing value of feeling confident and in control of life	£12,775	The Social Impact of Community Investment , HACT, 2014. Average of the annual wellbeing values per person of 'high confidence' and 'feel in control of life'
Improved ability to interact with other people	Annual wellbeing value of being able to socialise and meet others	£3,000	The Social Impact of Housing Providers, Fujiwara, D. (2013)

Improved mental wellbeing	Average annual cost saving of service provision for adults suffering from depression and/or anxiety disorders, per person per year - fiscal and economic costs	£5,208	New Economy Unit Cost Database, 2022 - Health tab, cell M71
Participants have increased income and less financial stress	Wellbeing value of 'financial comfort' (moving from a state of low financial comfort to higher financial comfort) annual value per person per year	£8,917	The Social Impact of Community Investment , HACT, 2014
Participants improve their computer/digital skills	Annual value of having regular access to the internet	£2,413	The Health Impact of Housing Associations' Community Investment Activities, HACT, 2015.
Participants take part in volunteering opportunities	Annual health and wellbeing value of volunteering regularly (volunteer at least once per month for at least two months)	£3,199	HACT Social Value Calculator V4, 2018. Annual health and wellbeing value of regular volunteering outside of London
Ethnically diverse participants have enhanced understanding of the English language and work-related skills	Value of learning English/ cost saving of ESOL classes	£1,020	Based on information provided by a CLLD provider in Hull. They told us the service at Hull College is £1,020 per year for 2 days of learning per week, plus exam fees.

APPENDIX 3: CASE STUDIES

Names of all participants and delivery partners have been changed to maintain anonymity.

Participant A

Participant A found out about the support at a youth centre. They were offering support with developing CV's. He didn't know how to write a CV and thought it would be beneficial, so he went to the delivery partner to get this help and access further support for gaining employment.

He spoke with the delivery partner on a regular basis, at least weekly for around three months. He wanted to work in the construction industry. The delivery partner explained that he needed a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Card to do what he wanted. The support was tailored towards accessing this. This included being given access to online practice tests.

The delivery partner had to explore different options for A to complete the training so he could gain access to his card. He needed support paying for the service and there were difficulties due to Covid as he wanted to complete his training face to face.

A also lacked motivational skills and often struggled to get out of bed. The delivery partner contacted him the day before his first test to ensure he had everything he needed and that he knew where he was going. They also contacted him on the morning of the test to ensure he was up!

A successfully completed the level 1 Health and Safety in Construction course. He followed this up with another construction related certificate. At the time of speaking, A was getting close to gaining access to his CSCS card and hopeful of following this up by gaining employment.

He was very happy with the support provided and with himself for getting to where he had to date.

He had not only improved his qualifications in an area of interest but had improved his confidence, self-worth, and time-keeping skills.

Participant B

Participant B had been out of work for over a year and lacked confidence.

She was referred to the delivery partner by a friend who suggested it may help them gain work. She was also lonely and wanted to socialise more and wanted a role where she could help others.

But she didn't have any relevant qualifications. It was agreed that a sensible first step would be to volunteer initially, and a placement was secured in an agency providing financial advice. She started with around ten hours a week which increased over time.

The placement was a great success as she received on-the-job training which eventually led to a paid part-time role at this agency.

This was a very positive outcome, that not only led to paid employment but also improved her confidence and allowed her to socialise.

Participant C

Participant C was over 50 years old and had been unemployed for several years (with the odd short-term work). He had lost all self-worth, was becoming increasingly isolated and didn't think he would ever work again.

His neighbour told him about the support offered [via the PEAT Project]. He received a wide range of support for over 18 months from the delivery partner. This started with regular encouragement to engage with them after he had initially contacted the delivery partner.

After they had built his confidence and trust up, Participant C started to regularly attend the delivery partner's office. He received help with developing a CV, preparing for interviews in terms of preparing him for questions but also help with sourcing suitable clothes to wear. He had several rejections which hit him hard each time but they kept encouraging him to come back (often through numerous phone calls) and working through the feedback with him. This included how he could respond to similar questions again in the future.

He finally secured employment as a security officer. His well-being has improved immeasurably. He enjoys the role so much he hopes to stay in it until he retires.

Participant D

Participant D was unemployed for over two years and had never held down a regular job. The reason for this was he found his work boring, and he was happy enough claiming benefits.

He had been encouraged to go for support by a friend, but he was sceptical thinking they would force him into work he didn't want.

He was very happy that the delivery partner was willing to listen to him and that the support was tailored to what he wanted to do. Following several conversations about his interests and skills, he decided that a role in security may be of interest.

He received support developing his CV and with interview skills. He was also supported with gaining a Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence. The delivery partner had a great relationship with a local employer who provided security. They were able to secure employment with them.

He feels this would not have been possible without the support provided. He has been in that role for almost a year and he really enjoys it. This is one of the longest he has been in a role.

Participant E

Participant E was a single mum, who was out of work, and struggled with her mental health. She had little support with childcare. The one thing that really helped was staying active by going to the gym.

Covid hit her really hard. She struggled to cope with no time away from her children and was unable to afford her gym membership anymore.

She became increasingly isolated and depressed. It impacted upon her sleep and eating. She also fell out with her friends. When Covid restrictions were lifted she couldn't motivate herself to get out of the house or become active again.

She eventually contacted the project delivery partner for help when she felt she had nowhere else to turn. The focus of the support was around helping her regain her motivation and improving her mental health. This took months but it has had many benefits including improvements to her mental wellbeing, increased confidence and motivation, eating and sleeping better, making new friends as well as repairing old friendships, attending new groups including bingo and organised walks, and she has started going to the gym again.

She is now back into part-time employment and feels like she has better mechanisms for coping with stress. This has not only helped her but also her children as she is a much happier mum.

Participant F

Participant F lived alone, had very low self-esteem and so kept herself away from people, and was unfit.

One day she decided she had to change and walked into one of the project delivery partners. By the end of her first discussion, she had agreed to improve her employment prospects. It was decided that to enable this she had to improve her confidence and that this could be achieved by improving her health and well-being.

She therefore, agreed to join a Couch to 5k running programme. The project delivery team would call her up to ensure she was going for her

first few runs. It didn't take long before she was joining up with the other runners on the programme twice a week – regardless of the weather.

She very quickly started to lose weight and make friends, this in turn improved her self-esteem. It wasn't long after this that she got a part-time job in a shop. This was followed soon after by another part-time role in a bar. Additionally she volunteered as a carer.

She has held her two part-time roles for over six months now and continues to run regularly. She socialises with people outside work and with her running club.

Participant G

Participant G wanted to be a childminder. She had started the relevant training but would regularly miss courses due to anxiety. She was referred to the PEAT Project delivery partner to help build her confidence.

G wasn't confident enough to go to the delivery partners offices at first. They agreed to meet her with a friend where she had her initial training. After, two or three meetings, G was confident enough to meet elsewhere so they suggested the local library, which would help her get used to going to different places.

Then Covid hit and they were unable to meet. The delivery partner continued to support her over the phone. G completed several online courses through the project. Once she completed all these courses she was referred to an adult education organisation, where she enrolled on distance learning courses to help her with her ambition to

find work in schools once her daughter started full-time school in September 2021.

At that point, G had achieved a successful 'outcome'. However, the delivery partner continued to support her throughout her education. She received support after her marriage ended and didn't know how to claim benefits, or what she was entitled to. She also received help applying for her DBS and later they helped her secure a role in a school. G was also unsure whether she would be better off working part rather than full-time. The delivery partner helped her understand the financial implications of losing her Universal Credit, having additional childcare costs against working full time.

This case study demonstrated the benefit of continuing to offer support even after the participant had secured a successful outcome. If they hadn't, G would likely have left her training course and be unemployed again.

Participant H

Participant H recently moved to Wakefield from overseas. She moved here on her own with three children. She developed a good network of friends but struggled to find support accessing finance.

She was put in touch with a project delivery partner by one of her friends. They supported her with an application for Universal Credit, which was declined. In the short-term, the delivery partner helped her access foodbanks so she could feed her family. They then helped her into part-time employment by developing her CV, helping identify roles

that suited the hours she could work and conducting job searches for her.

This was just a temporary position but gave her some vital work experience and money. The delivery partner then enrolled her on to an English language course which would help her accessing other employment opportunities. The delivery partner continues to support her and are confident she will be in full-time employment soon.

Participant I

Participant I had been unemployed for over 2 years and claiming benefits for a disability. This long-term unemployment had impacted his confidence. Previously he had held several diverse roles.

He registered with a delivery partner and was keen to gain voluntary roles. This was partly to improve his confidence but also to socialise as he felt increasingly isolated.

The delivery partner put him in touch with a local employer who took him on as a volunteer on a short-term basis. However, he provided such a valuable contribution, he still had this role 12 months later. His confidence is restored, his well-being improved and he has learnt a range of new skills including general maintenance, team work and customer service.

The delivery partner has begun supporting him again as he is now ready to look for full-time paid employment.

Participant J

Participant J left school with limited qualifications and was unsure of what to do. She attended a youth club where she heard about the support on offer through the PEAT Project.

The project delivery partner provided her with some career's advice. J had always wanted to help people so she was encouraged to work towards a role in the care sector. The project supported her gaining residential care qualifications.

They then helped her apply for a job in a local residential care home. This included interview practice. She was successful in getting the role and has worked there for over 12 months now. She regularly walks past the project centre and pops into say hello and occasionally ask for where she can get support on different issues.