

Mulvey, Gail ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0894-3065> (2023) Evaluation of the Copeland Work and Skills Programme (Building Momentum 2019-2022), final report. (Unpublished)

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/7053/>

*Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.*

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

**provided that**

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
  - a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

**You may not**

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing [insight@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:insight@cumbria.ac.uk).

**Evaluation of the Copeland Work and Skills  
Programme (Building Momentum 2019-2022)**

**FINAL REPORT**

*Prepared for  
Copeland Borough Council*

*February 2023*

***Author:***

***Dr. Gail C. Mulvey***

*Centre for Regional Economic Development  
Institute of Business, Industry and Leadership, University of Cumbria,  
Brampton Road Campus, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8AY  
T: 01228 242285 [www.cumbria.ac.uk/cred](http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/cred)*

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	
1.1 Aims of this research	<b>6</b>
1.2 Methods	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Assessment of Need</b>	
2.1 Unemployment Rate	<b>8</b>
2.2 Economic Inactivity	<b>8</b>
2.3 Employment Rate	<b>9</b>
2.4 Job postings and vacancies	<b>10</b>
2.5 Skill levels	<b>11</b>
2.6 Start-ups and business growth	<b>12</b>
<b>3 Review of the CWSP: Part I – Programme Data</b>	
3.1 Evidence of effective delivery across the 6 Programme workstreams	<b>14</b>
3.2 Performance against aims and objectives	<b>16</b>
3.3 Performance against outputs and outcomes	<b>17</b>
3.4 Evaluation of Programme Monitoring and Management	<b>18</b>
3.5 Assessment of employer engagement	<b>19</b>
3.6 Assessment of the Programme's value for money	<b>19</b>
3.7 Assessment of the Programme's added value	<b>20</b>
<b>4 Review of the CWSP: Part II – Interviews with members of the Partnership</b>	
4.1 Evidence on performance against aims and objectives	<b>21</b>
4.2 Evidence on Partnership engagement	<b>23</b>
4.3 Evidence on Value Added	<b>24</b>
4.4 Evidence of the CWS Partnership's performance against outputs and outcomes	<b>27</b>

4.5	Additional comments on the management and meetings of the CWSP	29
4.6	Improvements in the CWSP over time	29
<b>5</b>	<b>Review of the CWSP: Part III – Interviews with external partners</b>	
5.1	External Partners	30
5.2	Interview Analysis	31
5.3	Concluding Comment	34
<b>6.</b>	<b>Strategy Alignment</b>	
6.1	National Level Policies and their relevance to the CWSP	35
6.2	Regional Level Policies and their relevance to the CWSP	36
<b>7</b>	<b>Future Programme Delivery</b>	
7.1	Duplication of services provided by members of the CWSP	37
7.2	Current gaps in provision	37
7.3	Appropriateness of an emphasis on pathways into self-employment and enterprise	37
7.4	Further engagement of external partners and employers	38
<b>8</b>	<b>Concluding Comments</b>	<b>39</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	Copeland Work & Skills Programme Evaluation: Programme Member Consultations	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	Copeland Work & Skills Programme Evaluation: External Partner Consultations	<b>43</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	CWSP Members	<b>45</b>

## **TABLES**

	<b>Page</b>
1. Numbers in employment and Employment rates in Copeland, Cumbria and the NW	8
2. Numbers and proportion of the population qualified to Level NVQ 2 and above	9
3. Target and Final Outputs of the CWSPP	15
4. Changes made to target outputs in the Programme	17
5. Provision of services by Partner members	20
6. Degree of interaction between Partner members	22

## **FIGURES**

	<b>Page</b>
1. Standard Claimant Rate, August 2020 – August 2022	6
2. Comparative rates of inactivity in Copeland, Cumbria and the NW, 2009-22	7
3. Employment Rates in Copeland, Cumbria and the NW, 2009-22	7
4. Proportion of the population with NVQ Level 2+ qualifications, Copeland, Cumbria and the NW	10
5. Registrations of New Businesses, districts of Cumbria	10
6. Numbers of businesses experiencing a 10% or more decline or growth in their annual turnover, Cumbria Districts	11

### **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to those individuals who agreed to be interviewed as part of this research. The author, however, remains responsible for the interpretation of data and presentation of interview findings. We would also like to thank the Programme Manager for his assistance in providing the information necessary to conduct the evaluation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In September 2022, the Centre for Regional Economic Development (CRED) at the University of Cumbria was commissioned by Copeland Borough Council to evaluate the success, both in terms of performance and impact, of the 2019-22 Copeland Work and Skills Partnership (CWSP) Programme “Building Momentum” and, in so doing, to also consider what the priorities should be for the proposed next Programme of delivery.
2. Three sources of data were used to conduct the evaluation: a) CWSP Programme (CWSP) management data; b) Interview data gathered from Partnership members and Project Board members and c) Interview data gathered from external partners of the CWSP. In addition, statistical sources and reports at the Government and local government levels were examined to assess ongoing need for Programmes to reduce worklessness in Copeland and their alignment to strategies at the County and national levels.
3. The trend rates of unemployment and employment in Copeland over the past few years have been favourable and both are better than the national and NW averages. However, during the pandemic, levels of economic inactivity increased more considerably in both Copeland and Cumbria as a whole relative to elsewhere in the NW and it appears that there may be a greater legacy in Copeland. This is particularly important given the labour shortage that is now visible across many sectors of the economy.
4. The Cumbria Intelligence Observatory’s Labour Market Review for September 2022 reports that the volume of 16-64 year olds who are actively engaged with the labour market has decreased by approximately 12,000 in the past three years and that the occupations most in demand in Cumbria are nurses, care workers, customer services, administration and kitchen/catering assistants. This would indicate a need for any new CWSP to provide training opportunities and work experience in these areas.
5. Statistics on the numbers and proportion of the population qualified to level NVQ 2+ show a marked actual and relative (compared to Cumbria and the NW) improvement in Copeland since 2015 which is a commendable achievement.
6. Statistics on both the numbers of start-ups and businesses experiencing a 10% or more growth in annual turnover in Copeland are markedly lower than in other districts of Cumbria which would indicate a need for an increased emphasis of a new CWSP being on the encouragement of enterprise and the matching of workers to the needs of local employers.
7. A review of evidence obtained from the CWSP Management data shows a good degree of success in four (Provision of bespoke support; Use of an Employability Fund; Provision of IAG to CWSP members; Sector Development) of the six workstreams.
8. However, there has been more muted success in delivery of the Apprenticeship and Wage Subsidy workstreams. This, almost certainly, is due to the unprecedented times which we have witnessed due to the Covid pandemic in 2020-21. Completion rates of apprenticeships and wage-subsidised training and employment have been adversely affected.
9. A request to alter target outputs as a result of changes to the CWSP due to Covid was granted and apart from the number of apprentices completing courses (7 as opposed to a target 20), all of the expected outputs of the Programme were achieved and some massively superseded (eg. those engaged in sector development).

10. Employer engagement has led to local vacancies being filled in the following sectors: Health & Social Care; Leisure & Fitness; Transport; Engineering & Maintenance; and Security.
11. In terms of value for money over the three years, 396 individuals have engaged with the Programme and 72 people have received offers of employment. The cost per job offer at £6,385 is low given the multiplier effect of the assumed minimum wage acquired by someone who is then employed as a result of the Programme.
12. During October 2022, a total of 12 interviews were conducted with CWSP member organisations, 3 of whom were also Project Board members. The majority of the semi-structured interviews lasted from 45-60 minutes and were conducted at member organisation's premises. However, four were conducted online, lasting 30-45 minutes, with those who found it to be a more convenient method.
13. Partner members were found to offer a wide range of services deemed essential to reducing worklessness. Two thirds of members stated that they provided mental and/or physical support to unemployed individuals, an area of need that was found to be growing in the last CRED evaluation undertaken in 2018.
14. There is a very high (working with at least six other partners) degree of interaction between at least one-third of Partner members due to cross referrals of individuals. However, at least half of members appear to have interactions with fewer than four other members of the Partnership. Despite engagement in the Partnership being asymmetrical, all members interviewed found the existence of the Partnership to be either very important or quite important in helping them to achieve their own organisations' objectives. They were also unanimous in viewing the partnership as an important supportive network of members with whom they could share their experiences.
15. Partner members were broadly unanimous in their belief that the CWSP was achieving its target outcomes and providing added value and they particularly praised the CWSP Project Officers for their approachability, helpfulness, communication and efficiency.
16. The quarterly meetings of the CWSP had necessarily moved online during the Covid pandemic but now that this was over, one-third of interviewees thought that they should revert to being face-to-face. It would seem that a mix of on-line and face-to-face meetings should be chosen in future in order to capture the benefits of both methods of provision.
17. In November 2022, eight interviews were conducted with seven of the external partner organisations of the CWSP, these being local employers. The semi-structured interviews lasted 20-35 minutes and took place either at their premises (5) or online via TEAMS (3).
18. The CWSP perceives there to be a number of benefits from engagement with external partners and equally, partners were in agreement that their collaboration with the Partnership had played an important role in helping the unemployed: to find jobs; to reskill for employment in their sector; and to obtain pre-employment skills. They also found the relationship to be an important means for informing job seekers about their sector and for some employers, a means by which to find suitable job applicants.
19. The aims of the CWSP are closely aligned to a number of national (The Government's Levelling Up Agenda, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) and regional (The Borderlands Growth Deal) strategies and policies. It will also be important for the CWSP to engage with the new Cumbria Skills Action Plan.

## **1. Introduction**

The Copeland Work and Skills Partnership (CWSP) was established in May 2009 to bring together organisations in the Borough which were addressing worklessness and supporting the needs of those who were claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or incapacity benefit, and in particular, those aged under 25 and NEET. It was felt that coordination and sharing of information on those who were out of work and possible programmes to support them into employment or skills development would both aid delivery across the Borough, improve outcomes for clients and Programmes and thereby help narrow the gap between Copeland's employment rate and skill levels with those of the rest of Cumbria and the North West of England. The CWSP has received funding to develop and run a Programme that would aid the work of the Partnership in achieving certain objectives related to improving employability, upskilling and re-skilling of people living in the Borough.

In 2015, the Centre for Regional Economic Development (CRED) at the University of Cumbria was commissioned to conduct a review and assessment of the CWSP to see primarily what gaps and duplication there might be in the provision of programmes to reduce worklessness in Copeland and also to evaluate the success of the Partnership's Programme (CWSPP).

Following this, an extended Programme of activity with the involvement of more partners was funded between 2016-19 and a second evaluation was conducted by CRED in 2018. Suggestions for future development of the CWSPP, in particular to take account of the increased need for welfare services due to changes in the welfare system (move from Job Seekers Allowance to Universal Credit) and an increased need to support those furthest away from the labour market, were incorporated in a programme of work for 2019-22 entitled "Building Momentum."

### **1.1 Aims of this research**

It is the aim of this research to evaluate the success both in terms of performance and impact of the 2019-2022 CWSPP "Building Momentum" and in so doing, to also consider what the priorities should be for the proposed next Programme of delivery. The evaluation as stated in the Project Brief should take account of the following:

- Evidence of effective delivery across the Programme's six workstreams
- Performance against aims and objectives
- Performance against outputs and outcomes
- Programme monitoring and engagement
- Environmental and external factors
- Partnership engagement
- Employer engagement
- Value for money
- Added value.

### **1.2 Methods**

In conducting an evaluation of the current CWSPP, there are three sources of data:

- 1) Programme management data, collated and made available by the CWSP Programme Manager who has also undertaken his own Programme Review of years 1 and 2 of the

current programme. This data is mainly of a quantitative nature. This forms the subject content of section 3 of this report.

- 2) Interview data gathered from Partnership members and Project Board members, providing a wealth of qualitative data on the success of the Partnership and recommendations for further delivery of programmes. This forms the subject content of section 4 of this report.
- 3) Interview data gathered from external partners of the CWSP, providing qualitative data on their experiences and views of working with the Partnership. This forms the subject content of section 5 of this report.

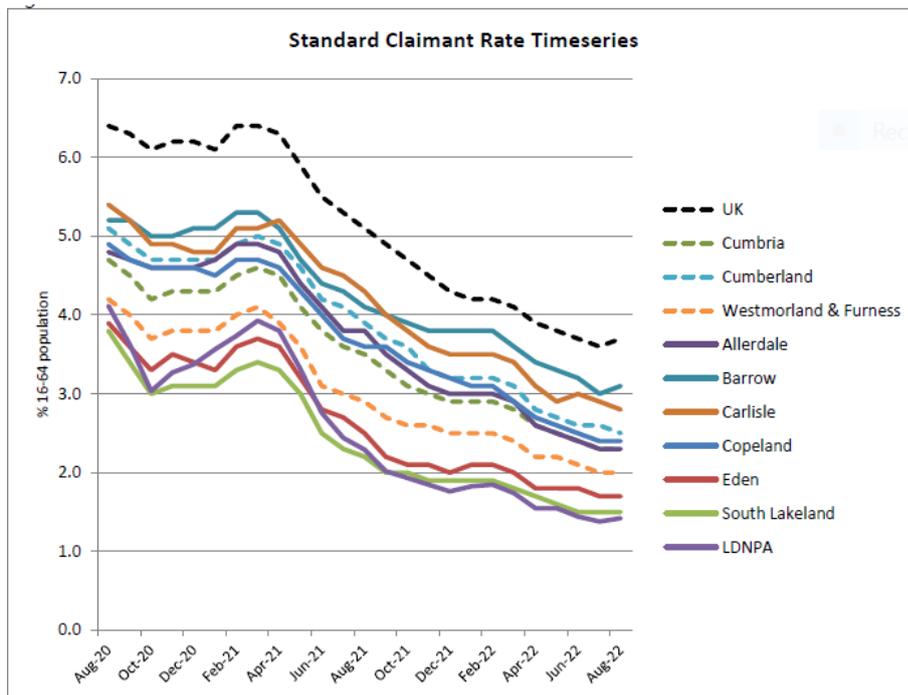
In order to deliberate on future delivery, we must also look at the ongoing need for programmes to reduce worklessness and increase skill levels of the population of the Borough (content of Section 2 of this report) and consider alignment of objectives with those of other policies/strategies at the county and national levels (content of Section 6 of this report). Research for these sections is desk-based using statistical sources and reports at the Government and Local Government levels.

## 2. Assessment of Need

### 2.1 Unemployment rate

The primary aim of the CWSP Programme has always been to try and reduce the level of worklessness in Copeland. The latest data for Copeland (available for 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022) shows the claimant count to be lower than in November 2019 (the comparable number pre-pandemic) whereas at the County level, it is 480 persons higher. Although the Unemployed claimant rate for all claimants in Copeland, at 2.6% of the workforce, is below the national average of 3.6%, this is not the case for those in the age groups 18-24 (4.5%) and 25-34 (3.6%). There is therefore a need for action to try and reduce these percentages.

**Figure 1: Standard Claimant Rate, August 2020- August 2022**



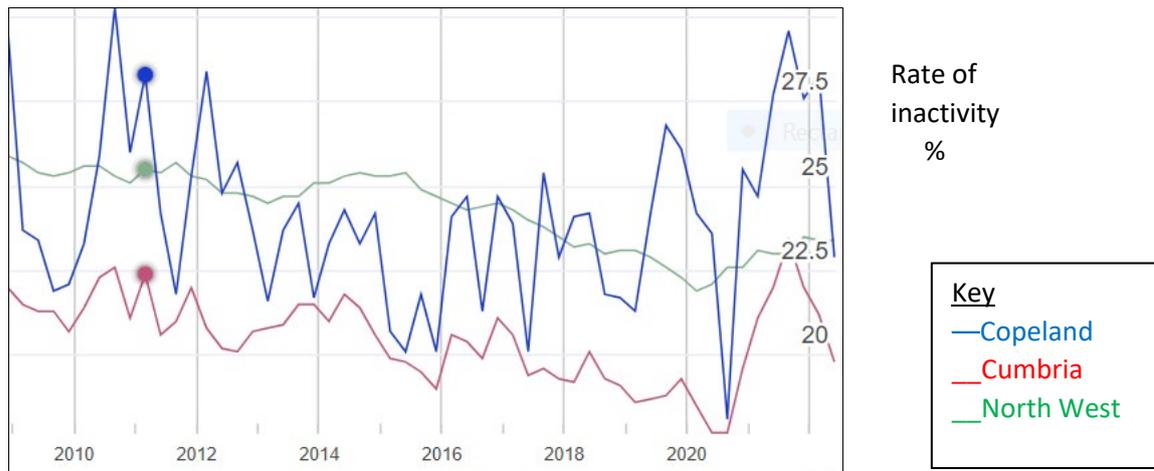
Source: “Labour Market Briefing Sep. 2022,” *Cumbria Intelligence Observatory*, p. 9.  
Secondary Source: Office for National Statistics / DWP

In the year to November 2022, there was a reduction of 285 in the number of people claiming Universal Credit in Copeland which represented a 0.7% reduction in the rate and this compared to a reduction of 0.6% in Cumbria as a whole and 0.9% in the UK. The time series for all age groups over the last couple of years can be seen in Figure 1. Clearly this is a positive trend and, one could argue, reduces the imperative for the CWSP (the claimant rate in 2009 when the CWSP began was approximately 13.7%).

### 2.2 Economic inactivity

Levels of economic inactivity have been notably higher in Copeland than in Cumbria but were generally lower than those in the NW throughout the period 2013-19. The Covid pandemic appears to have had a much greater detrimental effect on economic inactivity in Copeland (and Cumbria) than elsewhere in the NW and this has been borne out in the interviews with CWSP Board members (see Fig. 2).

**Figure 2: Comparative rates of inactivity in Copeland, Cumbria and the NW, 2009-2022**

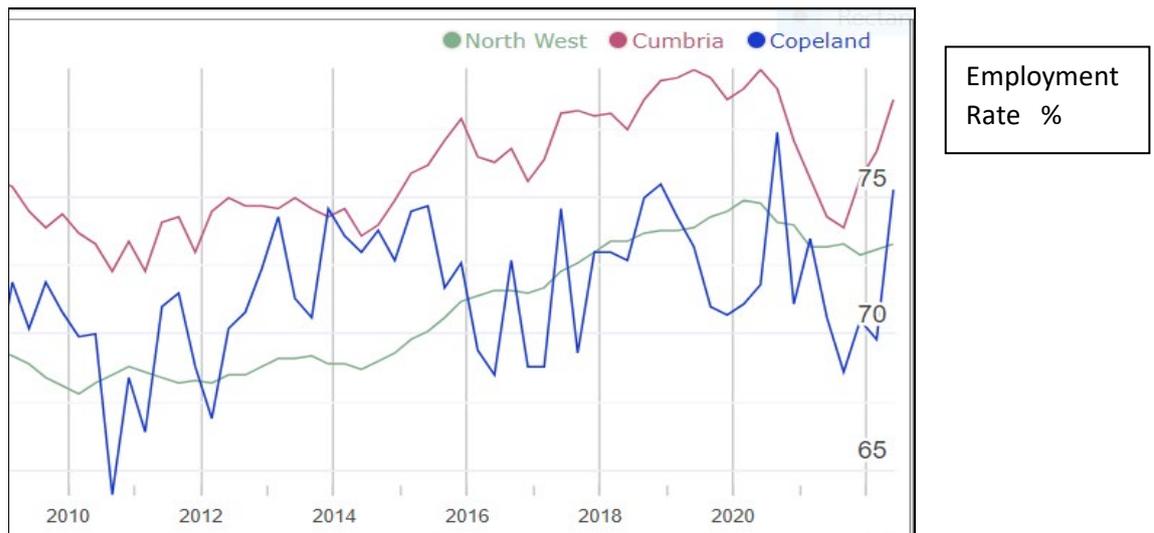


Source: “Labour Market Briefing Sep. 2022,” Cumbria Intelligence Observatory

### 2.3 Employment Rate

Time series data for the employment rate in Copeland with comparators of Cumbria and the NW can be seen in Table 1. The period shown dates from the previous CRED evaluation for 2018. Both the numbers in employment and the employment rate are very variable for Copeland and due to large confidence limits in the data, it is difficult to detect any overall narrowing of the gap between the Borough’s rate and those of Cumbria and the NW since the CWSP began in 2009 (see Fig. 3). However, data for the last quarter (Sep. 2022) shows a marked increase in the numbers of people in employment in Copeland and a resulting employment rate of 77.3%, a rate that is now markedly above that of the NW.

**Figure 3: Employment Rates in Copeland, Cumbria and the NW, 2009-2022**



Source: NOMIS

**Table 1: Numbers in employment and Employment rates in Copeland, Cumbria and the NW.**

<b>Year Ending</b>	<b>Numbers in employment in Copeland</b>	<b>Employment Rate in Copeland</b>	<b>Employment Rate in Cumbria</b>	<b>Employment Rate in the NW</b>
Jun 2017	32,200	74.6	78.1	72.3
Sep 2017	30,300	69.3	78.2	72.6
Dec 2017	32,000	73.0	78.0	73.0
Mar 2018	32,300	73.0	78.1	73.4
Jun 2018	31,200	72.7	77.5	73.4
Sep 2018	32,500	75.0	78.6	73.7
Dec 2018	33,100	75.5	79.3	73.8
Mar 2019	31,000	74.3	79.4	73.8
Jun 2019	30,800	73.2	79.7	73.9
Sep 2019	29,700	71.0	79.4	74.3
Dec 2019	29,600	70.7	78.6	74.5
Mar 2020	29,800	71.1	79.0	74.9
Jun 2020	30,300	71.8	79.7	74.8
Sep 2020	32,400	77.4	79.0	74.1
Dec 2020	29,000	71.1	77.1	74.0
Mar 2021	31,000	73.5	75.7	73.2
Jun 2021	30,100	70.6	74.3	73.2
Sep 2021	29,300	68.6	73.9	73.3
Dec 2021	29,900	70.5	75.7	72.9
Mar 2022	29,300	69.8	76.7	73.1
Jun 2022	31,200	75.3	78.6	73.3
Sep 2022	33,900	77.3	80.9	73.4

*Source: NOMIS*

## **2.4 Job postings and vacancies**

Whilst one might argue that the overall positive trends in the unemployment and employment rates for Copeland over the past few years reduce the imperative for the CWSP to address worklessness, there is now a pressing need at all geographic levels in the UK to increase the size of the workforce. Following Brexit and the Covid pandemic, the economy has seen a shrinkage in the size of the overall workforce with people taking early retirement, the numbers of EU immigrants decreasing and people reporting long-term sickness, being contributory factors. Even before Brexit and Covid, Cumbria's population of working age had been contracting and fell by 20,200 or 6% over the 10 years to 2020, the fastest rate of decline in

any LEP area in England (LEP Skills Report, 2022, p. 9). Furthermore, the Cumbria Intelligence Observatory's *Labour Market Review* for September 2022 (p. 1) reports that the volume of 16-64 year olds who are actively engaged with the labour market (working or looking for work) in Cumbria is estimated to have decreased by approximately 12,000 in the past three years, half as a result of demographic change and half due to people disengaging from the labour market completely. In particular, the number of inactive working age residents who do not want a job has increased by 15% (6,800) whilst the volume who do want a job is unchanged. The data on the reasons for being inactive are unreliable due to sample size but indicate that there has been an increase in those who are long term sick, those who are retired and those who do not specify a reason.

The Cumbria Intelligence Observatory's *Labour Market Review* for September 2022 (p. 2) reports that the occupations most in demand in Cumbria are nurses, care workers, customer services, administration and kitchen/catering assistants with the job-related skills most in demand being those of nursing, auditing, midwifery and housekeeping. The personal attributes most in demand are communications, management, customer service, sales and leadership. It is therefore clear that any new CWSP should attempt to provide training opportunities and work experience in these areas.

## 2.5 Skill levels

On the skills front, there has been a large narrowing of the regional gap in the proportion of the population aged 16-64 in possession of NVQ Level 2+ qualifications. In Copeland, the percentage with such qualifications (77.4%) is now higher than that in both Cumbria (76.2%) and the NW (77.2%) (see Table 2 and Figure 4). It is not known the degree to which the CWSP has contributed to this narrowing but it is nevertheless a commendable achievement for Copeland.<sup>1</sup>

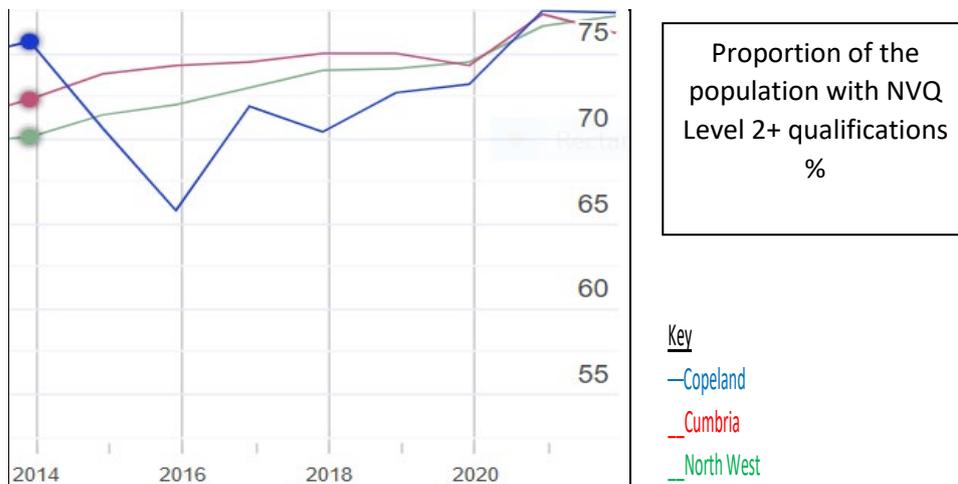
**Table 2: Numbers and proportion of the population qualified to level NVQ 2 and above**

Year Ending	Nos qualified in the working age pop'n in Copeland	% qualified of the working age pop'n in Copeland	% qualified of the working age pop'n in Cumbria	% qualified of the working age pop'n in the NW
Dec 2014	30,300	70.6	73.8	71.4
Dec 2015	27,300	65.8	74.3	72.0
Dec 2016	28,900	71.9	74.5	73.0
Dec 2017	29,600	70.4	75.0	74.0
Dec 2018	30,300	72.7	75.0	74.1
Dec 2019	29,000	73.2	74.3	74.5
Dec 2020	31,200	77.5	77.3	76.6
Dec 2021	30,800	77.4	76.2	77.2

Source: NOMIS

<sup>1</sup> It is noted that it was an objective of the Cumbria Skills Investment Plan 2016-20, that the proportion of the population of working age with that level of qualifications should increase from 74% to 76%.

**Figure 4: Proportion of the population with NVQ Level 2+ qualifications, Copeland, Cumbria and the NW**



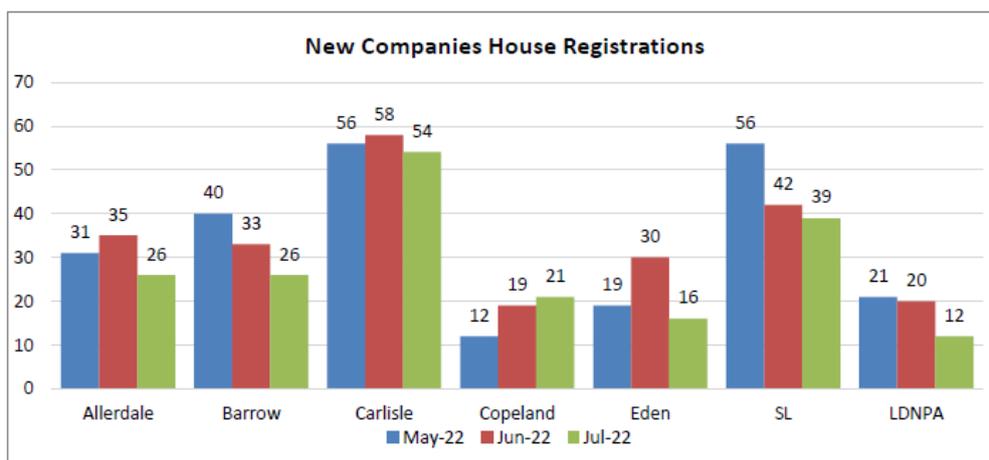
Source: NOMIS

Of direct relevance to the work of the CWSP are the rates of NEET. In 2021/22, the percentage of the cohort of those aged 16-17 who were NEET or Not Known in Copeland was a commendable 2.3% in comparison with a rate of 3.4% for Cumbria as a whole and 4.7% for England.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.6 Start-ups and business growth

Start-ups of businesses in Copeland remain low relative to those in other parts of Cumbria but nevertheless increased consistently over the second quarter of 2022 (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Registrations of New Businesses, districts of Cumbria**



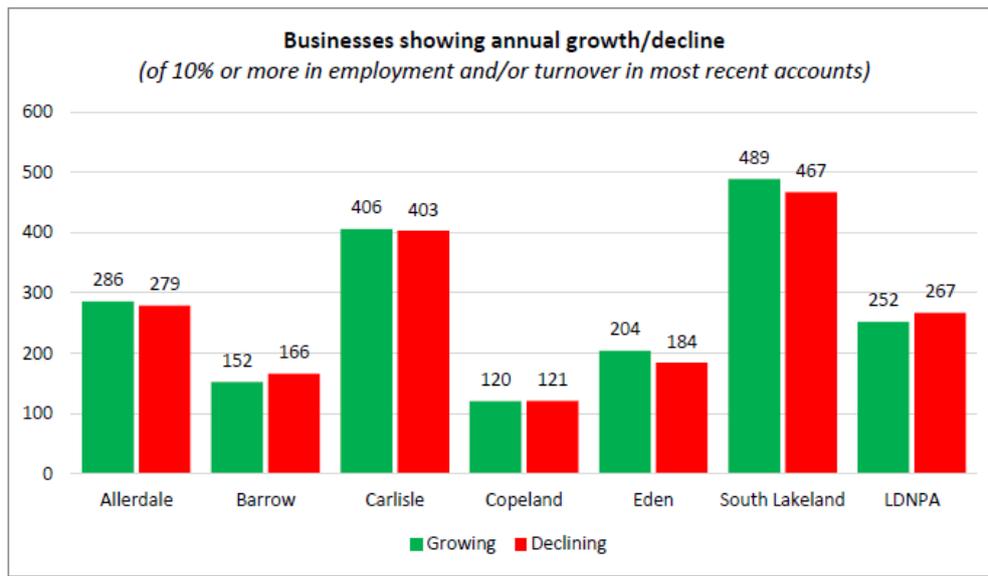
Source: BankSearch Note 1: LDNPA area is a "best-fit" comprising wards with 50%+ of area within NP. Note 2: LDNPA starts are also counted in the relevant district. Note 3: Data relate to registered office address.

Source: "Labour Market Briefing Sep. 2022," Cumbria Intelligence Observatory, p. 24

<sup>2</sup> Source: Cumbria Intelligence Observatory (2022) "NEET LA Tables," available at [NEET LA Tables \(cumbria.gov.uk\)](https://cumbria.gov.uk)

However, an equal number of businesses in Copeland have shown annual growth in employment or turnover of 10% or more in their last set of accounts as had recorded a 10% or more decline. This was not the case for all other districts of Cumbria (apart from Barrow) which saw a greater number experience an increase as opposed to a decrease (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Numbers of businesses experiencing a 10% or more decline or growth in their annual turnover, Cumbria Districts.**



Source: FAME (Bureau Van Dijk) NB: % is of all active businesses including those without financial results

Source: "Labour Market Briefing Sep. 2022," Cumbria Intelligence Observatory, p. 26

These findings, one can argue, indicate a need for an increased emphasis of the new CWSP being on the encouragement of enterprise and the matching of workers to the needs of local employers.

### **3 Review of the CWSP: Part I - Programme Data**

In this and the next two sections, we shall review the work of the CWSP over the period 2019-22 looking at its aims and objectives, outputs and outcomes, Programme management and added value. The three sources of data used are Programme Management data and interview data from interviews conducted both with Programme members and external partners. Each will be examined in turn.

#### **3.1 Evidence of effective delivery across the 6 Programme workstreams**

The workstreams in the CWSP 2019-22 are as follows:

- a) Apprenticeship subsidy
- b) Wage subsidy
- c) Sector development
- d) Bespoke support
- e) Employability fund
- f) Information, advice and guidance support

##### **a) Apprenticeships**

The aim of the apprenticeship subsidy has been to provide a subsidy towards intermediate and advanced apprentice salaries so as to entice smaller employers to support individuals into local employment. Although 29 individuals commenced an apprenticeship under the Programme, only 7 completed their level 2 or level 3 qualification during the 2019-22 period. The CWSP Final Report offers a number of explanations for this low level. Firstly, that the Covid-19 pandemic led some employers to lay off apprentices as they had to close their business. Others had to substitute workplace learning with online support and learning. This had not always proved to be an effective substitute and some qualification dates have had to be extended. Some apprentices have had to have a break in their learning or have left the Programme due to anxiety, mental health and stress caused by Covid. Secondly, some apprenticeship qualifications have been amended resulting in qualifications taking longer to achieve. Thirdly, the Report questions the motivations of some employers involved in apprenticeships with the inference being that they may be using apprentices as cheap labour as opposed to being young people in whom they should invest skills and support. The Final Report suggests that employers might in future include work trials before taking on apprentice candidates to increase completion rates.

##### **b) Use of the Wage subsidy**

To assist those individuals who were unemployed and finding it difficult to get work, a wage subsidy of £1,250 or £2,500 over a 26-week period was offered to employers as a contribution towards the wage and training costs of those unemployed people that they might take on. The number of wage subsidy starts on the Programme was 57 which exceeded the target 50 and was more or less equally split between numbers of males and females and part-time versus full-time employees helped. It also covered many sectors. The Final Report records that 39 out of the 57 (67%) starts completed 26 weeks of employment and 27 of the 57 (47%) received training either via Adult Learning in Copeland or in-house while in employment. 100% of those who completed 26 weeks went on to have a positive outcome, eg. they were either retained by the same employer (including being invited back for seasonal work), moved into employment with a different employer, or undertook further training/learning. Further

research on why more individuals did not complete their 26 weeks and/or receive training could be useful.

### **c) Sector development**

The sector development workstream of the Programme is focussed on delivering bespoke development programmes and shorter training packages for a range of key sectors: Digital, Construction, Manufacturing, Health and Social Care, Public sector, Retail and Hospitality & Tourism. It is aimed at meeting local employers' needs for workers and giving the unemployed the skills required for employment in those sectors as well as for sectors predicted to experience growth in the future.

As noted in section 2.4, there is high demand for people in the health and social care sector and so it is appropriate that under the CWSP, some unemployed residents have received training in the skills and knowledge required to work in that sector. Wyndham Manor Care Home in Cleator Moor also took on some of the trainees, filling vacancies within their business. Other sectors that were supported through skills training of the unemployed included the Transport sector; Security sector; Leisure and Fitness sector; Culture and Arts industry; Outdoor Adventure sector; Environmental Conservation sector; and Engineering sector where trainees were enabled to apply for vacancies within them. Self-employment was also boosted by giving unemployed residents an understanding of some of the essential skills and characteristics required to being self-employed.

However, there was less success at providing work opportunities for the unemployed in two other sectors that were targeted, namely, Tour Guiding; and Green Skills.

### **d) The delivery of bespoke support**

The CWSP Manager organised a whole series of workshops and sessions with external partner organisations aimed at delivering bespoke support to those unemployed residents referred to them. These have had the objectives of:

- Generating and increasing their self-confidence
- Improving their communication skills
- Showcasing employers' opportunities
- Improving their digital capabilities
- Helping them to cope with Covid
- Developing their teamwork skills
- Increasing work participation amongst those with neurodivergent conditions

and this workstream seems to have been very successful.

### **e) Use of the Employability Fund**

A fund to provide small amounts of money to individuals who might be facing financial barriers to accessing employment or training was set up as part of the CWSP. This has been a great success, supporting 58 individuals over the length of the Programme. Monies have been used to secure job offers; apprenticeship offers; start businesses; commence volunteering roles and enhance employment prospects. All of this was achieved at minimal cost too, with partners requesting on average a mere £188.50 from the Fund. However, the interviews conducted with Partner members confirm the recommendation in the CWSP Programme Manager's Final Report that there could be greater publicising of the Fund to Partner members in order that more people be assisted.

## **f) Information, advice and guidance support**

A workstream has provided funding aimed at upskilling delivery partners in their IAG skills. This has been very successful with 24 staff from the CWSP partner organisations taking such courses and 20 have gone on to complete their NVQ's in IAG at Levels 3 or 4. The CWSP Programme Manager's Final Report noted that "the up-skilling of partner practitioners provides a core foundation for the Partnership and ensures high-quality IAG is sustained."

## **3.2 Performance against aims and objectives**

The aims of the Copeland Work and Skills Programme 2019-22 are to:

- a. Improve co-ordination and shared learning, through facilitating the work of the Work & Skills Partnership;
- b. Directly support local individuals into work through upskilling and improving employability;
- c. Improve stakeholder networks with employers and local providers of welfare services maximising the benefit of programme delivery;
- d. Develop a programme framework that captures and monitors gaps and priorities, with a view to developing collaborative approaches across public, private and third sectors;

and to meet these aims, the Programmes' objectives were to deliver the following:

- An established programme of Partnership meetings to oversee the development and delivery of the Work & Skills programme;
- The implementation of agreed projects aimed at developing capacity of the Partnership, reducing barriers into training and employment, providing bespoke provision for explicit client groups; testing out new schemes as appropriate;
- Strengthen ties with employers through forums such as the Employer Advisory Group relevant sub-groups of BECBC;
- Explore the formation of a Welfare Services Advisory Group to mirror the work of the Employers Advisory Group;
- Build upon current evaluation of the existing programme framework, to look at options with local partners and Cumbria LEP for delivering locally identified gaps and needs.

The CWSP developed a number of instruments to achieve these aims and objectives. These include, firstly, the employment of two project officers who help to coordinate the activities of the 20 member organisations, arrange quarterly meetings of partners to discuss delivery of the Programme, make partners aware of each others' individual programmes, enable referrals to take place between partners and increase the quality of IAG to the unemployed. Secondly, capacity in the Partnership was increased by the expansion of partner members from 18 to 20. Thirdly, an Employer's Advisory Group was established to help inform partners of the skill sets required by employers to fill current and future vacancies in Copeland. Fourthly, a wage subsidy scheme was provided which gives employers a £2,500 subsidy to take on an unemployed person. Fifthly, an Apprenticeship

subsidy scheme was introduced to give employers an incentive to take on unemployed individuals as apprentices. Both of these subsidy schemes contribute to sector development, help to increase employment in emerging sectors of the economy and those requiring help in recruitment due to skills and manpower shortages. Lastly, an Employability Fund was established to fund bespoke support to individuals to help overcome personal barriers in reducing worklessness.

The need to put in place a Welfare Services Advisory Group was lessened with the emergence of the Council's Social Prescribing team and the introduction of the West Cumbria Mental Health Partnership facilitated by Groundwork NE & Cumbria.

The success of the Partnership in achieving these aims and objectives has been further examined through the interviews with Partner members and external partners and is therefore the subject material of sections 4 and 5.

### 3.3 Performance against outputs and outcomes

The key outcomes of the CWSP 2019-22 were to be:

- a) Added value from joint working, coordination and shared learning
- b) Increased opportunity and better linked pathways into employment in Copeland
- c) Enhanced quality of information, advice and guidance provision within the Partnership including with local providers of welfare services
- d) More targeted provision in key areas of need and less chance of waste / duplication
- e) Closer links between employer skills requirements and skills development
- f) Monitoring of gaps and priorities with a view to developing collaborative approaches across public, private and third sectors.

The success of the Partnership in achieving these outcomes has been examined through the interviews with Partner members and is therefore the subject material of section 4.

Table 4 in the CWSP Programme Manager's Final Report details the success of the Programme in achieving its target outputs. This is reproduced below in Table 3.

**Table 3: Target and Final Outputs of the CWSP**

Output	Workstream (targets revised during Year 2)	Workstream Progress (Year 1, 2 & 3)	Overall Outcome
<b>Jobs Created/safeguarded (2)</b>	Job Safeguarded (1)	0 (1)	<b>2</b>
	Jobs Created (1)	0 (1)	
<b>Local People assisted in their skills development (180)</b>	No engaged in Wage Subsidies (50)	Year 1 - 19 Year 2 - 30 Year 3 - 7	<b>56</b>
	No engaged in Sector Development (60)	Year 1 - 21 Year 2 - 45 Year 3 - 35	<b>101</b>
	No engaged in Bespoke Support (110)	Year 1 - 62 Year 2 - 11 Year 3 - 59	<b>132</b>

<b>Local people helped to secure employment, education or training (105)</b>	No accessing Employability Fund (45)	Year 1 – 6 Year 2 - 27 Year 3 – 25	<b>58</b>
	No completing IAG/NVQ (20)	Year 1 - 10 Year 2 – 5 Year 3 – 5	<b>20</b>
<b>Number of apprentices (18)</b>	No completing apprenticeships (20)	Year 1 - 0 Year 2 – 0 Year 3 – 7	<b>7</b>
<b>Total 305</b>			<b>376</b>

Source: CWSP Programme Manager's Final Report, p. 21.

One can see that apart from the number of apprentices completing courses (7 as opposed to a target 20), all of the expected outputs were achieved and some massively superseded (eg. those engaged in sector development).

### 3.4 Evaluation of Programme Monitoring and Management

This is given further consideration in sections 4 and 5. At this juncture, we shall look at it in relation to dealing with the greatest external factor to hit the CWSP – the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns.

Project management was tested quite keenly by the onset of the Covid pandemic. The latter made it more difficult to engage employers in the Programme; affected the delivery of partners and had a negative impact on the mental health and motivation of the unemployed. In response, the Programme Managers acted quickly in a number of ways:-

- They widened the scope of the Employability Fund to enable partners to purchase IT equipment. The DWP Flexible Support Fund was also adapted. This meant that laptops and tablets could be lent out to job seekers enabling them to access online learning during lockdown and enabling them to complete any learning as part of existing employment support programmes.
- They ensured that training programmes to support the unemployed on pathways into employment were delivered digitally as opposed to face-to-face. For example, the 7-week programme of pre-employment training in knowledge needed for employment in the leisure and fitness sector run by Greenwich Leisure Limited, was delivered on-line via interactive classroom learning as soon as face-to-face delivery became impossible.
- They introduced “a bespoke programme called “Coping with Covid” that helped unemployed young people explore and understand the effects of fear, stress and anxiety on emotions, social skills, physiology and mental health, along with support on how to use various tools and strategies to manage this in their personal and work-related situations.” (CWSP Programme Manager's Final Report, p. 3). The 8-week programme was delivered at the request of DWP Youth coaches.

As a result of changes to the Programme due to Covid-19, the Programme managers requested a variation to the original outputs and expenditure allocations for the 3-year programme whilst keeping the total expenditure expected and total outputs the same. The changes to outputs were as follows:

**Table 4: Changes made to target outputs in the Programme**

<b>Work Programme</b>	<b>Change in target outputs</b>	<b>Actual Output</b>
IAG NVQs	↑ by 5 to 20	20
Sector Development	↓ by 30 to 60	101
Employability Fund	↓ by 45 to 45	58
Apprentice Subsidy	↑ by 2 to 20	7
Wage Subsidy	↑ by 20 to 50	56
Bespoke Support	↑ by 50 to 110	132
<b>Total Outputs</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>374</b>

As already stated, one can see that apart from the number of apprentices completing courses (7 as opposed to a target 20), all of the expected outputs were achieved and some massively superseded (eg. those engaged in sector development).

In January 2020, the Programme Manager also commissioned some research into the development of employability online support tools. This may be a part of future programmes.

### **3.5 Assessment of Employer Engagement**

Employer engagement with the Programme has been a success in that:

- The sector-based work academies have continued to be led by employers to ensure pre-employment activities are fit-for-purpose and relevant for sectors.
- Vacancies have been filled by working with employers such as in Health and Social Care (eg. Wyndham manor Care Home); Leisure and Fitness (eg. Greenwich Leisure Limited); Transport (eg. White line Taxis); Engineering and Maintenance (eg. Engineering and maintenance facility, Leconfield); and Security (eg. CRS Facility Management).
- New forums such as the Education Training Group of the Zero Carbon and Cumbria Partnership have been accessed as well as information obtained from Cumbria LEP's People, Employment and Skills Strategy Group (PESSG) and Cumbria Action for Sustainability on the skills required for specific sectors.

### **3.6 Assessment of the Programme's value for money**

Evidence from the CWSP Programme Manager's Final Report indicates that the Programme has been a great success in that 396 individuals have engaged with it over the 3 years and during which 72 people received offers of employment. The total expenditure incurred on the Programme was £459,707.588 which implies a cost per job offer of £6,385. Given the benefits to the individual and the local economy of a person being in employment, this is value for money as a full-time job at the minimum wage would pay within the range of £9,048 - £19,760 per annum in the period 2019-22 depending on the age of the employee and have a multiplier effect.

### **3.7 Assessment of the Programme's added value**

Evidence of added value of the Programme comes from examples of unemployed individuals getting support on their pathway to employment through use of several of the Programme's workstreams. For example, an unemployed individual may have joined a Sector-based Work Academy, learning the skills required for work in that sector. The individual may have taken advantage of digital delivery of his/her courses via use of a laptop obtained through monies from the Employability Fund and once trained, a participating employer may have accessed the Programme's wage subsidy scheme to support the employment of that person in a part-time/full-time job (take for example, Copeland resident Lubimir Dwik, as noted in Appendix 1 of the CWSP Programme Manager's Final Report).

This topic is given further consideration in section 4.3.

## **4 Review of the CWSP: Part II – Interviews with Partnership Members**

In mid-October, 13 of the 19 CWSP member organisations were approached for interview. Advice was taken from the Programme Manager and those organisations which weren't approached were those deemed to have either played very little role in the operation of the present Programme or which were undergoing structural difficulties (these comprised Credit Union; Gen 2; Home Group; Women Out West; TEG Virtual; and Riverside Housing). Equally, representatives of Cumbria CVS, when approached, felt that they had not engaged much in the Programme. More than one person from each organisation was identified for interview when it was thought that their different roles would enable them to shed light on different aspects of the evaluation. Hence, invitations to interview were emailed to a total of 21 individuals/managers in 13 separate member organisations. Over the course of 3 weeks, a total of 12 interviews were conducted, 3 of which were with individuals who were also Project Board Members. 8 interviews were conducted face-to-face at the member organisation's premises in West Cumbria and lasted between 45-60 minutes. The remaining 4 were conducted online via TEAMS and lasted between 30-45 minutes. Face-to-face interviews were the preferred method as it is felt that more in-depth information can be gleaned via this mechanism and a feel for the premises which clients were going to, could be obtained. This form of contact was also generally appreciated by interviewees. However, an online interview was more convenient for some organisations (Lakes College, Groundwork, Inspira) and a necessity due to not having physical premises for one organisation (Better Bodies). The semi-structured interviews were divided into three parts with initial questions aimed at clarifying what their organisation's objectives and geographical reach was. Questions were then asked concerning the ways in which their organisation engaged with the Partnership and the benefits that they saw from membership. The final section required reflection on how well they thought the CWSP had achieved its aims, on whether there was duplication and/or gaps in service provision between members and on potential improvements to the Programme or its management. (See Programme Member Consultations Interview Schedule in Appendix 1).

### **4.1 Evidence on performance against aims and objectives**

The following were identified as aspects needing to be provided in the aim of reducing worklessness in the Borough:

- Improving employability skills (ie. CV writing, confidence) of the unemployed
- Improving access to employment
- Providing mental +/-or physical support to unemployed individuals
- Providing employment matches between employers and unemployed individuals
- Providing sector-specific training
- Providing life skills (incl. money management) or adult learning to those in or out of employment
- Supporting entrepreneurship
- Providing IAG to individuals

**Table 5: Provision of services by Partner members**

Service	Number of members providing service
Improving employability skills	12
Improving access to employment	11
Providing mental +/- or physical support to unemployed individuals	8
Providing employment matches between employers and unemployed individuals	10
Providing sector-specific training	7
Providing life skills or adult learning to those in or out of employment	9
Supporting entrepreneurship	7
Providing IAG to individuals	10

As one can see from Table 5, there is wide coverage being provided of the essential aspects to reducing worklessness. Employability skills included CV writing, confidence building, and interview technique. Several members ran the Restart Programme under contract from the DWP where this was a core element of provision. The CAB aimed to improve some of their clients' employability skills by offering volunteering opportunities. For example, people who may have been out of the job market might have a need to update their skills. Stay-at-home parents might need to look again at their skills before going into employment and so, the CAB could provide a range of different roles like customer services and dealing with administration from which they might progress into a paid position.

Only one organisation did not deem it to be in their remit to improve access to employment whilst two said that they did not provide IAG to clients. Just over half (7) of the organisations provided some sort of specific training to clients and 7 also actively supported entrepreneurship in their offer. The PEC in Cleator Moor was the main provider of business accommodation (44,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) that entrepreneurs could look to rent. One provider said that they had helped a lot of individuals become self-employed and to set up their own business. Another provider however said that they occasionally ran self-employment courses but that "there was not great take-up."

Two thirds of members stated that they provided mental and/or physical support to unemployed individuals. In CRED's 2018 Review, this was found to be an area of growing need in the Borough, so this is encouraging. Groundwork's mantra is to help those furthest away from the employment market, to work with them and see what they want to achieve and see what is needed to help them achieve it. The *Building Better Opportunities Programme* with funding from the European Social Fund and the National Lottery have a programme called "*Choices*" which provides an holistic approach to those facing employment barriers. Groundwork run the *Choices* programme and believe it to be one of the most successful programmes in the country.

The way that some organisations provided employment matches between employers and unemployed individuals was through arranging work experience for clients. Some employers also approached them if looking to recruit.

The provision of life skills and/or adult learning which included money management was a more specialist member service and those members who did not provide it themselves, said that they referred clients to those who did, especially to the CAB where a full-time member of staff was employed to offer sessions in money management.

With regard to target groups, Partnership members had programmes of support that covered the necessary range of people as follows:

- The unemployed, both adults and young people either with the Restart Programme or not
- Those who are benefit-dependant
- Those who are at risk of redundancy
- Those who need to use a Food Pantry
- Those starting in self-employment
- Those looking to expand
- The most vulnerable and isolated from the workplace or education
- Under-represented groups in employment
- Under-employed individuals
- Primary and secondary age pupils thinking of going into construction and nuclear
- 5 year olds doing STEM subjects
- Corporate businesses who book courses that affect the employees in their workforce.

Most Partner members were providers of services Cumbria-wide and sometimes nationally although they might have a dedicated office in Copeland whilst 2 operated in Copeland and Allerdale and three, solely in Copeland.

#### **4.2 Evidence on Partnership engagement**

Of the twelve partners interviewed, 9 have been members of the CWSP since it began whilst the others had joined under the 2016-18 or 2019-22 Programmes. When asked about their involvement in the Partnership and the partners with whom they engaged, there was found to be a wide range in the level of involvement. Replies ranged from those who had interactions with very many or virtually all (8+) of the members of the Partnership to those who had few connections (4 or less) (see Table 6).

Whilst it is not suggested that interviewees gave a comprehensive account of all of their interactions with partner organisations, the scale of interaction, I believe was ascertained. The key partners in the Partnership, Inspira, PEC, the DWP, Groundwork, Community Learning & Skills and Lakes College are those which either receive the most referrals from others in the Partnership and/or are those who refer clients on to a large assortment of other Partnership organisations. For example, 8 organisations stated that they either worked with or referred clients on to Inspira to do training courses with them. 6 organisations stated that they referred people on to Community Learning and Skills (formerly Adult Learning). The organisation was praised for its work on ESOR (English for speakers of other languages) given the numbers of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees who have recently settled in the area. Community Learning and Skills had also helped Skills 4 You develop their Cookery and Allotment project.

**Table 6: Degree of interaction between Partnership members**

<b>Partnership member</b>	<b>Number of interviewees saying that they worked with that organisation</b>
Inspira	9
Phoenix Enterprise Centre	8
DWP	6
Groundwork	6
Community Learning and Skills	6
Lakes College	6
Citizens Advice Bureau	4
All Together Cumbria	3
Millom Network Centre	3
Skills 4 U	3
GEN 2	3
Cumbria Voluntary Service	3
Credit Union	2
Better Bodies	2
Cumbria Youth Alliance	1
Women Out West	1

Note: Additional organisations with whom interviewees said that they interacted included Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council (4); Ingenus (2); and the Centre for Leadership Performance (1).

Given the wide range of facilities available at the Phoenix Enterprise Centre (PEC), it is not surprising that 8 partners stated that they sought to engage with it. The DWP work with them serving those unemployed who do not have access to Whitehaven Job Centre. With the CAB, PEC works on a cross-referral basis. The CAB said that if individuals need work skills, they refer them to the PEC and also for the Thrift Hub. Similarly, if individuals go to the PEC and have any issues with debt or hardship, they referred them to the CAB. Community Learning and Skills use PEC's premises and the CAB, at the time of interview, were about to move from their offices in Whitehaven to PEC's premises. Skills 4 U refer those people who don't know about the benefits that they can get to the PEC and also people for the Food Bank.

### **4.3 Evidence on Value Added**

Clearly the degree of interaction between partners is indicative of the value-added arising from the existence of the CSWP. To assess the benefits of membership of the Partnership, interviewees were asked to say how important they felt the CWSP was in helping them to fulfil their own objectives as follows:

- **Making it easier to make referrals to other organisations in the Partnership**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	5	5	0	2

Interviewee answers were equally split between those who said that the Partnership was very important in this regard (5) and those who said it was quite important (5). For two organisations, it was not applicable as they did not have clients of their own but they did gain referrals from other members. The comment from one member organisation was “I’ve met partners who I wouldn’t have met if it weren’t for the Partnership meetings.” This sentiment was echoed by another interviewee. Another said that the Partnership was important “because we have an understanding of what the other partners provide and (it) also gives us an understanding of the different types of other support that are available in Copeland.” One interviewee stated that “The Partnership gives us a platform to promote our services. Chris and Carol coordinate things and let us know what others are doing.”

- **Offering a pathway into employment for your clients**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	4	6	1	1

Six of the partner organisations felt that the Partnership had played quite an important role and four said a very important role in offering a pathway into employment for their clients. They cited the fact that the Project Managers circulated information on vacancies. A number of interviewees said that their learners had taken part in programmes that had been organised with the Rosehill Theatre and the “Motivational Queen.” Two interviewees said that they had had a number of their clients use the Sector Academies to get employment. As one interviewee said, the CWSP had come up with “some very well thought-through offerings” and another said “if there is a need for vocational training, Chris will come to us to get us to work alongside him.”

- **Offering skills training for your clients**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	7	5	0	0

The skills training that the CWSP is able to offer to Partners’ clients is felt to be one of the most important and valuable services that it provides. All members made use of it with seven saying that it was a very important service and five saying that it was quite important (even if they provided in-house skills training). One interviewee commented “Us being aware of the

support and training out there allows us to deal more holistically with our clients. We very much want to enable our clients to move forward with their situation – so if we can signpost or refer them to other organisations, the Partnership has made an enormous lot of opportunities for this.” Partners praised the work of the Employers Advisory Group and the offering of courses with a guaranteed job interview at the end. One also said that they made use of the Employability Fund to fund training for clients.

- **Offering Covid-19 support to your clients**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	3	2	2	4

There was a mixed response to the question of whether partners had found the Covid-19 support of the CWSP Programme to be useful. One third said that being a large organisation themselves, they had their own systems in place to cope with changes required to provision during the Covid pandemic and had therefore not made use of any particular help that the CWSP Programme could offer. On the other hand, three organisations which, via the Employability Fund, were able to get computers to lend out to their clients during lockdowns, found this support to be very important. “We got reconditioned laptops for young people to lend out for them to do some online training with our support. (This was) especially important for those in sheltered accommodation because they don’t have access to things – staff could lend them a computer and come back next week to see what they had done” for their modules on mental health and work-based skills.

- **Giving your organisation access to additional funds via the Employability Support Fund**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	6	4	1	1

Although one of the partner organisations was unaware of the existence of the Employability Fund, the remainder felt that it was either a very important (6) or quite important (4) resource provided by the Partnership. As mentioned above, some organisations used it to acquire laptops for their clients to use at home during Covid. In that regard, one organisation claimed that it had “been a god-send, super important because of the restrictions on (their own) funding.” Another said that it “has supported people with their child-care provision being paid for. Taxi fares paid for people too anxious to use public transport. We were able to give a man a bicycle. It didn’t cost much but made a big difference to his life.” One organisation had used the Fund to get security badges for clients, needed for their new employment which was a massive cost to the individuals involved. Another organisation said that it was important “just to know that it’s there. We have told people that it’s there for small expenses.”

- **Offering a supportive network of partner members with whom you can share your experiences**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	10	2	0	0

Partners are unanimous in viewing the supportive network that the Partnership provides as being either very important (10) or quite important (2). The following sentiments were widely shared:

“The meetings are a good place to share ideas and have Guest speakers. It’s good to see what others are working on as one may be able to support them with other things.”

“The meetings are extremely good as people can hear what everyone is doing and try to find people who can fill in the gaps.”

“We can build mutual trust with each other so as we have that trust in that organisation to enable us to refer to them, enabling us to do more for that individual that we are working with.”

“It is truly positive partnership working and Chris always works to get the right input from everybody and to make sure that their ideas work. It is a commendable approach.”

One new partner organisation made the point that being new to the area, being introduced to the Partnership “allowed us to collaborate and avoid competition that one might otherwise have had to face. We don’t like to see ourselves as a stand-alone organisation.....our ultimate objective is to support the community.”

#### **4.4 Evidence of the CWS Partnership’s performance against outputs and outcomes**

Interviewees were asked to comment on the achievement or otherwise of the Partnership’s target outcomes.

##### **4.4.1 Enhancing the quality of information, advice and guidance provision within the Partnership**

Seven of the partners stated that their organisations had benefitted from the IAG NVQ’s training provided by the CWSPP with members of their workforce gaining mostly Level 4 qualifications. One interviewee said that it “has been gold dust because to an organisation like ours which has had to have qualified IAG advisors, it is so important to have them and we may not have had sufficient funding to do this without the Partnership.” Another said that “it’s been one of the most sought-after qualifications that Chris has been able to provide.” Even those organisations that had not taken advantage of the training said that they would have liked to had their staff had the time to do so.”

##### **4.4.2 More targeted provision in key areas of need and less chance of waste/duplication**

All interviewees felt strongly that the Partnership achieved this and that the Programme Officers were integral to it. The general sentiment was that “the partners often do similar work and Chris can coordinate this which cuts down on some of the duplication and saves on a

waste of money.” “The Partnership management provides a very strong link between organisations by keeping people up to speed – they are integral to linking the right people or projects up with each other.” One interviewee added the point that “sending people on multiple training courses that have similarities puts people off. So, a central point where we can identify need and then lead to a person’s need being met has been aided by the Partnership.”

#### **4.4.3 Provide increased clarity on the pathways into employment in Copeland**

Two of the partner organisations felt that they already have that knowledge and hence it wasn’t something that they “would particularly seek out of the Partnership.” The majority (7) of members believe that the Partnership Programme scores very well on providing increased clarity on pathways into employment saying “my team and I are much clearer about what’s available to people;” “we all know how we can do it and who we can link into. Chris gets guest speakers who then get to hear what the Partnership does and we hear how we can link with them.” Several organisations noted that the sector-based training was often linked to an employer. For example, the Programme aimed to raise awareness of careers in outdoor adventure and conservation and included employers, West Lakes Adventure, West Cumbria Rivers Trust and Lake District National Park.

#### **4.4.4 Provide clear links between employer skills requirements and skills development**

It was pointed out that “this has been one of the strongest points with the Skills Academies. The Partnership has been able to tailor courses and training to meet those needs and this has led to positive experiences for those taking part, the employer and individuals. It has given them more confidence to approach an employer.” One interviewee thought that the Partnership had scored well on this at first but that now it was the case that there were “too many jobs and not enough people to go through the Programme’s training,” say in the care sector, because the care homes would take them on anyway such was the shortage of workers for these jobs.

#### **4.4.5 Provide added value from coordination of activities by member organisations**

There was unanimous agreement from the partners that the Partnership achieved this. One interviewee went so far as to say that “they were pivotal to pulling together the key organisations in Copeland who would be best placed to support unemployed people. They were the lynch pin to it” and “we have that jigsaw, so we all know what each other does.” “There is very little duplication now because we know what each others’ strengths are and refer to those organisations.”

#### **4.4.6 Provide added value from shared information and learning**

As with the last statement, partners were unanimous in the view that the Partnership excelled in this regard. Among the points made, they stated that the Programme Officer circulated emails about the sector-based academies, events and activities and the Minutes of the CWSP meetings; that they “get to hear what we wouldn’t have access to outside of the Partnership;” that they don’t need to go searching any more for the right people as the Programme Officer would get that from other partners. Two organisations expressed the sentiment that “unlike some other partnerships in Cumbria, (this one) is very inclusive” and that they knew of no other that did this job as well as they do.

#### **4.5 Additional comments on the management and meetings of the CWSP**

There was overwhelming praise for the two CWSP Project Officers in terms of their approachability, helpfulness, communication and efficiency. They were stated to “respond quickly, process any queries very quickly looking to see how to assist and explore.” It was appreciated that details of new courses being provided by members was quickly dispatched to all. In terms of the CWSP meetings, these were said to be “very good, well-run/chaired and informative.” “Everyone is given ample opportunity to comment and for all partners to say what they want.” The managers were also said to be “interested in the learning, the progressive piece from the Programme” although one interviewee thought that there could be more emphasis on this by examining lessons learned and best practice from particular programmes / projects tried by partners.

With regard to the frequency of meetings, quarterly was thought to be about right. However, the subject of whether they should continue to be on-line, gave rise to mixed reactions. With the onset of Covid-19, the meetings had necessarily moved from being in-person, formerly held at PEC’s offices, to being held via TEAMS. Three interviewees welcomed the development quoting time saved on travelling and an ability to get more done in the day, as benefits. This also allowed them to personally attend every meeting whereas they might otherwise have had to send deputies on occasion. Four interviewees felt that a variation of on-line and in-person would be best in future so as to capture the benefits of each method of provision. On the other hand, four partners expressed a desire for the meetings to revert to being in-person, stating that one could bond together and glean so much more information from in-person contact, face-to-face gives a greater opportunity for networking.

#### **4.6 Improvements in the CWSP over time**

11 out of the 12 partners interviewed felt that the CWSP had built up momentum and improved in several ways. The sector-based academies were praised as was the work with Sellafield and the Leconfield estate and other employers. With regard to Programme management, it was said that “communication with the partners has got better and we are all getting to know what each other is doing a lot better.” Whilst the increased number of partners was seen as a possible source of duplication of service provision, others thought that the greater diversity and attendance at meetings by many members was a good thing. Some interviewees took the question as an opportunity to re-iterate that they found that “working with the CWSP has been very valuable and the impact that they have had for some of their clients.”

## **5 Review of the CWSP: Part III – Interviews with External Partners**

### **5.1 External Partners**

Over the period 2019-22, one of the aims of the CWSP has been to develop ties with local employers in different sectors through forums such as the Employer Advisory Group. This would provide the Partnership with “more targeted support pathways for individuals seeking to access available vacancies.”<sup>3</sup> There have been a number of external partners with whom the CWSP has engaged. The overriding reason for the development of these relationships has been to help reduce levels of worklessness in the most deprived communities in Copeland through improving employability and upskilling. In developing this engagement with employers, two instruments were made available – an apprenticeship subsidy and an employer wage subsidy of up to £2,500 per employee. In addition to the overriding objective, there may be other perceived benefits to collaboration with individual external partners which we shall examine below under the discussion of each partner who was interviewed.

#### **i. The Centre of Engineering Excellence (CEE), Leconfield Industrial Estate, Cleator Moor**

It is recognised by both Sellafield, who run the CEE, and the CWSP that sectors, other than nuclear, must be strengthened in West Cumbria in order to generate the jobs and GVA required to employ the local work force when Sellafield’s demand for workers reduces from 11,000 to 6,000 in future. The CEE aims to develop a workforce skilled in Engineering, Radiometrics, Robotics and Innovation. Located on the Leconfield Industrial Estate, the Centre also hopes to attract other firms to the site helping to reduce unemployment in the area, diversify the local economy and to have a bigger social impact on the local community. Two long-term unemployed individuals with an aptitude for engineering were taken on by the Centre for a 5-week period. They were introduced to the work being done in “the bays”, did a job brief and then presented it. Although not recruited by Sellafield immediately, this was said to be more due to the firm’s restrictive employment practices than their lack of talent and the two individuals were recruited on a 6-month agency supply contract.

#### **ii. Money Education Support Services (MESS), Free-lance provider**

The intentions behind engagement with MESS is to give unemployed people education, advice and support on taking up self-employment. The free-lancer who runs the Programme receives referrals from Inspira as well as people channelled through the CWSP managers. The training programme with those who are interested lasts 6 months and has been very successful with many going on to start their own business. So far, there have been four tranches with 40-45 people in total. He also runs a pre-session online called “Exploring self-employment.”

#### **iii. Greenwich Leisure Limited, Whitehaven and Cleator Moor**

The manager of this social enterprise, trading as BETTER, runs three leisure centres in Copeland. Given the national shortage of people with life-guard skills and those with the necessary skills to be Life Guards locally, this relationship was set up to fill a local employer’s need at the same time as create employment for unemployed individuals. The firm took advantage of the wage subsidy scheme. Two people from the CWSP in 2021 undertook the training and were then employed as Recreation Assistants at Copeland Pool and Fitness Centre.

---

<sup>3</sup> CWSP Project management Plan – December 2018, p. 13

**iv. CRS Facility Management, Whitehaven**

This facilities management firm faces huge problems of recruitment. The intention of the CWSP has therefore been to help a local employer obtain employees and at the same time offer on-the-job experience in the security industry to unemployed individuals. This has proved successful in that, with the help of the wage subsidy scheme, 6 unemployed individuals have undertaken training with the firm leading to 3 being taken on as employees at the end of it.

**v. Rosehill Theatre, Moresby**

Involvement with the Rosehill Theatre has centred around giving the unemployed and NEET individuals opportunities to “learn about volunteering, customer service, approaches to presentation, public speaking, building confidence and self-esteem.” They would also learn about employment opportunities in cultural industries and what skills they might need to secure them. It is the mission of the Rosehill Theatre to build creative, resilient and helpful communities by giving people access to quality arts, culture and entertainment, removing practical barriers to employment and participation. In the first collaborative project with the CWSP in November 2021, the Theatre hosted a day-long creative workshop with a Creative Practitioner and it attracted 14 people. In the Summer of 2022, they had about 12-14 people attend a 2-week programme and since then, they have had two people register an interest in volunteering, working on the “Helping Hands” programme in the theatre. The impact of Covid and funding uncertainties for the Theatre has meant that there are no jobs available as yet but the Theatre is hopeful that the relationship with the CWSP “will blossom and grow over the next 5 years as more projects get under way.”

**vi. The Outdoor Partnership, Coastal Cumbria, Whitehaven**

With this partner, the intention was to raise awareness of employment and career opportunities in the Outdoor sector as it was felt that “people in general in Copeland don’t connect with the outdoors.” The 16-week development programme would also help clients’ wellbeing and help them address issues arising from Covid. Since starting in 2021, there have been two cohorts of people (16) attending the Programme although the interviewee had not seen any of the people that she had worked with, get a job in the Outdoor sector.

**vii. Co Lab Engineering, Barclays Labs, Whitehaven**

The owner of this company was interviewed because of his previous involvement with the Centre for Engineering Excellence but the visit to his offices in the Bus Station, Whitehaven also enabled one to see the incubator possibilities for potential new businesses that might arise from a future CWSP programme. The interviewee’s newly formed business works on problem statements of firms to come up with solutions which might simultaneously have applications in other industries. A future collaboration with his business has the potential to inspire unemployed individuals and stimulate enterprise and innovation. “The ambition would be to use our Engineering Academy 6-week programme to give people with an aptitude for engineering, an opportunity to come through this that wouldn’t otherwise have access or the experience, to come and help us develop a solution.”

## **5.2 Interview analysis**

In November 2022, 11 external partners of the CWSP were contacted via email and invited for interview. Over a period of 3 weeks, a total of 8 (two were from the same organisation) were interviewed in an attempt to glean what they saw as the benefits of participating in the CWSP Programme, to examine how they thought that their relationship with the Programme

might have been improved and to see what role they might envisage for their organisation in any future CWSP programme. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 20-35 minutes, three of them being conducted via TEAMS whilst the remainder were held in person at the organisation's premises.

### 5.2.1 Benefits to engagement

The CWSP perceives there to be a number of benefits from engagement with external partners. Interviewees were asked how important they thought their connection had been in achieving those. We will examine them in turn.

- **Helping the unemployed to find jobs**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	5	3	0	0

Interviewees were unanimous in believing that their involvement with the CWSP was very important (5) or quite important (3) to helping the unemployed to find jobs. It was also felt that it had “the potential to be a lot more important.”

- **Helping the unemployed to reskill for employment in their sector**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	4	3	0	1

The question was not applicable for one of the interviewees but the rest were unanimous in believing that their involvement with the CWSP helped the unemployed to reskill for employment in their sector. It was stated by one interviewee that giving people the chance to have in-work experience within a particular industry enabled both the individual and the employer to see if they were a good fit for each other, “the try before you buy” scenario. This might be particularly important if the individual had little previous knowledge of that industry/sector.

- **Helping the unemployed to obtain pre-employment skills**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	6	1	0	1

The question was not applicable for one of the interviewees. The remainder thought that the Programmes and/or experience, CV and interview preparation that they had been able to give the unemployed people was either very important (6) or quite important (1) in giving them pre-employment skills. One interviewee remarked that this was obvious when they saw their CVs on arrival! Individuals' confidence levels in particular seemed to be boosted.

- **Informing job seekers about your sector / organisation**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	6	1	1	0

Apart from one interviewee for whom the question was of little relevance, the remainder thought that their engagement with the CWSPP played a very important (6) role or quite important (1) role in informing job seekers about their sector. Those sectors in particular which were finding it hard to recruit staff valued this opportunity. It was also important for new growth areas of the economy to highlight career opportunities.

- **Helping employers in your sector find suitable job applicants**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	2	2	2	2

It was this question and one other that drew the most mixed responses from interviewees. In this case, there were an equal number of responses in each of the response categories. Two of the external partners had clearly benefitted from their engagement with the CWSPP precisely because it offered them people to fill vacancies in their firm. At the other extreme, it was not the purpose of the Money Support Service to employ people. With regard to the CEE, it was felt that future engagement with the CWSPP had the potential, if done right, to help other companies in the engineering or associated industries to acquire suitably experienced job applicants. It was about realising that this pilot programme demonstrated that there are people who don't fit into the normal recruitment box but who are nevertheless capable.

- **Enlightening your organisation to the work of the CWSP**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	5	2	0	0

Obviously, engagement with the CWSPP was an important means by which these organisations were enlightened as to its work and indeed one of the organisations admitted that they had been unaware of its existence before they had been introduced to the Partnership through an intermediary. Initial discussions between the CWSP Programme Manager and potential partners seems to have played an important role in exploring the benefits of partnership to both sides.

- **Supporting entrepreneurship in Copeland**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Nos. of replies</b>	3	1	1	3

For four firms, the aim of supporting entrepreneurship was either not applicable or not important. For the other 4 though, it was deemed to be either very (3) or quite (1) important.

Those partners in the creative and outdoor sectors saw their sectors as “fertile ground” for self-employment and therefore the training programmes that they were giving were seen as a “kick-start” to it.

### **5.2.2 Partners’ levels of communication and involvement with the CWSP**

The degree of involvement in the wider CWSP that partners have ranges from being “arms length” to “full on” including attendance at Partnership meetings, receiving the Partnership’s newsletters and emails.

### **5.2.3 Views on the management of the Programme**

Partners were unanimous in their praise for the way that their interactions with the CWSP were handled. For example, one commented “Chris was our main contact and he basically organised everything. He made sure we had everything required. We gave him our requirements and he linked up with others as needed eg. Lakes College for other parts of the course. Everything was scheduled smoothly and efficiently.” “Chris would attend our office and chat about the Partnership and follow up. Chris always jotted things down and followed up on things.” Another interviewee commented that “those who we dealt with were very professional, effective and efficient. They were passionate.”

None said that there had been any impediments to the success of their collaboration with the CWSP.

## **5.3 Concluding comment**

The experiences that partners had of working with the CWSP left them all eager to play the same if not a larger role in the CWSP in the future. Two interviewees even expressed a desire to become internal partners of the Partnership and most felt that there was definitely scope for them to engage with more unemployed people on existing and possibly new projects.

## **6. Strategy Alignment**

The aims of the CWSP and its Programmes have been closely aligned to a number of national, regional and local strategies and this is equally important when thinking about what is needed in the next Programme.

### **6.1 National Level Policies and their relevance to the CWSP**

At the national level, the Government's Levelling Up Agenda (2022) includes the roll out of Local Skills Improvement Plans, giving local employer bodies and stakeholders a statutory role in planning skills training in their area, to better meet local labour market needs [p.6]. In February 2022, the Government created a £2.6bn UK Shared Prosperity Fund (2022) to fund investments to regenerate communities, boost people's skills and support local businesses [p.8]. One of the 12 missions of the Agenda is to equip "hundreds of thousands more adults with the skills and equipment support they need to progress in life, including the most disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market" [p. 273]. "Multiply, the £560M adult numeracy programme, will be the first priority, offering local support for people to gain or improve their numeracy skills." A priority of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is People and Skills Investment by which "places can use their funding to help reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment and education" [p. 16]. They can also use funding "to provide people with the skills needed to progress in life and work, including supporting local areas to fund local skills needs" [p. 18]. These are at the core of what the CWSP does and will do.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund document reports that "The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth found that in-firm or on-the-job programmes tend to be particularly effective and involving employers in the design of courses and ensuring activities mirror actual jobs" [p.20] and this was a finding of the interviews with external partners where on-the-job training provided by Greenwich Leisure and CRS Facility Management to clients of the Programme had led to their employment in those firms. The Levelling Up Agenda calls for "supporting people to realise their career aspirations without having to leave their communities and to ensure that local employers have access to the skills they need to grow and thrive" [p. 225].

The Fund will also "prioritise interventions to strengthen pride in place in 2022-23 and 2023-24" [p. 274]. "By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK" [p. 10]. The Levelling Up Agenda White Paper recognises the fact that places with relatively low levels of physical capital (infrastructure and housing) and human capital (skills and experience), as exist in parts of Copeland, may be unable to invest and innovate and pride in local communities may be depleted [p. 20]. The CWSP working in tandem with the Copeland Enterprise Development Programme and Town Deals for Cleator Moor and Millom & Haverigg will help to reverse that otherwise self-reinforcing cycle of depletion. The Levelling Up Agenda states that "local voluntary and community groups and trades unions are central for building skills and social capital" [p.80].

Another of the investment priorities for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is to support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow. One of the objectives is to create jobs and boost community cohesion through investments that build on existing industries and institutions and range from support for starting businesses to visible improvements to local retail, hospitality and leisure sector facilities [p.14]. These accord with the combined aims of the CWSP, Copeland Business Development Programme and the Town Deals. A second objective is to

promote networking and collaboration, through interventions that bring together businesses and partners within and across sectors to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and stimulate innovation and growth. This is consistent with the CWSP employer engagement and partnership engagement workstreams. One of the outputs defined by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is the “number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready” [p. 14] and this is a stated pathway in the proposed new Copeland Skills and Enterprise Programme 2022-26. Also, one of the outcomes is the “number of new businesses created” and equally, this is one of the outcomes expected in this future Copeland Programme.

## **6.2 Regional Level Policies and their relevance to the CWSP**

Efforts by the CWSP to address worklessness, support businesses & skills and improve places is also aligned with the Borderlands Growth Deal. The latter has, as two of its strategic themes, “Improving Places” and “Supporting business, innovation and skills” by investing in smaller market towns to reinvigorate and repurpose towns to support thriving and sustainable communities.”<sup>4</sup>

It will be important for the CWSP to engage with the Government’s Local Skills Improvement Plan for Cumbria as this is aimed at ensuring that technical skills provision better meets local employer skills needs. This will include new T levels, higher technical qualifications (HTQs) and Apprenticeships. “As part of the Government’s Lifetime Skills Guarantee, since 2021, all adults in England who do not have a level 3 qualification (A level or advanced technical diploma equivalent) have been able to take a free approved level 3 qualification under the Free Courses for Jobs Programme. Also since April 2022, any adult with a level 3 qualification or higher who earns the national Living Wage or who is unemployed can access a further high-value level 3 qualification for free” [p. 230].

The Cumbria Local Skills Report (2022) identifies a number of acute skills and labour supply gaps in the County. These are in hospitality, adult social care, the health sector, logistics and manufacturing. These are all areas on which the CWSP can concentrate its efforts via the Employer skills academies. It also identifies the Arts and Entertainment sector as being a growth sector, which justifies the focus on opportunities for training in the Creative Arts sector in Copeland. In an effort to increase the labour supply in Cumbria, the Cumbria Skills Strategy (2022) is to focus on two particular areas which align with the CWSP:

- Addressing worklessness and youth unemployment
- Creating the future (and current) workforce and skills to meet the needs of our economy.

To achieve these, the Cumbria Skills Action Plan seeks to develop bespoke sector solutions to specific skills needs; develop an escalator model of support for unemployed residents; and build a curriculum for inclusive growth. This curriculum includes 3 elements: firstly, “Jobs Fuse – an extension of the National Careers Service to include skills support and guidance for individuals facing unemployment and employers making changes to their workforce. Secondly, “The Key and Journey to work” which is skills support for unemployed residents focussed on progressing towards and into employment. Thirdly, Youth Hubs, led by DWP and local authorities, a range of local agencies, including colleges, the third sector and the Careers Hub, have established virtual hubs which will offer face-to-face support for young people.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. <https://www.borderlandsgrowth.com/themes>, pp.2-3. Indeed, there is a picture of Whitehaven Harbour in this document.

## **7. Future Programme Delivery**

Sections 2 and 6 clarified the need for a future CWSP Programme and showed how such a Programme would fit in with local and County strategies to reduce worklessness, increase skill levels and help employers to fill vacancies. In designing the next Programme, there is also a need to consider the extent to which there is deemed to be any duplication and gaps in service provision by members of the Partnership. There is also the expectation that a new Programme will be focussed more on pathways into self-employment and enterprise than was previously the case. To what extent is this appropriate? These are questions that were asked during interviews with the Programme members.

### **7.1 Duplication of services provided by members of the CWSP**

The majority of those interviewed in the Partnership believed that there was some degree of duplication of services with only three thinking that there was not. The view taken was that some duplication was inevitable and unavoidable given the funding available and organisations “fishing in the same ponds.” It was said to be due to “the nature of the contracts out there at the moment” and “that will only happen if there is funding for it.” The areas in which it occurred were in the provision of employability skills, IAG and mental health support. However, it was felt that the main providers of these services – Inspira, Lakes College, Community Learning and Skills and PEC – had a different approach and that this degree of choice available to DWP, for example, when making referrals might be useful and be of benefit in meeting the particular needs of the client. The Programme management was felt to be a good mechanism by which duplication was minimised as provision was mapped “by use of the jigsaw.”

### **7.2 Current gaps in provision**

Many interviewees said that this was a question that exercised their minds regularly. Half of the members of the Partnership believed there to be either no gaps in the provision of services or at least none that they could think of. Two members made the point that viability had to be considered, citing the fact that some new programmes had been tried but that getting people out to come on them had been problematic ie. “can you provide a cohort for those and how willing will those be to participate?” One provider lamented the gap in services to those who don’t **have** to look for work, that might be caused by the ending of the *Choices Programme*. They cited that it had been funded by the European Social Fund and might not receive adequate replacement funding from the Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund. Another member of the Partnership stated that there was a gap in provision of services and resources to help refugees get the certificates needed for employment. Another member thought that more information and communication and “building more relationships around the supply sector” was needed. The aim would be to get people into “other sectors of new investment in the area.”

### **7.3 Appropriateness of an emphasis on pathways into self-employment and enterprise**

In line with investment objectives in the Town Deals for Cleator Moor and Millom & Haverigg, Partnership members were asked how realistic an objective they felt it was for some clients to be steered towards a pathway into self-employment and enterprise. Two members of the Partnership thought that it was not appropriate for the next Programme to increase its focus

on such a pathway. Their reasons were based on the belief that the current recession would see sole traders being particularly adversely affected and that their previous experience had been that courses on self-employment had attracted little interest.

The majority of partners, however, thought that this new emphasis was to be welcomed. Their experience had been that a number of their clients had become self employed and they were able to quote a list of start-ups. One partner cited the success of the Bus Station in Whitehaven and another the success of the PEC in its occupancy rate of premises for businesses. Half of interviewees also felt that the recession could act as a “push factor”, rather like Covid-19 had, that is, that some people might start up a business through economic necessity.

#### **7.4 Further engagement of external partners and employers**

An additional factor to consider in a new Programme is the degree to which or the way in which external partners should be developed. This question was asked in the interviews with current external partners. All of the interviewees valued the engagement that they had had with the CWSP and were eager to see that relationship continue in the next Programme, if not grow. One interviewee commented “we would love to have a larger role in the CWSP and be more involved in that. There’s more potential for employing people who come through on the Programme as we are looking for internships” whilst another said “There’s a lot to work on for boosting people’s self-esteem and getting people into jobs by this type of project.”

Fostering the relationship between the CWSP and the Centre for Engineering Excellence on the Leconfield Industrial Estate so that a steady stream of unemployed individuals could be taken on by them and nurtured could be a good way to stimulate growth in the area given its proximity to Cleator Moor. The work that they are doing in local schools to stimulate interest in STEM subjects will also boost local recruitment in the nuclear supply chain and give employers in other sectors, the skills that they need in their future workforce. This effect has the potential to increase as more large firms are attracted to locate onto the Industrial Estate offering further opportunities for Employer Engagement with a future CWSP Programme.

The potential for Copeland to reduce worklessness, reduce income inequality, improve wellbeing in its most deprived communities, as well as generate jobs and provide skilled workers for local employers through the work of the CWSP, the Copeland Enterprise Development Programme and Town Deals is considerable. The Levelling Up Agenda states that “Market failure occurs in places locked in self-reinforcing low growth, poor health, low wellbeing equilibrium. Helping places to spring that trap will potentially unlock growth in a place, by boosting skills, productivity, health, incomes and quality of life” [p. 128].

## **8. Concluding Comments**

The intention of this report has been to evaluate the success of the CWSP in achieving its aims over the period 2019-22. Three sources of data have been gathered and interrogated to this end including qualitative data obtained from the CWSP Programme Manger's Final Report (2022); qualitative data obtained from interviews of Partner members and qualitative data obtained from interviews of external partner organisations.

The outputs achieved by the 2019-22 Programme have been many and in all cases have exceeded targets (except for the number of Apprenticeships). This has been achieved despite the huge impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the delivery of services by Partners and the changes to methods of provision that that necessitated. All members of the Partnership find it to be an important supportive network with whom they can share their experiences. The CWSP Programme Officers have been widely praised for their efficiency & effectiveness and the support that they have extended to Partnership members and external partners. Individual partners will strive to achieve their own missions of reducing worklessness and improving skills acquisition but there is added value from the interventionist approach of the CWSP. Partners are able to leverage more funding as a result of the increase in numbers of individuals that they can help due to referrals made easier by the existence of the Partnership.

We have seen that the CWSP still has a valuable mission to achieve despite favourable increases seen in the levels of employment, numbers of people qualified to NVQ Level 2 and above and a reduction in the unemployment rate in the Borough. Objectives to increase labour force participation, reduce unemployment and support skill acquisition and employment in local industries align closely with those addressed in regional and national strategies. There is much evidence to support the argument for a new CWSP Programme that not only continues with the objectives of previous Programmes but which now places greater emphasis also on the support of enterprise and the close matching of local employers' needs with the skills provision made available to unemployed residents. This will also tie in well with the investments proposed under the Copeland Business Enterprise Development Programme and Town Deals.

## REFERENCES

The Borderlands Partnership (2021) "Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal: Strategic Themes" available at: <https://www.borderlandsgrowth.com/themes>

Centre for Regional Economic Development (2018) "Copeland Work and Skills Partnership Programme Development" for Copeland Borough Council.

Copeland Borough Council (2018) "Copeland Work and Skills Programme (Building Momentum) 2019-22: Project Management Plan with detailed business case."

Copeland Borough Council (2022) "Copeland Work and Skills Programme (Building Momentum) 2019-22: Final Report".

Cumbria Intelligence Observatory (2022) "Labour Market Review: September Report".

Cumbria LEP (2022) "Cumbria Skills Advisory Panel: Local Skills Report 2022."

Her Majesty's Government (2022) "Levelling Up the United Kingdom," White Paper.

Her Majesty's Government (2022) "UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Prospectus" available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

## APPENDIX A: COPELAND WORK & SKILLS PROGRAMME EVALUATION

### PROGRAMME MEMBER CONSULTATIONS

#### Section A: Your organisation

- 1) Which of the following are objectives for your organisation?
  - Improving employability skills (ie. CV writing, confidence) of the unemployed
  - Improving access to employment
  - Providing mental +/- or physical support to unemployed individuals
  - Providing employment matches between employers and unemployed individuals
  - Providing sector-specific training
  - Providing life skills (incl. money management) or adult learning to those in or out of employment
  - Supporting entrepreneurship
  - Providing IAG to individuals)
- 2) Who are your target groups?
- 3) What is your geographic coverage of provision?

#### Section B: Membership of the Partnership

- 4) How long has your organisation been a member of the Partnership?
- 5) Which other partners in the Programme does your organisation work with and in what ways?
- 6) Looking at this list, how important would you say has the W&SP been in helping your organisation to fulfil its own objectives?

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
Making it easier to make referrals to other organisations in the Partnership				
Offering a pathway into employment for your clients				
Offering skills training for your clients				
Offering Covid-19 support to your clients				

Giving your organisation access to additional funds via the Employability Support Fund				
Offering a supportive network of Partner members with whom you can share your experiences				

- 7) Have any of your organisation's employees benefitted from the IAG NVQs being provided through the Programme?
- 8) With regard to your organisation's delivery over the last couple of years, how did Covid-19 affect it?
  - Did membership of the Partnership aid your delivery during this period and how?

**Section C: W&SP Partnership success**

- 9) The W&SP Programme for 2019-22 stated that it had a number of aims, which I will go through. I would like to ask if you could comment on what you think the success of the Programme has been in delivering on those aims?
  - To provide added value from co-ordination of activities by Member organisations
  - To provide added value from shared information and learning
  - To provide increased clarity on the pathways into employment in Copeland
  - To enhance the quality of provision of IAG within the Partnership
  - To provide more targeted provision with less chance of waste and duplication
  - To provide closer links between employers' skills requirements and skills development
- 10) Have there been any impediments/drawbacks to working in the Programme?
- 11) Do you think that there is any duplication of service provision by members of the Partnership? If so, in what areas?
- 12) Do you think that there are any gaps in provision in Copeland with regards to work and skills enablement?
- 13) There is an aspiration that the Partnership will support pathways into self-employment and enterprise. Is that realistic? What would need to be done to make that happen? What kind of self-employment would be suitable for your clients, do you think?
- 14) What do you think of the Management of the Programme? (Prompt: Are the Partnership meetings effective? Do you go to them regularly, do you go or do you send someone else to attend and does it vary?)
- 15) Do you think that the Programme has improved over the years and if so, in what ways?

## APPENDIX B: COPELAND WORK & SKILLS PROGRAMME EVALUATION

### EXTERNAL PARTNER CONSULTATIONS

#### Section A: Your organisation

- 1) Can you give me an overview of what your organisation does?
- 2) Where do the majority of your customers/employees come from?

#### Section B: Your organisation's involvement with the CWS Partnership

- 3) How and when did your organisation get involved with the CWS Partnership?
- 4) In what ways has your organisation worked with the Copeland Work & Skills Programme Partnership (CWSPP)?
- 5) Roughly how many unemployed people have you worked with who have come through the CWS Programme?
- 6) Looking at this list, how important would you say that your connection with the CWSPP has been, in the following ways?

Objective	Very important	Quite important	Not important	Not applicable
Helping the unemployed to find jobs				
Helping the unemployed to re-skill for employment in your sector				
Helping the unemployed to obtain pre-employment skills				
Informing job seekers about your sector/organisation				
Helping employers in your sector find suitable job applicants				
Enlightening your organisation to the work of the CWSPP				
Supporting entrepreneurship in Copeland				

- 7) At the administrative level, what does your involvement with the CWSPP comprise? I.e. do you attend any of the CWSPP meetings, do you receive their Minutes, do you receive updates/newsletters/emails?

#### Section C: Effectiveness of the CWSP Programme

- 8) With regard to your experience with the CWSPP, how would you describe the management of the Programme? Expand

- 9) Have there been any impediments to the success of your collaboration with the CWSP?
- 10) Could your organisation's connection with the CWSP be improved upon and if so, how?
- 11) Do you see your organisation having a role in a future CWSP? Would you like this role to be larger/smaller/about the same as previously?

## **APPENDIX C: COPELAND WORK & SKILLS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME MEMBERS**

All Together Cumbria

Better Bodies

\* Citizens Advice Bureau

Community Learning and Skills

Credit Union

Cumbria CVS

Cumbria Youth Alliance

\* DWP

DWP Barrow

GEN2

Groundwork

Home Group

\* Inspira

Lakes College

Millom Network Centre.

\* Phoenix Enterprise Centre

Riverside Housing

Skills4You

TEG Virtual

Women Out West

\* Also one of the Project Board Members