

Sefton CVS

# Evaluation of Include-IT Mersey Programme 2017-2019

Final Report

November 2019

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

AMION Consulting were appointed by Sefton CVS in October 2017 to carry out the longitudinal evaluation of the Include-IT Mersey project on behalf of the project's strategic partnership, which brings together representatives from across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) including delivery partners from within the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector; three Local Authorities and eleven Housing Associations. The evaluation was commissioned to monitor the effectiveness, impact and value for money of the project and its delivery model for participants, partners and other stakeholders.

The partnership were also interested in reviewing the ongoing delivery of the programme (which started in March 2017) and receiving recommendations that would actively contribute to continual improvement of the project and provision of insight regarding the performance of the project against key milestones.

Two evaluation reports have been produced to date and the conclusions and recommendations from each report can be found in Appendix A:

- First interim report (formative) – January 2018; and
- Second interim report (formative and summative) – July 2018.

This third, and final summative report is the last of the three main evaluation reports planned at the start of the commission and covers delivery from March 2017 up until the end of June 2019, primarily because the programme was initially given a small extension of £54.5k to June 2019, while decisions were being made regarding the allocation of future funding. As described later in the report, the Include-IT Mersey project has since received notification of further funding from the Lottery up until the end of December 2021, however the arrangements for evaluating this second phase of delivery have yet to be agreed, so this evaluation effectively marks the end of Phase 1.

The report provides a commentary on the ongoing rationale for the project (in terms of its design and relevance to the needs of the client group and the local area); an assessment of the management and delivery arrangements; the performance of the project against the milestones set at the outset; the outcomes and impacts of the programme recorded to date and the extent to which it represents value for money; and the lessons learnt throughout the implementation of the project that can be used to inform and shape future delivery.

## 1.2 Evaluation methodology

An evaluation framework was developed at the start of the project to guide the delivery of the evaluation. This outlined the key evaluation questions, the research tools and methods that would be used to gather the primary and secondary data, the tasks for each stage of the evaluation and a timetable for gathering evidence and production of the reports. The methods and data collected comprised a mix of:

- desk based research;
- monitoring information;
- stakeholder consultations;
- focus groups;
- online surveys; and
- case studies.

The inputs for the final evaluation report have included a review of the Include-IT monitoring and evaluation returns and the quarterly monitoring information; a desk based review of best practice and the changing policy context; consultations with the training delivery partners; and collection of feedback from programme participants, via online surveys of current and past participants; and a brief review of comparator information/benchmarks.

### 1.3 Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is presented in the following sections:

- **Section 2: Programme context** – this section describes the changing context in which the programme has been delivered and the extent to which it has remained relevant (particularly in terms of the design and delivery of the programme) to the needs of the client group and the appropriateness of the activities given the project objectives;
- **Section 3: Performance of the programme** – provides a qualitative assessment of the implementation of the programme – in terms of the management of the project, the effectiveness of the partnership and the efficiency of the procedures/structures established to deliver the project. It also presents a quantitative analysis of the implementation of the programme, in particular, with regard to spend and outputs achieved against projected targets and progress in meeting the cross-cutting themes;
- **Section 4: Impact and value for money** – based on feedback from participants and delivery partners, this section describes the impacts of the programme for individuals and wider impacts for partner agencies. Using the 3E's guidance, it also provides an assessment of value for money;
- **Section 5: Conclusions and lessons learnt** – presents the overall findings of the evaluation with regard to the effectiveness, impact and value for money of the programme and its constituent activities. The lessons learnt throughout the two-year delivery period are also presented with a number of recommendations for the second phase of the programme.

## 2 Changing programme context

### 2.1 Policy

#### 2.1.1 *National Digital Inclusion Policy Developments – Adult Basic Digital Skills*

In 2018 the Department for Education consulted on Improving Adult Basic Digital Skills. It outlined a digital entitlement aimed at improving adult basic digital skills including national standards for qualifications at 'beginner' (entry levels 1-3 - designed for adults with little or no prior experience of using digital devices or the internet) and 'essential' levels – (level 1 - designed for adults with some experience of using digital devices and the internet, but lacking the full range of basic digital skills needed for life and work). Reporting on consultation findings in April 2019, the Government's Consultation Response outlined the following commitments:

*'From 2020, alongside the existing legal entitlements to English and maths, we will introduce an entitlement to fully funded digital qualifications. Adults with no or low digital skills will have the opportunity to undertake improved digital qualifications based on new national standards setting out the digital skills people need to get on in life and work. The entitlement will help providers support adults at risk of being left behind by an increasingly digital world. This is alongside our wider action on digital skills, where we continue to support the Good Things Foundation to deliver the 'Future Digital Inclusion' programme in their Online Centres Network. The new digital offer will comprise of new essential digital skills qualifications and new digital Functional Skills qualifications.' p.4*

It proposes that this digital entitlement will be fully funded for Liverpool City Region residents from 2020 through the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB).

#### 2.1.2 *Local Employability Support & Digital Inclusion – Liverpool City Region*

In the LCR's most recent Employer Skills Survey for the 2018-20 and the LCR Skills for Growth Employability action plan:

- 29% of employers reported that their staff lack basic computer and IT skills; and
- 63% of employers said that it was very important that all or most of their employees should have at least some basic knowledge of how to use everyday technology.

The Survey findings also suggested that employers feel these skills are generally not hard to find among young people (84% reported little or no problem recruiting from this group), but 29% of employers had experienced difficulties in recruiting those with the necessary technological skills from among older age groups. The Action Plan recognises the need to develop progression pathways for residents who currently have lower levels of skills to develop the knowledge and competencies required for identified growth sectors.

Similarly the LCR Digital and Creative Skills for Growth Action Plan (2018-20) identifies the need for 'fusion' skills i.e. job applicants will need to be able to combine sector specific skills with digital skills. It cites that many entry level posts will require digital skills e.g. warehousing/back office functions. Analysis of ONS data on internet usage shows Liverpool City Region adults are narrowing the gap in usage but remain behind North West and national positions.

### **2.1.3 *National BBO Evaluation 2018-19***

The most recent Building Better Opportunities Evaluation Annual Report 2019 brings together evidence from the national evaluation of the BBO programme undertaken by consultancy firm ECORYS. It summarises key recent learning from the programme, drawing principally on evidence gathered 2018-9.

- Engagement and targeting: By end of 2018, BBO projects had worked with 50,579 participants, achieving just over two-thirds (67%) of the total number of participants it aimed to assist over the programme lifetime.
- The programme is performing well in terms of engagement. Nationally, BBO has already exceeded the lifetime engagement targets for participants with disabilities (147%) and those aged over 50 (103%).

#### **(i) Engagement**

The BBO programme is successfully engaging with individuals and groups who are at risk of social exclusion and those that are typically harder to engage. Key factors in this engagement success include:

- The design of the BBO programme - encouraging projects to form partnerships that involve specialist organisations - has worked well providing a clear route to access harder to reach groups, while their profile and the fact they are trusted by individuals from target groups underpins their success
- Outreach activity and building strong relationships with external referral partners, with this being particularly important for economically inactive individuals who might ordinarily not engage with programmes such as BBO.
- Using targeted social media and marketing campaigns, both of which were reported as being helpful in encouraging self-referrals. Word of mouth was also commonly noted as an effective factor in promoting engagement through peer or family relationships.

#### **(ii) Programme administration:**

- Administrative requirements have become better defined and more widely understood as the programme has entered a more stable delivery state.

#### **(iii) Partnerships Working:**

- Partnership composition inevitably changes over the course of a longer programme. At the level of individual projects, there continues to be changes in local project partnerships. Projects reported having had partners leave partnerships early in the programme, with ESF administrative requirements typically being cited as a key reason. More recently,

restructuring or internal changes within partners, organisations ceasing trading or becoming insolvent, or poor performance, were reasons for change. Project management staff were generally accepting of these changes and did not necessarily view them negatively in all cases.

- In some contexts, a reduction in partnership numbers was leading to smaller, more manageable partnerships and in some instances was viewed as a “natural progression for the partnership.” Undertaking some due diligence to ensure the capacity of partners at the beginning, but also retaining some flexibility in the programme to allow partnerships to change are key lessons from BBO. This has allowed projects to be responsive as differing participant needs emerge, or when external factors have affected the availability of provision.

**(iv) Providing support for specific target participant groups - the following has been shown to work well:**

- Early support and provision to address mental health needs is essential for those with these conditions. A dual approach where participants receive dedicated wellbeing and mental health support alongside employment support has been shown to work well in BBO projects.
- When supporting groups with language needs (refugees/BAME groups) a more informal approach to teaching English, such as through Conversation Clubs and promoting language learning as being employment focussed, has helped to increase attendance.
- Volunteering is particularly popular for older age groups. This can effectively build people’s confidence and help them overcome social isolation. It is most effectively used when pursued as part of the journey towards employment, so projects need to identify appropriate opportunities across partner agencies and organisations.
- Exploring existing or potentially long forgotten skills, rather than solely focus on acquiring new ones, is a useful approach when supporting older people or refugees.
- Recognising the influence of family circumstances or the childcare responsibilities of women is necessary to engage effectively with female participants. Looking beyond the needs of the individual female participant and considering whether any support is needed to address any issues in the wider family can also prove successful.

## 2.2 Management and delivery arrangements

### 2.2.1 *Central project management team*

There has been some slight restructuring over the last year with the departure of the project Quality Co-ordinator and Admin Officer – as agreed with BBO funders. However, following the extension of the programme, both of these posts are now being put back into place to ensure that the project has a full complement of staff as a matter of urgency.

## 2.2.2 *Delivery/geographical changes across the LCR*

As part of the regular management arrangement reviews and reflecting several programme delivery extensions, there have been several changes since the last evaluation report – reflecting the national profile of delivery partnership consolidation. Over time this has also resulted in:

- broadening the project's reach through extending delivery into other disadvantaged wards and communities not currently targeted and reducing the focus from 50+ to 40+ (with the minimum age eligibility criteria set at 18);
- overall reduction and consolidation of the overall numbers of delivery partners,
- in Knowsley & Wirral: improved presence and recruitment/delivery following the withdrawal of 3 providers (Knowsley FACE; Wirral Radio and Wirral BC Adult Learning Service) in 2018 and subsequent reallocations to other remaining delivery partners. STEC have expanded their delivery to include the Knowsley venues in Halewood (New Hutte Centre). The WEA are now delivering at Tomorrow's Women Wirral and CGL in Birkenhead, Wirral;
- In Liverpool, Alt Valley Community Trust has moved from delivery at The Bridge, Norris Green to an expanded number of venues at Dovecot MAC, the Communiversity, Breck Road Library, Kirkby job centre and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council;
- In Sefton, 3tC now provides both digital training and employability support elements for BBO – with WEA no longer co-delivering with them;
- In St Helens, Helena Housing Association has merged with Liverpool Mutual Homes and renamed as Torus Housing – it remains as a delivery partner in the town centre, working jointly with St Helens Chamber;
- Henshaw's – one of the specialist partners supporting learners with visual impairments have closed their Liverpool office and pulling out of Merseyside delivery altogether; and
- LCVS and Community Action Wirral, had roles in supporting the delivery of volunteer briefing sessions which is now redundant.

## 2.2.3 *Roll out of accredited qualifications*

Many delivery partners have become approved centres with the Good Things Foundation during the past year, to enable the accreditation of participants' online learning through Learn My Way (using the C & G Entry Level 3 Online Basics qualification). Seven more partners (3tc, Age UK Wirral, Alt Valley, Big Help Project, Greenbank, Rotunda and Torus) have pursued this development opportunity, in addition to the WEA that completed the process in 2018 and Granby Toxteth Development Trust, which has been an approved centre for this qualification for several years. Four (Age UK Wirral, Greenbank, Rotunda and WEA) were also able to access additional accreditation support delivered by STEC and funded through the BBO Programme.

Each of them has completed the initial QA process and signed up to a webinar in July to complete the registration process. Other partners offer alternative accreditation routes for

learners, which they have chosen to continue with, meaning that all bar one is now able to offer an accreditation route for project participants.

**Case Study:**

Several learners whose Include IT course was accredited have reported this being an extra bonus for them in moving towards applying for job vacancies. Granby Toxteth Development Trust offers City & Guilds accredited learning – with a very light touch assessment at the end of the course. Ms D – early 60s – commented:

*'The tutor and the other learners made me feel really welcome – never met them before but they put you at ease. Now I've got my City and Guilds IT qualification. Tara the tutor just asked us on the last day of the course if we wanted to do it, so we didn't get worked up - just did it and was the best way. I've told my Job Coach at JCP and she is really pleased as well.'*

Mrs E, who was also on the course, commented:

*'I am starting to feel a bit more confident and think about applying for jobs. I've passed the City and Guilds for IT a few weeks ago at the end of the course which has made me feel better as well.'*

#### 2.2.4 *Volunteer Digital Champion Development:*

The role of the Digital Champions has continued to evolve with the development of the project, and the DC's are now engaged in assisting with course delivery and delivery of the digital drop in sessions, in addition to their ongoing role in promoting the course and where possible making referrals to the training providers across the LCR. Since the project started the digital champions have been involved in over 180 referrals of which 51 have led to enrollment on the Include IT Mersey course.

To date 157 digital champions have been engaged on the project and 18 have used the experience at Include IT as a stepping stone to employment. There are currently 40 active digital champions across the LCR, with the exception of Knowsley, as follows:

- Halton - 5
- Liverpool - 12
- Sefton - 10
- St Helens - 6
- Wirral - 7

Over half (21) are engaged in assisting with digital drop-in sessions delivered across the LCR as shown in Table 2.1 below, 14 help with the courses by providing additional classroom support for the participants, and 3 digital champions do both.

The digital surgery activity is due to be expanded, with delivery planned for Knowsley, Halton, the Life Rooms in Bootle and through Riverside – the delivery of 2 sessions in Liverpool and one in Wirral.

**Table 2.1: Digital Drop-in Sessions**

Day	Venue	Time
Monday	Bootle Library	11am-1pm
Tuesday	Porchfield Community Centre, Croxteth	10am-12pm
	St Helens Carers Centre	10am-12pm
	Hope House, St Helens	12pm-2pm
Wednesday	The Atkinson, Southport	10am-1pm
	Southport Community Centre	10am-12.30pm
Thursday	The Reach, Speke (call 0151 233 3069 to book appointment )	10am-12pm
	Akenside Court, Bootle	1-3pm
	The Atkinson, Southport. Tablet only session	2-4pm
Friday	Netherton Feelgood Factory, Bring your own device	11am-1pm
	Birkenhead Central Library, in partnership with Wirral Mencap	1-3pm

Links have also been developed with Merseyside Police's Digital Community Support Officer, who has delivered online safety sessions to volunteer DCs (to better equip them in advising members of the public) and attended digital drop-in sessions and provided direct support to the public.

## 2.2.5 *National Careers Service Links*

Over the last year Greenbank, WEA, Torus (previously Helena) and 3tc developed links with the National Careers Service (NCS) to supplement the provision of IAG and employment support to participants. STEC and Halton Council are building on their existing NCS relationships to explore further ways of working together to support their delivery. Plans are now in place to link their advisers into future BBO provision.

The plan is for NCS advisers to attend one day of each course to support IAG, employability support and progression planning, hooking willing participants in to the wider NCS service for continued support into the future. Ten training partners have engaged with this initiative, in addition to it already happening in St Helens, where the Chamber is the local NCS provider.

## 2.2.6 *Marketing and Promotion*

Varied publicity and promotional activity continued throughout the past year including:

- a range of volunteer Digital Champion publicity activity roles, including outreach engagement, attendance at various events, promotion to various other organisations, etc;

- delivery partner attendance at local community events and promotion to organisations such as libraries, Job Centres, employment advisers, thematic support groups, social groups and community organisations;
- publicity resources, materials and project documentation have been updated with the new Community Fund logo;
- promotion through Housing Association partners via customer facing staff, social media channels and other more targeted approaches;
- adverts in local newspapers including the Wirral Globe, Southport and Formby Champion; and
- regular content posted on social media.

## 2.3 Funding

The initial application for funding from the Building Better Opportunities Programme was submitted for a two year period to cover delivery from March 2017 to March 2019. Towards the end of 2018, projects were informed that a further round of funding would be available to support a continuation, or variation of activities up to the end of December 2021 subject to satisfactory performance to date. In Spring 2019, the Include-IT Mersey project was one of a number of existing projects across the UK to receive notification of an extension, with a further £1.64m from BBO (which is matched with funding from the European Social Fund, ESF) to extend the Include IT project for a further 2½ years.

During the first quarter of 2019 therefore, a key focus for the project has included planning for future delivery. Budgets, delivery plans and profiles have now been finalized and agreed with the Lottery, with the additional investment forecast to extend the project until December 2021. Project planning has included both a thorough review of the delivery model, insight from the national digital inclusion landscape and emerging good practice findings from Ecorys' national evaluation of the BBO programme. As a result, planned developments and improvements for Phase 2 of the project include:

- “Improving access” (to IT/internet) outside of courses/ formal sessions, both by:
  - setting up more drop-in sessions run by Digital Champion volunteers; and
  - providing computers/ tablets and mobile data connections (for a fixed period) to participants. This incentive will both aid retention of participants to complete their learning programmes and will support them to further develop their skills post project completion.
- Building in a centrally managed £50k fund for partners to apply into to cover unforeseen or expensive costs that their individual budget allocations do not cover, such as childcare, interpreters, signers, extra learner support for high needs learners, etc.; and for learner expenses/incentives/rewards, such as providing a computer/ tablet (as above), interview clothes, etc.

- Broadening the geographical reach by relaxing the priority ward boundaries originally targeted in Phase 1 and targeting other areas of disadvantage or identified digital exclusion.
- Further reducing the priority age focus down to 30+, following the original reduction from 50+ to 40+, due to clear levels of demand across the area.
- Working with the Good Things Foundation (who own/run Learn My Way) to get more training partners approved as accredited centres, able to accredit learners' work through an Entry Level 3 City & Guilds 'online basics' certificate.
- Increasing the project management team back to full capacity, by appointing a replacement Quality Co-ordinator and Project Administrator, following the departure of the previous post-holders last year. These two vacancies placed the remaining management team members under increasing pressure over the six months following their departure and it was a key priority to urgently fill these roles as soon as the longer-term project extension had been approved.

### 3 Performance of the programme

#### 3.1 Management and delivery

This section provides an insight into how the management and delivery of the programme has evolved over time and in a number of instances been refined to improve delivery. It is primarily based on feedback gathered from interviews with the delivery partners, including the strategic leads and tutors where possible, but also includes feedback from participants from their post training evaluation questionnaire administered by the central team, and responses received from the online surveys of learners carried out in June 2018 and 2019.

##### 3.1.1 *Delivery partner consultations*

###### **(i) Working relationship with the Include-IT central management team:**

- Delivery partners universally volunteered very positive feedback about team support and responsiveness: 'Very proactive management team - they are a driving force...we've never waited longer than an hour for a response from the team - even when contacted them on a Friday evening!'
- Increased partnership working to develop new ideas and work co-operatively together – service providers with Include and service partners together – for example, STEC have been resourced to provide an intensive support role around engagement of some partners with the accreditation registration and roll out process – and have been working with several delivery partners including Greenbank and Rotunda. This in turn has led to increased exchange of good practice between partners in relation to programme delivery approaches.
- A very positive working culture is apparent between all stakeholders across the Include IT Programme – with high levels of trust and responsive, constructive engagement around performance management and any challenges arising.

###### **(ii) More refined promotion/recruitment approaches:**

- Delivery partners are working in a more targeted way to engage with some client groups, for example, Universal Credit (UC) Disability group. An example is the Big Help Project, which works to engage participants using Kirkby JCP. Big Help Project works with high numbers of clients with complex needs and mental health issues and made a presentation at Kirkby JCP to present the Include offer to their clients in UC. This included clarification and reassurance to potential participants about the voluntary nature of involvement with Include IT. The presentation resulted in several of this cohort being recruited onto the Include IT Programme and Big Help now uses this recruitment route on a regular basis.
- Over the last year (2018-9) an additional referral/recruitment route has emerged through local social prescribing models. Big Help engages with Care Merseyside CIC – in partnership with a local GP practice – to develop referral routes onto Include IT for those who are socially isolated often resulting in mental ill health or those with complex needs.

GPs prescribe a range of social options for patients including digital training and debt advice at Big Help - part of its core offer as well as back to work support. Over the last 8 months about 7 people have engaged with Include IT.

- Many delivery partners are promoting and recruiting participants through supplying Include IT marketing information out to other service providers. For example, Age UK Wirral promotes the service to its own 300 volunteers as well as to local supermarkets and GPs. It also promotes the service to local JCP staff with Age UK co-ordinator staffing an info stand at Bromborough JCP to inform the Job Coaches. It has also recently publicised an incentive – with a £20 Amazon voucher guaranteed for each participant completing the course.
- Greenbank has revised its recruitment and marketing of the Include IT programme through more assertive outreach to specialist partners including Mencap, Brain Charity, and Natural Breaks – and believe that the reduction in eligible age range which has reduced to 30 year has been helpful

**(iii) Enhancing the local delivery models:**

- Some delivery partners have made substantial changes in their delivery approach & geographies: Greenbank; STEC; Alt Valley Community Trust Big Help; WEA; Independence Initiatives – adapting their delivery venues and geographical targeting to a broader base, which in turn is supporting the programme to recruit more women and more economically inactive.
- Several delivery partners have committed to initial sign-up sessions for new learners which focus solely on paperwork/evidence as a first pre-teaching session and aim to clarify the offer and any issues/perceptions of learners re involvement, for example: 3TC; Age UK Wirral. Delivery partners commented that this was ironing out learners' concerns about involvement and assisting with retention rates overall. They also cited that this enabled a less frenetic introduction to the Include IT course which resulted in more relaxed and receptive learners in the following training weeks.
- Increased involvement of National Careers Service was cited by several delivery partners. This tended to be variable in response by learners and delivery partners and often worked best where a good working relationship and continuity of personnel had developed.

**(iv) Progression of Learners**

- Overall delivery partners appear to be more focused on the progression of learners since the first evaluation report was completed – with greater acknowledgement of the 'step up' required to the next level of existing digital training courses which many believed was often too big for many learners in some areas.
- Alt Valley Community Trust commented: 'if the leap to a Level 1 digital training course is too big for our learners, we offer other courses to them. It's often about building learners' confidence so we offer people entry level qualifications at Communiversity and also signpost to Basic Skills courses at Adult Learning Service.'

- Some delivery partners have started to provide more signposting in terms of progression pathway information about free distance learning courses e.g. those provided by Knowsley College.

**Case Study**

3Tc has developed and delivered a new Digital Training move on option and it ran a new level 1 course which included the participation of BBO completers. Focusing on how content around websites, PowerPoint and desktop publishing – it ran a 3-day course in June 2019 (ITQ qualification - portfolio based). A total of nine participants completed the Sefton Council funded opportunity and filled a gap identified locally for five people who wanted to progress with their digital learning after completing the Include IT programme.

- Several delivery partners have cited the importance of being able to offer a progression route from learner to digital champion, volunteering on the Include IT course to progress with skills and employment readiness, as outlined in the case study below:

**Progressing into Volunteering as a Digital Champion**

**Mr S, WEA Halton** - Unemployed for 25 years, Mr G attended the first WEA course at the start of 2018, having been struggling with anxiety and depression for a long time. He told us:

I could hardly talk when I first came along. I now feel like a human being on this course. On other courses if you got stuck you've had it – but not here. It's been motivational and has got me fired up. This course has brought me back into life after 25 years out of work.

He has completed the course and told us about the impact it has had on him and his family

My grandkids (aged 12 and 10) say to me "how do you know that grandad" - they are surprised at what I can do on the computer now - they were thinking old people can't learn anything. I thought my life was over but because of the discussions and interactions and dynamism on this course - I have come back into the human race.

On completing the course, his tutor suggested he got involved as a Digital Champion, to support other people coming along:

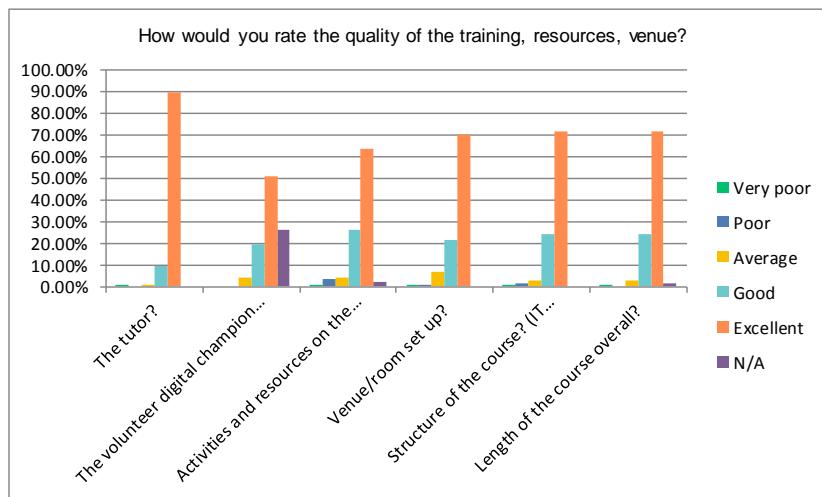
I've always done volunteering so when the tutor mentioned helping here on the Include IT course, I jumped at it. I am now on the volunteering course for digital champions and as a result the JCP have put my job search on the back burner as I have made such good progress since I started on the include it course, I am not frightened to see the work coach at JCP anymore.

### **3.1.2 Feedback from participants of the programme**

The feedback from learners regarding the management and delivery of the programme has been consistently good, with very high levels of overall satisfaction (95%) and 99% of participants reporting that the training was easy to follow. When asked how participants would rate the quality of the training, resources and structure of the course, responses were received from between 156-170 learners, which were overwhelmingly positive, with approximately 90% of participants rating the tutor as excellent for example as shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Over 80% of participants also rated the activities, resources, venue and overall structure of the course as either excellent or good. With regard to the Volunteer Digital Champions, not all training partners/venues took up the offer of volunteers so over 20% of learners could not respond to this question. Of those that did, the feedback has been extremely positive.

**Figure 3.1: Satisfaction with the structure and quality of training/delivery**



Source: Include IT participant online surveys

When asked about the employability support provided as part of the course, 77% thought that this was useful, while 14.5% hadn't yet covered this, but all participants who responded to the online surveys in both 2018 and 2019 said that they would recommend the course to family and friends.

As part of the post training evaluation carried out by the central team, to improve the ongoing delivery of the training, learners are asked to suggest potential improvements. Well over 60% commented that no improvements were needed and where recommendations were suggested these included - less paperwork, longer courses, more handouts, further/higher level courses and the provision of tea/coffee – a number of which have been addressed or provided as the course has progressed.

## 3.2 Expenditure

### 3.2.1 Phase 1 projected expenditure: March 2017 – June 2019

The Include-IT project was initially allocated £1.645m from the Building Better Opportunities Fund, which includes Big Lottery Funding and ESF. The projected spend at the start of the project, as set out in the stage 2 application<sup>1</sup>, for the three calendar years was as follows:

- 2017 (March – Dec) - £881,025
- 2018 (Jan – Dec) - £701,590

<sup>1</sup> November 2016

- 2019 (Jan – March) - £62,683

The timetable for delivery of outputs and spend was initially extended up until the end of June 2019 (with an additional £54.5k allocated as ‘bridging funding’ for an additional 69 participants for the project to the end of Q2 2019) as the Lottery was in the process of deciding which projects would receive further funding from the programme.

**Table 3.1: Projected and actual expenditure: March 2017 – June 2019**

Area	Cumulative to date		
	Forecast (to Q2, 2019)	Actual (end Q2, 2019)	Actual as a % of total
Merseyside	£1,490,190	£1,461,197	98.1%
Halton	£205,744	£195,535	95.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,695,934</b>	<b>£1,656,732</b>	<b>97.7%</b>

Source: Include-IT quarterly monitoring return – Q2, 2019

As shown in Table 3.1, the cumulative spend on the project up until the end of Q2 for 2019 was £1.657m. This is higher than the initial Phase 1 allocation of £1.645m and 98% of the spend forecast to the end of Q2 2019.

### 3.2.2 *Actual expenditure vs projected expenditure*

#### (i) **Year 1: target £881,025; actual £479,104**

At the start of the Include-IT programme, as reported in the first evaluation report, the project was underspending in the early stages as a result of:

- over-ambitious forecasting in the early stages of the project (by most partners) combined with delays to staff recruitment – which resulted in a late start to the actual delivery of the training;
- lower than planned levels of delivery which had an impact on staffing costs and participant expenses (travel, lunch/ refreshments, childcare);
- participant expenses generally being lower than those forecast at the outset;
- later than planned recruitment of the volunteer co-ordinators which had a knock-on effect of delaying the recruitment and mobilisation of volunteers;
- lower levels of (more costly) publicity activities;
- little need to procure local community organisations (non-project partners) to deliver community engagement events; and
- significantly lower than forecast staff expense claims and venue hire.

Based on revisions made to the forecast spend at each stage of the quarterly monitoring/ reporting process however, the partnership did start to close the gap on actual spend towards the end of the year which was down from 62% in Q1/2 to 34% by Quarter 4 (actual vs forecast).

**(ii) Year 2: target £701,590; actual £785,988**

A comprehensive review of the project funding was undertaken in January/February 2018, and permission was sought from BLF to vire funding across the budget headings to address some of the key issues raised above. For example, the volunteer related costs which (including briefing sessions, equipment, expenses, volunteer hosting costs) made up a large proportion of the overall budget (22%), required significant re-modelling as a result of the changing role of the digital champion to provide more support in the classroom and provision of assistance at the digital surgeries compared with recruitment of participants as originally planned. In addition, the turnover of volunteers was nowhere near the level originally anticipated, as volunteers spent longer with the project instead. This resulted in the need for only 75-100 volunteers to support the training provision, as opposed to the 150 originally planned. Other areas of slippage that required re-forecasting and partial reallocation include those listed below:

- procured services (e.g. community engagement events)
- participant expenses
- marketing and publicity

The central management team also discussed redirecting funding to other areas of project delivery (and additional participants) to ensure that the project met its overall aims, objectives and targets.

Despite re-profiling, areas of variance or underspend in Year 2 related to:

- staff costs – both internal and sessional/consultants;
- the timing of partner claims;
- venue hire costs;
- participant expenses; and
- higher spend on consumables.

Overall however, during 2018 expenditure was largely in line with projections at the start of the project and actual spend exceeded the target by some £84k.

**(iii) Year 3: target £62,683; actual £215,581 (to end of Q1 2019)**

Expenditure in the final quarter of Phase 1 (Q1, 2019) was the highest quarterly claim for the project, bringing the cumulative spend to £1.48m, which represented 90% of the initial budget for phase 1 of the project. As part of the project planning process the remainder of the initial budget (£164,747) was combined with the extra investment and the increased budget was re-forecast from Q2-2019 until the end of December 2021. In total the programme will receive £3,290,600 over the lifetime of the programme.

As part of the reforecasting process, and review of expenditure to date, categories that were consistently under-spent (e.g. participant expenses and venue hire) or over-spent (consumables) were adjusted to set a more realistic forecast. However, it is anticipated that the budget will still need close monitoring and adjustment as the project progresses for the remainder of the programme.

### 3.3 Include IT outputs and outcomes

The overall level of projected outputs and outcome (results) targets for the Include-IT project are set out in Table 3.2 over the page. This table also presents the performance of Phase 1 of the project, up to the end of Q2 2019, based on data returns made to the central management team via the LMW management information system.

Analysis of the data demonstrates that the number of participant starts (940) has exceeded the target set for phase 1 at the start of the project of some 750 participants. This has in part been driven by the central management team but also pro-active working with the delivery partners to stay on track with targets.

Table 3.2: Projected targets for the Include-IT project, and outputs and outcomes achieved to end of June 2019							
Indicator	Target (March 2017-2019)			Actual (March 2017 – June 2019)			%
Outputs	M'Side	Halton	Total	M'side	Halton	Total	
<b>Participants</b>	652	98	<b>750</b>	823	117	<b>940</b>	<b>125%</b>
Male	326	49	<b>375</b>	418	59	<b>477</b>	<b>127%</b>
Female	326	49	<b>375</b>	402	57	<b>459</b>	<b>122%</b>
Unemployed	326	49	<b>375</b>	487	47	<b>534</b>	<b>142%</b>
Economically inactive	326	49	<b>375</b>	336	70	<b>406</b>	<b>108%</b>
>50's	196	29	<b>225</b>	545	73	<b>618</b>	<b>275%</b>
People with Disabilities	179	27	<b>206</b>	357	71	<b>428</b>	<b>208%</b>
People from Ethnic Minorities	34	5	<b>39</b>	69	1	<b>70</b>	<b>179%</b>
Outcomes	M'Side	Halton	Total	M'side	Halton	Total	
<b>Progression into education/training</b>	111	17	<b>128</b>	177	31	<b>208</b>	<b>163%</b>
<b>Progression into employment</b>	46	7	<b>53</b>	66	7	<b>73</b>	<b>138%</b>
- Of which, those who were unemployed	23	4	<b>27</b>	48	6	<b>54</b>	<b>200%</b>
- Of which, those who were inactive	23	3	<b>26</b>	18	1	<b>19</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Inactive moving into job search</b>	88	13	<b>101</b>	65	18	<b>83</b>	<b>82%</b>

Source: Include-IT quarterly monitoring return Q2, 2019

In addition, although not recorded in the statistics above, the project has also been successful in recruiting 157 digital champions with good representation across all of the LCR authorities. While the overall target was initially 150, this was subsequently revised down to a range of 75-100, based on changes to the nature of the role discussed earlier. 18 digital champions have

moved into employment as a result of their experience on Include IT and 40 digital champions are currently active in running the digital surgeries/drop-ins (21) and helping on courses (14). The digital champions have made over 180 referrals to the project, of which 51 have started on the training.

### Outputs

As shown in Table 3.2 above, the performance of the project in relation to outputs and outcomes is largely positive, with all output target surpassed in total. Following the slow start to the project, increased recruitment became a priority from the start and further targeting was required throughout the delivery of phase 1 in relation to:

- the recruitment of women onto the courses; and
- identifying and recruiting economically inactive individuals onto the project.

As shown in Table 3.2, the project was particularly successful in engaging over 50's and individuals with disabilities, where targets were doubled, and similarly, BME participation was also ahead of projected targets.

### Outcomes

Analysis of the outcomes data demonstrates encouraging performance overall, although somewhat mixed, with strong levels of progression into education, training and employment, particularly for those who were previously unemployed (i.e. out of work and actively seeking work), but an underperformance in terms of progression outcomes for economically inactive residents (i.e. out of work and not actively seeking work), particularly in assisting inactive people into work or active job search. The number of inactive residents claimed as moving into job search has recently been affected by an internal audit that was carried out, which discovered a level of inaccuracy in the recording of participant details (specifically in the categorization of participants' unemployed/ inactive status), and a subsequent revision of the figures was made.

Feedback provided by the training providers and participants through both the post training evaluation forms and the online surveys, suggest that in addition to the quantifiable impacts, the project has also been successful in improving a range of qualitative outcomes for participants on the project - particularly in relation to improved confidence, and social skills. These are described in more detail in the next section on impacts.

## 3.4 National comparator performance

The monitoring data from the Include IT project has been compared with figures for the overall National BBO programme to assess local performance. The comparators in table 3.3 below demonstrate that the Include IT Mersey project has:

- engaged a higher % of women and 50+, a slightly lower number of economically inactive and people with disabilities, and a significantly lower proportion of BME groups (although this is unsurprising given the demographics of the other areas of the UK delivering BBO projects compared to the Liverpool City Region); and

- achieved much higher training outcomes and economically inactive into job search, a lower job outcomes figure, but a higher proportion of overall progression outcomes.

<b>Table 3.3: Include IT Mersey compared with the National BBO programme</b>					
	<b>Include IT Mersey (30/6)</b>		<b>National BBO (31/3)</b>		
<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>% of starts</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>% of starts</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Participants</b>	940	-	71020	-	
Male	477	50.7%	37047	52.2%	-1.4%
Female	459	48.8%	33664	47.4%	1.4%
Unemployed	534	56.8%	39285	55.3%	1.5%
Economically inactive	406	43.2%	32473	45.7%	-2.5%
>50's	618	65.7%	17437	24.6%	41.2%
People with Disabilities	428	45.5%	35592	50.1%	-4.6%
People from Ethnic Minorities	70	7.4%	16263	22.9%	-15.5%
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>% of starts</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>% of starts</b>	
<b>Progression into education/training</b>	208	22.1%	6329	8.9%	13.2%
<b>Progression into employment</b>	73	7.8%	9280	13.1%	-5.3%
- Of which, those who were unemployed	54	10.1%	5885	15.0%	-4.9%
- Of which, those who were inactive	19	4.7%	3455	10.6%	-6.0%
<b>Inactive moving into job search</b>	83	20.4%	2763	8.5%	11.9%
<b>All progressions</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>38.7%</b>	<b>18372</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>12.9%</b>

## 3.5 Cross cutting themes

At the start of the programme, all training partners were responsible for preparing action plans to guide activity to support the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and diversity and sustainable development. The following sections provide highlights and activities undertaken by partners in delivering these plans. As part of Phase 2 of the programme, training partners are currently in the process of refreshing these plans/activities for the remainder of the project.

### 3.5.1 Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality

In addition to the varied, targeted publicity and outreach efforts to engage marginalised groups and residents of deprived wards, other examples of recent E&D improvement actions reported by partners include:

- Renewal of Disability Confident (previously 'Two Ticks') status by Rotunda and St Helens Chamber and Big Help Project currently in the process of applying for it for the first time.
- Activities to challenge gender stereotypes, such as the promotion of non-traditional progression opportunities (courses and jobs) for women, e.g. women into construction, warehousing and self-employment, for example, St Helens Chamber, Halton Council and the WEA.
- Links made with Refugee support organisations and groups to encourage BME participation and wider access to other provision on offer (e.g. Helena, St Helens Chamber, STEC and Halton Council), including the provision of interpreters. Plus STEC have provided support for a number of Eastern European migrant workers recently made redundant from a local factory. Helena has adapted their teaching methods, using a large tv monitor to better cater for the needs of the Syrian groups.
- Accessibility improvements to buildings, for example, by STEC, which is in the process of installing a new lift to open up access to facilities on the first floor.
- The WEA piloting additional resources to support dyslexic learners and providing better information and advice on support available through Access to Work for participants registered as disabled.
- Use of positive role models in the form of delivery staff and volunteer DCs. For example, 50% of tutors and 43% of the volunteer DCs currently active on the project are female. Several also have a recognised disability.
- Engagement of a mental health consultant by the Big Help Project (BHP) to improve HR and welfare processes in relation to mental health, for example, provision of mental health awareness training for staff and volunteers, appraisal processes amended to incorporate mental wellbeing support.
- BHP has also taken positive action to address historic pay inequalities across the organisation

As noted earlier, organisations have developed a range of strategies to improve the gender balance of participants on programme. The targeting of women, inactive residents, older working adults (aged 50+), individuals with disabilities and participation by BME groups and other vulnerable adults has proved particularly successful during Phase 1 of the project.

### 3.5.2 *Sustainable development*

Examples of sustainable development activities pursued by the delivery partners, a number of which are now nearing completion include:

Nearing the project's original planned end date of March 2019, several Delivery Partners have now achieved the majority of planned actions in their project-specific SD plans. We will revisit SD plans with partners in respect of the potential longer term extension of the project in the spring.

In addition to the range of improvement actions reported previously, more recent examples include:

- Improvements in housekeeping by the majority of Delivery Partners, with more actively conserving energy, increasing recycling or using environmentally friendly products:
  - environmental champions have been introduced by several partners and awareness sessions provided to staff and participants.
  - increased recycling:
    - Having not previously done so, Henshaw's now recycle 80% of their building waste; Big Help Project and Rotunda have reported 90% recycling. Independence Initiatives has also started to recycle and Age UK Wirral now use recycled hand towels.
  - The Big Help Project now uses non-bleached paper for all non-essential correspondence and photocopying, resulting in a 70% reduction in use of bleached white paper;
  - introduction of paper recycling bins where not previously in place;
  - ensuring that packaging for new purchases is taken away by suppliers;
  - several partners have stopped using disposable, non-recyclable plastic cups previously used in large numbers, either replacing them with recyclable alternatives or simply using glasses, e.g. Sefton CVS, GTDT, Henshaw's, St Helens Chamber;
  - successful 'switch it off' campaigns introduced by several partners;
  - replacement of electrical devices with more energy efficient options, for example, Everton Development Trust has replaced old fluorescent strip lighting with low energy LED bulbs, automatic switch-off devices for lighting and started to regularly monitor energy consumption. So far, in comparison to the previous year, electricity usage has reduced by 70%. Similarly, St Helens Chamber has an ongoing programme of replacing lighting with more energy efficient LED bulbs and some partners have replaced photocopiers with more energy efficient models with automatic standby modes;
  - St Helens Chamber has replaced its old paper-based purchasing system with a new online system (Sicon Wap), significantly reducing paper use and increasing efficiency;
  - EDT has replaced the old, large water cisterns that supply toilets. Recent water meter readings have shown a 40% reduction in water use in comparison to the previous months before the cisterns were replaced;
  - STEC currently has a major building improvements programme under way, introducing, amongst other things, energy efficient double glazing, wall insulation and a new boiler system;
  - 3tc has moved to new, more environmentally friendly premises; and

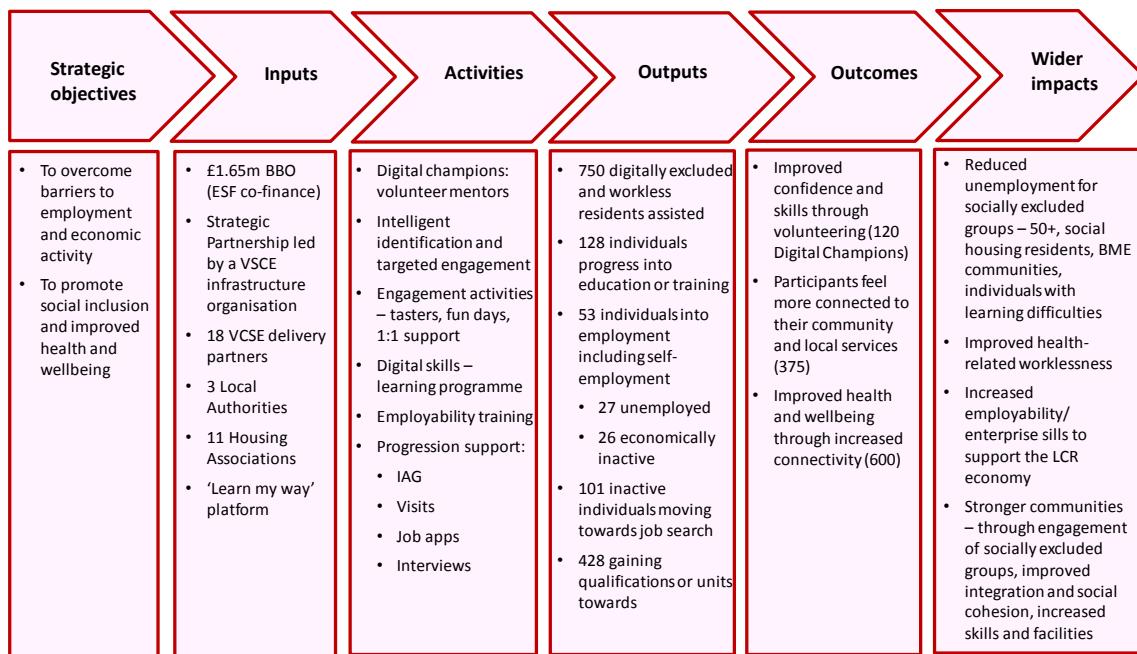
- some partners have reduced food waste resulting from lunches provided to participants.
- Improvements to staff and participant travel by several Delivery Partners, reducing single passenger car journeys (for example, through car share schemes), increasing use of public transport, cycling and/or walking, thereby reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions/ environmental impact, for example, BHP, EDT, Halton Council and Henshaw's car share schemes; BHP cycle to work scheme (two bicycles purchased for staff to date); increased use of public transport by EDT and GTDT staff.
- Promotion and encouragement of volunteering and active citizenship by most delivery partners. 11 previous Include-IT Mersey learners have since become volunteer DCs on the project and at least 16 others that we know of have progressed to other voluntary work.
- In addition to its sizeable foodbank operations, BHP has introduced a new Food Club service, which distributes 'close to sell-by date' food produce donated by local supermarkets at low cost to low income families. This both reduces unnecessary food waste and also has a significant positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local low-income families.
- The project has supported the provision of new IT hubs in locations/venues that previously had none, for example, Southport Community Centre, Riverside Development Trust (Toxteth) and Speke.

## 4 Impacts

### 4.1 Introduction

The logic chain for the project set out below describes the overarching strategic aims and objectives for the Include-IT Mersey programme, what it aimed to achieve and the resources it would use to deliver the projected outcomes and wider impacts.

**Figure 4.1: Include-IT logic model**



The preceding section reported on the performance of the project with regard to meeting the BBO output and results targets highlighted above. The remainder of this section provides an assessment of the extent to which the project has achieved some of the more qualitative outcomes and impacts described above. Data to inform this has been gathered from a participant survey that was carried out in 2018 and 2019; a follow up survey of past participants; and self-assessment data gathered from participants at the start and end of the training programme. The wider impacts section has also drawn on feedback from the consultations with the central team and the training providers.

### 4.2 Learner outcomes and impacts

#### 4.2.1 *Characteristics of survey respondents*

In total, the online participant survey was completed by 175 learners, with 94 completing the first survey in 2018 and 81 in 2019. Analysis of the characteristics of the survey respondents demonstrated that they were broadly representative of all participants in terms of age, gender,

ethnicity, disability, and geographical distribution. The respondents were evenly split with regard to gender compared with a 51:49 split from the monitoring data, and of the 150 participants that recorded their ethnicity, 91% were White British and 7.3% were from Ethnic Minority Groups, compared with 7.5% of the total population of learners. 41% of all respondents had a disability or long-term condition compared with 46% from the population as a whole and 72% were over 50 compared with 66% from the monitoring data.

In terms of economic status, 52% of respondents were unemployed compared with 57% of the total cohort but there was a lower proportion of economically inactive people responding (30% compared with 43% from the monitoring data) - 14% classed their economic status as 'other'.

#### 4.2.2 *Engagement and satisfaction among learners*

When asked how people heard about the training and why they enrolled on the course, the three main referral routes for participants were Job Centre Plus, the training providers themselves and word of mouth, and the primary reason for joining the course (60%) was to increase job opportunities, followed by 50% who wanted to gain skills that would enable them to access services online. Other reasons for enrolling included – 'refresher course'; UC requirements; and 'JCP suggested it was a good idea'.

Among respondents there was a very high level of satisfaction with the training (95%) and almost all participants (99%) found the IT training easy to follow, praising the tutors, groupwork, 1:1 support, pace, and additional support for learning difficulties.

The importance of a relaxed and non-threatening learning environment has been the foundation of a positive experience on Include IT for many learners – without that little is achieved.

#### Supportive Learning Environments

The Include IT programme has been consistently cited as being supportive in its approach with tutors and other learners being friendly and welcoming to everyone who gets involved - particularly important to many who have not been involved in any form of training for years and the many learners who come along having never used a computer before.

Getting involved in the Include IT course often leads to learners making new friendships and finding themselves far less isolated – with both other participants and through making contact with friends and family as a result of being able to go on-line.

Mrs E – late 50s – Granby Toxteth Development Trust told us:

I came along to the course twice a week on Thursdays and Fridays for 12 weeks. It suited me you know. I was a bit nervous at first but I liked the set up - we talked a lot and that helped. Was worried that I might not be ready to meet other people - I have lost my husband and my mum and dad over the last 2 years and thought it may be a bit too early for me to go on a course - but I was fine.

Many new learners had a real fear of using a computer for the first time – which has stopped them getting involved with any training previous to coming along to the Include IT course.

Mrs F is 61 and was made redundant. With the pension age being raised, she needed to keep working and had become very isolated after losing her job. Hearing about the course from Job Centre Plus, she

went along to 3TC in Sefton for the Include IT course there:

*'I was very frightened of computers - I would start crying cos I got myself in such a state about using them. I have always been a bag of nerves about using them. I've learned the basics now - how to get onto the computer and onto the internet and onto sites. Now I've met new friends and I'm amazed at myself. I'm not scared now'.*

She is now looking for work and using the computer and internet for job search, as well as keeping in touch with friends from the course and family members.

At 3TC in Sefton, Mr RP (early 60s) and his brother attended the course together and he commented:

*'I've never used a laptop before and did that on the course - young people are able to absorb info about computers very quickly but it takes us a bit longer! It's really helped being able to do the course and then go home and practice it there and get the hang of it. Made a big difference - good that the course is on 2 days. The atmosphere is really good here. I've been to other places before I came to 3TC, where the environment is not good. You need to feel comfortable to learn properly and that's what's worked well here - the learning process works well here. When I went home after doing the training, I felt I had learned something each time I had attended.'*

Fewer participants found the employability support useful (77%), although 15% hadn't yet covered it as part of their course. All participants said that they would recommend the training to family and friends.

**Figure 4.2: Satisfaction with the quality of the training provided**



Source: Include-IT participant survey (170 respondents)

#### 4.2.3 Benefits of the training

Participants were asked to rate their IT skills at the start of the course and at the end of the training. This showed that at the start 38% reported that their skills were either very poor or non-existent but after training this figure had come down to only 18% who reported that while their skills had improved, they still felt that they were basic. All respondents reported an improvement, with 10% stating that they were excellent, 20% reported that they had 'improved

and were not bad now' and over half said that while they had improved, they would like to learn more.

Well over 80% of all participants (84%) reported feeling happier as a result of undertaking the training, with 57% reporting 'very much' happier.

Learners reported how useful the IT Include course had proved in updating their original very basic IT skills as they started to search for work after many years out of the employment market 'being able to link into a range of support from local learning providers who have a range of support available had been invaluable'.

#### **Getting back into the Job Market and Labour Market Returners**

Mrs H (late 40s) started to look for employment after 20 years at home bringing up her two children. Through Age Concern Wirral, she has been able to gain confidence through volunteering, and in addition, she has also completed the Include IT course which has provided a way of refreshing her very dated IT skills:

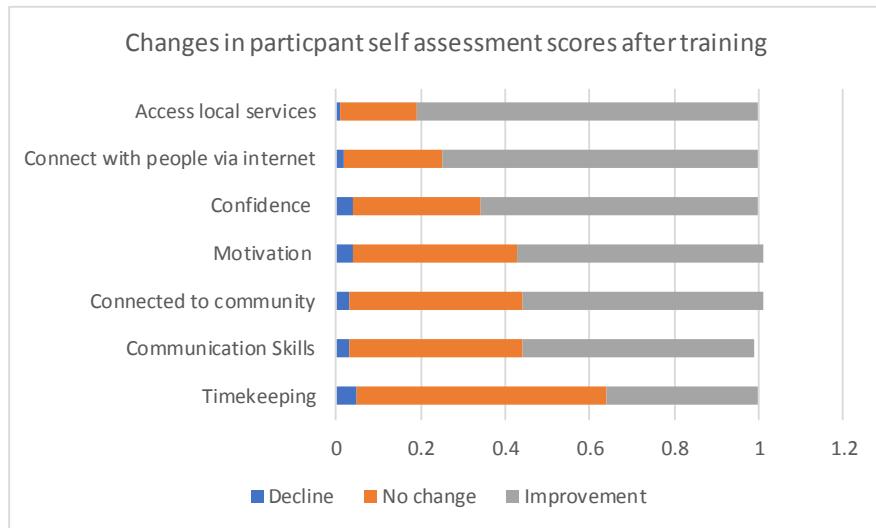
*'It's all pitched at right level - it's very basic but that's what I needed to build my confidence very quickly. Being out the job market for so long it's good to chat with people with different experience. It has made me realise where the gaps in my knowledge were such as Excel - so I have booked myself onto an excel course already. I have also been able to attend the Digital Surgeries several times a week at Prenton and at Birkenhead Library. The employability part of the course is more tailored to individuals on Thursdays which is good, so I can mix and match what I need. This has kick-started me to go on to other courses - really built my self-confidence quickly and structured my week.'*

#### **Self-Assessment**

In order to gather data about the wider impacts of the training programme (reduced isolation, improved social inclusion, access to local services) and to identify improvements in relation to a range of personal skills and attributes, participants were asked to rate themselves before and after the training. The results showed that:

- 55% of participants feel they have improved their communication skills;
- 57% feel more connected to their communities as a result of participating in the training;
- 58% are more motivated;
- 66% have improved their self-confidence;
- 75% are using the internet to stay connected with friends and family; and
- 81% feel better able to access local services online as a result of the training.

**Figure 4.3: Change in participants self-assessment scores after training**



Source: Include-IT participant monitoring data (848 learners)

When asked if participants were using the computer and internet more as a result of the training, 80% of participants were using it a lot more, and over half of all learners have started to use their skills to apply for jobs online. Well over 60% of all participants said that they would like to undertake further training and a further 30% replied 'maybe'.

The option to shift into different employment sectors through participating on the Include IT course has been attractive – especially for those who have always worked in more traditional sectors such as construction. Many of those working in manual and skilled trades and now in their 40s have never had the opportunity (or often the need) to address their lack of IT/digital skills. Many are not interested in IT or computers but now realise they have to get up to speed to address this.

#### New Employment Sectors

At the Rotunda Community College, several learners explained how the course had proved ideal for them. Mr B (early 50's) commented:

'The course has been really enjoyable – it's my first time on something like this. I realised I needed to get into the 21st century – my three teenage kids kept telling me to learn how to use a computer. I was just stuck in the same mode - saying 'I don't need to'. Then I went to the garage with the car and they said I need to do the insurance and the tax online - everything is going that way. You can't live without it now.'

I have learned how to do a CV after years of never having to have one as I work in the construction sector as a joiner - time served. Now I've got this I can look at trying for jobs outside that sector'.

The Greenbank team run the Digital IT course where several learners had been made redundant and needed to retrain to apply for work in different sectors. Mr L (late 40s) lost his job as a baker six months ago and is now gaining basic IT skills which he knows will open up employment opportunities in other sectors:

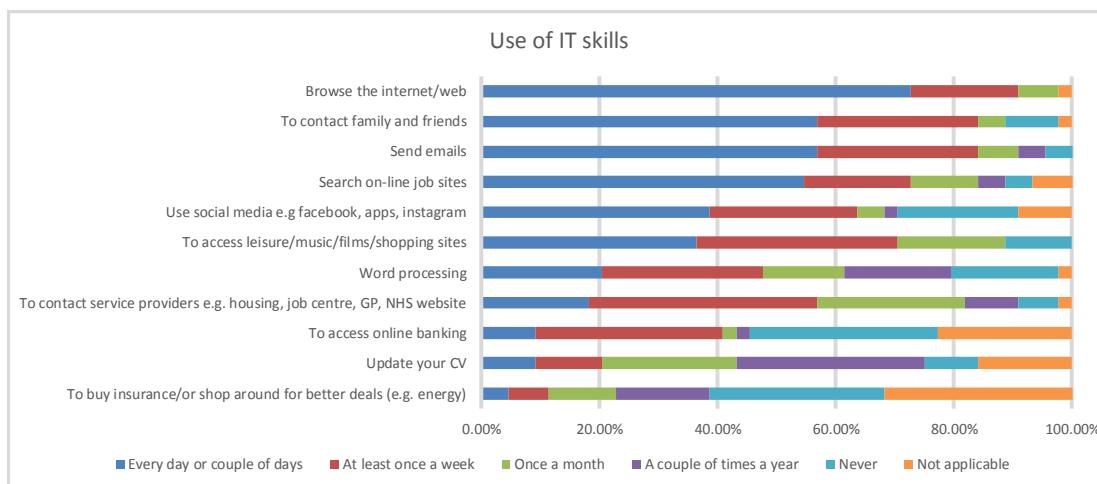
'It's good to come out to meet people – I lost my job six months ago as a baker and never used computers. I know that my job opportunities will increase if I can use computers/IT. I didn't have an

email address before starting this - can now use this to look for jobs and use it for job search which is useful. I have got my old laptop going again at home - had it repaired and can now check emails and job applications with that at home. I'm registered with job sites and with CV Library and Total Jobs now and will be applying for jobs very soon.'

#### 4.2.4 Impacts of the training as reported in the follow-up survey

A follow up survey was sent out to participants who had been consulted at the mid-point of the first phase of the programme, and a total of 44 participants responded to the survey. The level of satisfaction with the training remained high at 80% who thought that the course had been excellent or very good and 75% thought the skills that they had gained were either 'very' or 'extremely' useful. Just under half of the respondents said that they have continued to use the skills almost daily, with a further 30% saying most weeks, and the remainder using them every few weeks or occasionally. In terms of what these skills are used for, over 70% reported using them to browse the web on a daily basis, 60% use their IT skills to contact family and friends and over 50% use their skills to search for jobs online.

**Figure 4.4: Continued use of IT skills among past participants of the Include-IT programme**



Since completing the course, over 75% of past participants said that they continue to feel more confident; over 60% think they have a better chance of getting a job; in excess of 50% have done other training courses since leaving and nearly 40% say they have used their IT skills to help get a job.

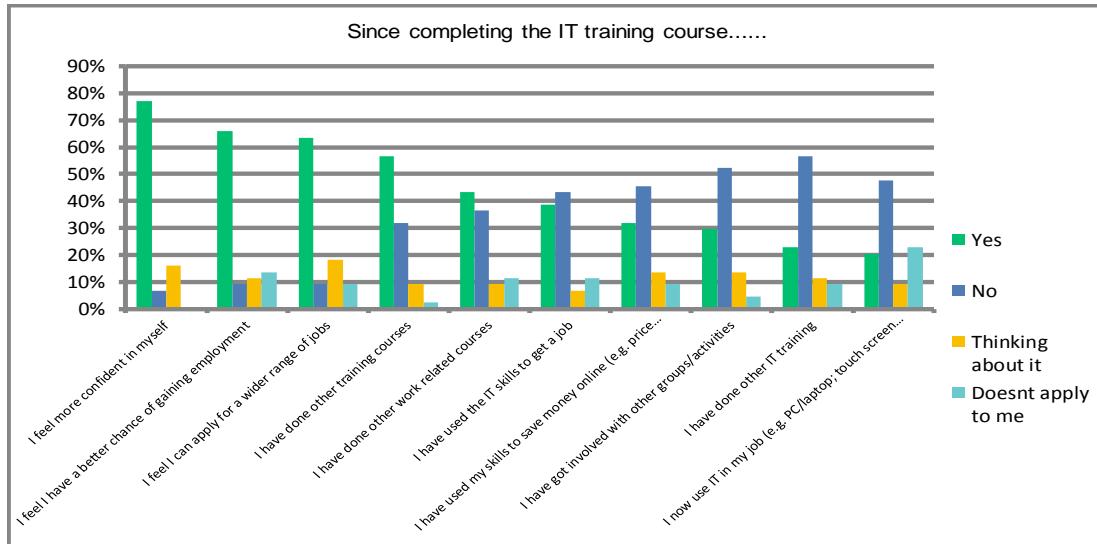
#### Learner Case Study

A younger learner at STEC was able to apply for an ILM post on finishing the Include IT course in Speke. With her improved IT skills, she not only gained employment but also shifted to on-line communication with service providers locally. She commented:

I have really started to use the internet for all sorts including registering with the HMRC and paying bills on-line including to my landlord South Liverpool Housing and to HMRC. The course has made a massive difference to me - I've now got a really good group of friends through it and the personal benefits have

been massive for me- especially the health and well-being side of things - it keeps your mind active. I have PTSD, anxiety and depression and this has really helped me.

**Figure 4.5: Activities since completing the Include IT course**



## 4.3 Wider impacts

In addition to the outcomes and impacts reported above, discussions with the training providers and the central management team have highlighted the following impacts as 'additional' to those already reported in the Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports, set out in Appendix A of the report.

### 4.3.1 Additional impacts for learners

- Productive joint working with JCP/GPs around the needs of learners with complex needs and mental health problems – recognition of the need for flexible, responsive support options locally;

#### Learning with Additional Needs

For learners with additional needs including learning disabilities and sensory disabilities, the flexible course and tutor support has made completion of the course a reality. This is through a combination of small group sizes and more personal, one to one support aided by the Digital Champions – volunteers who have often gone through the course recently themselves.

**Mr T** is in his late 40s and has been claiming ESA for a couple of years. His has enrolled on IT courses previously but found the structure of Include IT and the format of the support suited him much more than those previous courses:

*'I am dyslexic and have a learning disability - I was very happy with the structure of the course and with the way the tutor and the learning set up at STEC which made me feel relaxed. I could always ask for help from the tutor and ask him to explain things I found hard to follow.'*

*I loved the small group set up - we did the course as a group and all did it together as we went along. The tutor walked us through it and this learning style suited me very well - talking and doing rather than just reading it on the screen'*

Mr T completed his course and is now looking to stay involved as a volunteer Digital Champion. He continues to meet up with past learners at STEC at the drop-in Digital Surgeries every couple of weeks.

**Mr P** is in his early 50s, is visually impaired and retired from the Police. He is retraining in order to seek employment in the hospitality sector:

*'As I am visually impaired, I use a touch pad - this course is brilliant – it's building my confidence and courage to navigate my way around the computer – it's really changing my attitude towards IT generally. I like the way the tutor works – the support is very much based on him explaining then demonstrating and then me imitating - all one to one support which is ideal for me. I am looking to get back into work and this one to one support through the tutor is great. I'm using keys I didn't know existed on the keyboard!'*

- Compliance with criminal justice requirements through Include IT engagement: in Wirral, participants at Wirral's Tomorrow's Women Centre are now engaging with Include IT learning – initially to comply with Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (RAR) orders as part of their criminal sentences. Local judiciary are aware of the rehabilitation benefits of attendance through IT skills' development. The wider impacts have been far-reaching for several participants to date as described below:

#### **Learner Case Study: Ms C, aged 51**

Ms C described how she got involved with the Include IT course and her experience with it:

*'I've worked hard all my life, but not being able to use a computer was holding me back. I saw a flyer on the notice board at Tomorrow's Women Wirral - I wanted to learn about computers because I am a 'dinosaur' and hadn't really used them much. I have to do 20 days Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (RAR) days at Tomorrow's Women Wirral within my 12 months community order or I have to back to court.'*

The Include IT course attendance counts towards the RAR and has proved very positive for Ms C:

*'There is no pressure and my tutor understood me. It's a nice group, we all support each other and we have a laugh. It's relaxed and I can take breaks when I need to. It was straight forward and is building my confidence. Everyone brings something different in terms of experience skills to the group.'*

The impact of attendance on the course has been far-reaching for Ms C as she commented:

*'I feel more confident in a group and am thinking of volunteering as a digital champion at the next course. I've made new friends and Monday's cheer me up a lot. Using a computer has helped – I just need to sort out my new phone now. The tutor will help me with this. I feel more confident. My week is more structured which is a good thing for me. In the first few sessions I got very upset but now the only tears are from laughing with my classmates.'*

- Recognition of the importance of Include IT support in learners being able to better manage the UC compliance requirements – completion of on-line UC journal; log-ons; confidence; managing stress in this process.

**Partnership Working With JCP**

Increasingly, the Include IT team are hearing about ways in which learners are benefitting from close partnership working between training providers and local Job Coaches at the JCP. Many learners say that their job search is hindered by low digital and IT skills – saying they are struggling to get on-line as they have never used a computer or don't have support to get onto a computer at the library.

Ms B is in her late 50s and on Universal Credit and looking to get a job in the retail sector. With no IT skills to enable her to do this, she was told about the Include IT course at Helena Central by her Job Coach:

*I do 16 hours volunteering at the charity and shop and need to do 19-20 hours job search - this course goes towards that total for JCP. All the hours count. It's a lot of job search to fill so this is good to go towards that - love the course and everyone is so friendly at Helena (. I had to register on the new Find A Job JCP UC section of website by 17 June and it was really causing me some stress. I've done that now through this course but if I hadn't been on this course, I wouldn't have been able to sort it out myself. It's taken the pressure off me.*

Some learning providers have negotiated simplified application processes and paperwork with local JCP offices.

- Support for relocating, highly qualified migrant workers through employability and on-line job search skill development

**Learner Case Study: Ms A (Include IT, WEA at Tomorrow's Women Wirral)**

Ms A. is a participant on the Include IT course with WEA at Tomorrow's Women, Wirral. She was a qualified GP and junior resident in Gynaecology in India. Her family migrated to the USA but her sister invited me to live with her in the UK and now lives in Wirral. She had been using services at Tomorrows Women Wirral, noticed that Include IT Mersey was advertised on their website and contacted the tutor to discuss the course. She was aware that she needed to improve her IT skills, mainly in terms of being able to use social media for job searches and with looking and applying for jobs safely. It was important to her to learn how to stay safe online.

*I am a qualified doctor in India but struggled to get work in the UK. The course has given me positive directions. It has been hard to find out what my qualification enabled me to do in the UK and during the course this has been cleared up by the General Medical Council. I have been helped to write a cover letter and review my CV, as well as getting guidance on interview techniques. I began to feel more confident with job searching and I have since been invited for two interviews. I was struggling to even get interviews before.*

She has also been referred and used the National Careers Service.

*I like the project and I love the people on the course. It has given me confidence, friends and structure to my week. I have learned about life in the UK in general and what other support is available to me to help achieve my professional ambitions. The course has given me positive directions to further support me in looking for a job. I am pleased to say that I am now getting invited for job interviews and have moved much closer to employment here in the UK. The church has invited me to be a volunteer. I work with the under privileged in my church and at the local hospice I am supporting women and babies on the Premature Baby Unit. I felt really isolated before, now I feel more confident generally and I have more friends.*

Since the completing the course Ms A has been offered a job as a GP in in Birmingham.

#### 4.3.2 *Impacts for service deliverers*

The Include IT project has been important in supporting a number of community and voluntary sector delivery partners in terms of their ongoing sustainability, the development of new working models and access to new partnerships. Benefits include for example:

- refinement of individual BBO offers by delivery partners in variety of ways to complement and support their own service objectives and missions – with BBO being embedded and integrated to complement and support overall offer for example, Rotunda; STEC; Indy; Greenbank; Big Help; Alt Valley; Torus (refugee support) – community based/community of interest models are emerging and developing;
- relationships with JCP locally have improved significantly: ‘the relationship with JCP is very good... empathetic advisors at JCP. UC makes the job very difficult. Digital inclusion - empowers people to survive and comply with the digital expectation of the state’;
- Include-IT has challenged and changed the usual training provider approach of not running courses if recruitment numbers too low – BBO enables courses to run when people need to access support;
- improved/adapted content of other ICT courses being delivered by the service providers: for example, Age Concern Wirral – more iPad and phone content in courses; 3TC;
- social prescribing link with GPs has wide scale potential for learners and delivery partners– in terms of positive joint working and service offers;
- Include-IT course has proved to be the starting point for long-term engagement of the most excluded learners.

For example, Rotunda commented how many learners regularly return; stay in touch; and use the café for WIFI. Similarly in Alt Valley Community Trust – impact of the course on long-term engagement of learners with their overall service offer: they commented that people are afraid of coming on to courses, but when have completed the Include IT course, learners are not frightened of coming into the Digital Suite at Communiiversity, which is open access. Despite being open for seven years, it is now being used more than ever.

## 5 Value for money

### 5.1 3 E's assessment

This section sets out an assessment of the value for money of the Include-IT Mersey project. It comprises an analysis of the '3 Es' in line with National Audit Office (NAO) guidance.

The NAO uses three criteria to assess the value for money of government spending i.e. the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes:

- **Economy:** minimising the cost of the resources used or required (inputs) – i.e. spending less;
- **Efficiency:** the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them – i.e. spending well; and
- **Effectiveness:** the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) – i.e. spending wisely.

#### 5.1.1 *Economy*

The programme to date has been delivered within budget with spend equivalent to 98% of forecast expenditure by the June 2019.

Management and delivery of the programme has been continuously reviewed and in a number of instances has been refined to improve delivery. This, combined with the proactive approach adopted by the management team and the responsiveness of team support for individual projects, has helped ensure that the programme has been delivered economically. In addition to a reprofiling of expenditure, the quarterly monitoring claims have identified areas of underspend or variance on an ongoing basis, and where necessary adjustments have been made to the spend profile to ensure funding is diverted to areas requiring more/or less resources. The team have also used existing bases for delivery and minimized spend through competitive procurement processes.

#### 5.1.2 *Effectiveness*

The effectiveness of the programme needs to be judged on the extent to which it has achieved its objectives. The overriding strategic objectives of the programme are to:

- overcome barriers to employment and economic activity; and
- promote social inclusion and improved health and wellbeing.

These objectives have been pursued through activities designed to achieve a number of output and outcome targets. The programme's original target was to assist 750 digitally excluded and workless residents. This target has been comfortably achieved with 940 unemployed or economically inactive LCR residents assisted to date. Moreover, a high proportion of these have

come from groups who often face digital and economic exclusion – for example, 618 are aged over 50 and 428 are people with disabilities with even greater barriers to inclusion.

In terms of outcomes, the programme has also exceeded most of its targets. For example, 208 participants have progressed into further education or training (against a target of 128) while 73 have moved into employment (compared with a target of 53). Survey results, as well as provider feedback, suggest that the programme has also been successful in delivering its wider more qualitative outcomes regarding, for example, improved confidence, community belonging and health and wellbeing.

Overall, the programme is judged to have been effective in delivering its objectives. This reflects the appropriateness of both its design and its delivery arrangements and in particular its approach to:

- **engaging participants** – while the early stage thinking and plan was to use data held by the Housing Associations, it became apparent at an early stage in the process that data sharing protocols would limit this as a potential route. This was similarly the case with the use of the digital champions to recruit potential participants (see below). As a result, alternative mechanisms were developed with training providers which included generating referrals from existing partnerships and linkages with mainstream providers (including JCP);

The programme used the ‘Learn my Way’ platform to engage participants, but then adapted the training and course content to ensure that they kept participants interested by finding the ‘right hooks’ (e.g. social media, shopping/entertainment) followed up with targeted employment focused ICT delivery;

- **recruitment of volunteer ‘Digital Champions’** – who provided mentoring support for participants on the programme and have subsequently provided more support in the classrooms with participants and tutors. While their initial remit related to facilitating engagement through localised community networks and support, the role of the digital champion was refocused to meet the expectations of the volunteers, and to fit in with the requirements of the training providers;
- **use of experienced ICT and employment support providers** – who were based locally and had extensive employer links;
- **employment of local outreach delivery** – with small groups of between 5 - 8 participants, to provide more person centred, tailored support for individuals; and
- **provision of ongoing access to digital technologies** – through digital surgeries and IT drop-ins, which have provided participants with the ability to practice and apply their new skills during and after training.

**Provision of ongoing support:** several recently completed learners often find ongoing support from their tutor is a great help to them and encouraged them to continue to engage in using their new digital skill set.

**Mr R P** told us: ‘The team are very approachable at 3TC and take their time to listen and find out about our needs. Although I have finished the course, I have spoken to the tutor today who is going to help me

*get onto the new JCP Find a Job system.'*

At STEC digital surgeries are held fortnightly – and a past participant commented: *'It's been great coming along every 2 weeks - it acts like a refresher for me and that's good as I have a poor memory and I can also catch up with friends here. I am now much more confident in my volunteering role with South Liverpool Housing on the Scrutiny Committee - able to get involved more through using the computer - my IT skills are much better.'*

### 5.1.3 *Efficiency*

Project efficiency assessments compare the value of outcomes and outputs with the costs of the inputs required to create them. This often involves the calculation of unit cost ratios which can then be used for comparison with other benchmarks such as the ratios for similar projects elsewhere. However, undertaking such an approach in the current evaluation is seen as inappropriate for several reasons:

- the diverse nature of the multiple outcomes which the programme is seeking to generate – ranging from 'softer', less easily quantifiable impacts (such as improved confidence and reduced isolation) through to 'harder' outcomes such as jobs and skills;
- the focus of the programme on very hard to help groups; and
- the emphasis on starting a process of re-engagement with the programme's target beneficiaries and on establishing pathways through which the 'harder' outcomes (such as employment) will be generated but often only in the longer-term.

As a result, it has not proved possible to identify meaningful comparators that could be used as the basis for an assessment of project efficiency. Perhaps the most relevant potential comparison would be with the BBO programme as a whole. However, as at the date of this draft it has not proved possible to access programme-wide information (the national evaluation reports do not provide expenditure data nor do they address value for money issues).

## 5.2 Social return on investment

### (i) **Include IT Wellbeing Valuation**

Very recently (October 2019), Sefton CVS has calculated the Social Impact of the Include IT project using the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT) social value calculator<sup>2</sup>, which uses wellbeing valuation techniques, in line with HMT's Green Book, to assess social value. The specific indicators measured are set out in Figure 4.1 below. This indicates the number of people benefitting from the project and the social value unit costs associated with each benefit measured. A total wellbeing value has then been calculated for the programme as a whole.

**Table 4.1: Include IT Social Value**

Indicator	Number of people (participants)	Social value (unit costs)	Total wellbeing value
<b>General training for the job</b>	1131	£1,567	£1,771,937

<sup>2</sup> The Housing Action (<https://www.hact.org.uk/value-calculator>

<b>Full-time employment</b>	88	£14,433	£1,270,104
<b>Part-time employment</b>	30	£1,299	£36,860
<b>Digital Inclusion</b>	514	£2,413	£1,240,282
<b>Regular Volunteering</b>	164	£1,773	£290,729
			<b>£4,609,912</b>

Source: Sefton CVS, HACT social impact measures

Based on a total project spend to the end of September 2019 of £1,861,229, the wellbeing value calculated demonstrates a wider social return of £2.48 for every £1 invested in the project to date. This represents a conservative estimate of the total social value created, as a number of the participants on the programme have also benefited from improved self-confidence; better mental health and wellbeing; and reduced isolation – many of which have social values in the order of £13,000 to £15,000 per person reporting an improved outcome as a result of the project's intervention. However as the project has not gathered the relevant evidence/data to be able to attribute these benefits directly to the support received through the project, it is highly likely that the figure reported above, significantly underestimates the potential social value that the project has generated for its participants.

## (ii) Community wealth

As referred to earlier in section 4.3.2, the Include IT project has been instrumental in supporting a number of community and voluntary sector training delivery partners, through the provision of ongoing delivery contracts which are contributing to their sustainability and safeguarding of jobs within the LCR, the development of new working models and the establishment of new working relationships with other external agencies.

For example, the existing network of partner agencies (i.e. 16 providers) responsible for delivering the Include IT project, currently provide employment opportunities for 56 people or 30 FTEs. The FTE figures have been calculated to account for those employees who work on more than one project and may only spend a % of their time on Include IT. Analysis of HR records demonstrate that all staff live and work in the LCR - thereby retaining spend within the local economy and further job creation through knock-on supply chain/multiplier impacts.

<b>Table 4.2: Include IT – wider economic impacts</b>				
	<b>No. of individual employees</b>	<b>No. of individual employees that live in the LCR</b>	<b>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee nos.</b>	<b>FTE no. of employees that live in the LCR</b>
<b>Include-IT Mersey (x 16 partners)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>30.3</b>
<b>% live in LCR</b>		<b>100%</b>		<b>100%</b>

It should also be noted that the figures provided in Table 4.2 only include data from the current delivery partners. To date the project has also supported a number of other providers including the Good Things Foundation, Community Action Wirral, LCVS, Henshaw's, Knowsley Council, Wirral Council and Wirral Radio.

In addition to the spending and direct jobs involved in the delivery of the project to date, the Include IT project has assisted 70 people who were previously unemployed into employment

opportunities. Assuming that these individuals were previously unemployed (in line with the eligibility criteria for participation on the project) this will have also led to public sector cost savings in the region of £919,730<sup>3</sup>, resulting from a reduction in benefit payments.

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<sup>3</sup> New Economy Unit Cost Database v2 - £13,139 benefit savings for JSA claimants

## 6 Conclusions and lessons learnt

### 6.1 Headline findings

When the Include-IT project application was developed back in 2016/17, it was recognized that improving access to digital skills through projects such as Include IT Mersey, would make a significant contribution to all three of the LCR's growth objectives, as set out the City Region's growth plan 'Building Our Future'. Given the importance of skills as a key driver of productivity – which is at the heart of the government's new industrial strategy, and new innovation and technological developments continuing to underpin the growth of all industries both nationally and globally, it could be argued that the Include IT project remains as relevant, or even more important today, as it was three years ago.

As digital skills and new technological developments are also critical to the development of the local economy and the competitiveness of the LCR, it is vitally important that projects such as Include IT Mersey continue to work with excluded individuals to ensure that they get the right basic ICT skills that they need to progress, and to make sure that they are not left behind.

To date, the Include IT Mersey Project has been extremely successful in targeting economically inactive and unemployed people within the LCR and providing them with the digital skills and employability support to improve their confidence which has in turn enabled them to overcome a range of barriers to participation and progression.

Against an output target of 750 participants, the programme has assisted 940 LCR residents to date, of which 618 are over 50, 428 are people with disabilities, and 70 are residents from ethnic minorities. In total, the training and employability support provided has resulted in positive outcomes for almost 50%<sup>4</sup> of all completers (691 reported to the end of Q2 2019):

- 208 progressing into education and training (30.1% of completers)
- 73 moving into employment (10.6% of completers)
- 83 E.I. moving into job search (28.3% of E.I. completers)

In addition to the improved economic activity outcomes, and in keeping the potentially wider benefits of the programme (i.e. using digital skills to access online services and save money, reduce isolation, and improve health and wellbeing), a range of more qualitative impacts and enhanced personal and social skills have also been captured, including the following self-reported improvements:

- 55% of participants feel they have improved their communication skills;
- 57% feel more connected to their communities as a result of participating in the training;
- 58% are more motivated;
- 66% have improved their self-confidence;

<sup>4</sup> This excludes dual outcomes achieved by some learners (i.e. a job and training, job search and training)

- 75% are using the internet to stay connected with friends and family; and
- 81% feel better able to access local services online as a result of the training.

Furthermore, in terms of overall health and wellbeing, 84% of participants reported feeling happier as a result of undertaking the training, with 57% reporting 'very much' happier. An assessment of the social impact of the project demonstrates a return of £2.48 for every £1 invested, although it is felt that this figure currently underestimates the true social value that could be attributed to the project, based on the significant outcomes and benefits reported by many current and past participants.

## 6.2 Lessons learnt to inform future programmes

As set out above (and recognised by the Lottery as evidenced by their continuation of funding for the project up until the end of December 2021), the Include-IT Mersey project has been highly successful in helping to overcome barriers to employment and economic activity for residents within the LCR and promoting social inclusion and improved health and well-being by improving the digital skills of over 900 residents to date. The ongoing evaluation of the programme has identified the following 'key success factors' as being integral to this performance:

- **Project design** – development of a clearly articulated programme and delivery plan from the outset, with an established network of training providers signed up in the first place from across the LCR (from the VOLA consortium of training providers) and a core delivery model that sought to build on existing strengths, for example – use of experienced ICT and employment support providers; local outreach delivery with small groups of participants to provide more person centred, tailored support for individuals; ongoing access to digital technologies to provide follow up support after training; recruitment of volunteer digital champions and the use of a wide variety of mechanisms to engage and recruit learners onto the programme;
- **Very strong project management and governance arrangements** which have steered, monitored and refined the delivery of support throughout the programme. This has included:
  - effective engagement of all partners in the planning process, i.e. setting output and spend targets;
  - establishment and agreement of service level agreements with clear targets and mechanisms/protocols to address under-performance;
  - the production of clear administration guidelines – in terms of eligibility; paperwork; submission of claims etc;
  - the recruitment of an experienced and approachable team, with the flexibility to manage the delivery of a large, complex programme – including quality assurance; financial and performance monitoring; volunteer co-ordination and communications/ marketing and promotion of the project;

- effective communications through programmed steering group meetings; delivery partner meetings; and one-to-one progress/quality assurance sessions with individual training providers – all of which have provided mechanisms to disseminate progress updates and share best practice among partner agencies;
- thorough monitoring of the programme and assessment of progress against the milestones set at the start of the project to address areas of underperformance (in terms of spend and outputs) on a continual basis. This has included reprofiling spend to refine assumptions made at the start of the process and redirecting resources where needed (for example, as a result of some training partners leaving the partnership, or the provision of evidence which has demonstrated funding is no longer needed for certain activities); and
- the responsiveness of the central team (and delivery partners) to the evaluation findings and areas for improvement – which were actioned following the presentation of findings;
- ***A Strong Culture of Partnership Working***
  - The delivery model's current success is based on many years of experience and expertise in delivering and adapting IT training models to excluded residents across the city region by delivery partners. Through the sharing of this learning in the design stages, this model now represents a highly effective, evolved model of good practice which can engage and retain the involvement of people in digital training which has never been previously achieved locally.
  - realistic, practical awareness of both the programme team, delivery partners and Steering Group members of the ongoing critical organisational survival challenges facing many voluntary sector delivery partners locally, and the need for a flexible model of delivery which also reflects the expertise of these partners in working with some of the most excluded residents in the city region.
  - an open-door, responsive programme team culture which has continued to build engagement and trust with delivery partners over time, and which has encouraged these partners to be creative and responsive to challenges in recruitment, retention and on-going relationships and contact with participants in the community.
- ***Effective targeting*** – building on the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project, the central management team carried out targeted marketing and recruitment activities to ensure that they were reaching the areas (i.e. the designated wards) and client groups identified at the start of the project (particularly in terms of over 50's; people with disabilities; ethnic minority groups).

During the course of the evaluation it became evident that further work was required to engage more women and economically inactive learners onto the programme. For example, in recognition of the need to target more women, effective approaches included partnering with, and in some cases, actually delivering outreach provision in women focused organisations such as the Swan Women's Centre (Bootle), Tomorrow's Women Wirral and various Children's Centres across the city region. Other organisations partnered

with to target disadvantaged groups more broadly included: Mencap and the Bridge Community Centre (for example, disability focused organisations); YMCA/CLG (to reach learners with alcohol/substance misuse issues); refugee support organisations and carers groups;

- ***Locally based solutions and flexible provision tailored to the needs of the client group*** – for example, small class sizes (for example, groups of 5-8 to encourage participation), intensive support over 1 - 2 days per week, learning and the recruitment of groups that facilitated peer mentoring, and the use of specialist delivery partners such as Independence Initiatives for those with substance misuse challenges; Henshaws for people with visual impairment and Greenbank to support people with disabilities. It should also be noted that in most instances the local delivery partners have also remained open-minded in their approach to delivery and refined their models throughout the delivery of the first two years, as a result of best practice elsewhere and the flexibility provided by the central team to tailor provision accordingly;
- ***Increased focus on sustainability and progression of participants*** as the programme has evolved – as evidenced by the increased use of the National Careers Service, the move towards more drop-in digital surgeries, including those run by the Volunteer Digital Champions, and accreditation of the learning provided through the Learn my Way Platform and signposting to other/further courses that extend the skills gained through the Include-IT programme;
- ***Rapid Delivery Model Adaptations to Lessons Learned***: In the early stages of programme delivery, performance management processes quickly identified some key elements which were not working as effectively as hoped. These included: the generic marketing approaches for all city region authorities; some very restrictive geographical targeting with local authority boundaries; challenges in recruiting some targeted groups; and the difficulties of data-sharing with RSLs. These were addressed by the Programme Management team in consultation with partners at the earliest stage and, given the existing positive relationships with all of them, this enabled the delivery model to be adapted and implemented rapidly. This ongoing flexibility in relation to the model is now resulting in huge impact in terms of immediate and wider benefits for programme delivery and participants.

### 6.3 Recommendations for the remainder of the programme:

In order to build on and maintain the successes achieved to date, it will be imperative that the central management team and governance arrangements are retained for the duration of the contract to proactively manage the project up until the end of December 2021. Other actions to be kept under review include:

- ***Delivery model*** – continue to refresh the format and structure of the delivery to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. For example, instead of delivering sessions on laptops only, change the format to incorporate the use of phones for learning in the sessions (particularly given the rise of mobile phone usage at home and while people are out and about at café's for example to take advantage of access to free WIFI);

- **Information, advice and guidance** – continue to develop and improve IAG provision and employability support to complement the technical/digital skills training provided;
- **Recruitment and referrals** – keep the marketing and promotion of the programme under review to ensure that current mechanisms/routes do not reach saturation levels as a result of the expansion of the programme. Explore new/innovative routes – for example, social prescribing routeways for expanded referrals;
- **Improve the uptake of the digital surgeries** – and increase the number of volunteer-led digital drop-ins within the Knowsley and Halton areas to ensure coverage and access across the whole of the LCR area;
- **Promote and facilitate access to digital facilities for LCR residents** – for example, supporting development work by RSLs in relation to improved/free access to WIFI through social housing tenancies – especially in supported/high rise/group living settings.
- **Continue to promote the wider wrap around offer for support for more vulnerable groups** in need of more intensive support – e.g. refugee support model development: Syrian Refugee – translation/childcare support model at St Helens; delivery partners with experience in supporting people with mental health issues.
- **Further progression pathway development in relation to:**
  - **'Fusion skills'** – increasingly participants will need to be able to combine sector specific skills with digital skills for example, for warehousing employment in being able to use digital/IT as part of entry level job roles. There is potential for the BBO programme model to focus its employability support elements into sector specific support such as retail or warehousing.
  - **Extending the digital training progression pathway** – through extension on from the most basic entry level support onto to Levels 1 and 2 digital training. Recent central government stated its commitment to the introduction of an entitlement to fully funded digital qualifications for adults, to be based on new national standards - identifying the digital skills people need to get on in life and work. The Include IT delivery model is one which is highly transferable and replicable – engaging and retaining adults who are currently excluded to get the digital skills to move forward and achieve in relation to employment, training and education.

## Appendix A – Key findings and conclusions from Evaluation Reports 1 and 2

### First Stage Evaluation Report (Jan 2018)

#### Conclusions - What is working?

To conclude the first stage report, the table below provides an overview of the key strengths and weaknesses of the project by considering what is working well and what activities need to be refined or addressed moving forward.

What is working well?	What is not working?
<b>Design, content and flexibility of the model:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall learning content and focus of the programme – pitched well</li> <li>Adaptable format of Learn My Way platform enabling support for range of digital skills including very basic or non-existent</li> <li>Employability integration and incentive for many learners – targeted/focused goal</li> <li>Combined digital skills/employability focus of short course</li> </ul>	<b>Recruitment and engagement of learners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed use of RSLs as referral agencies and use of targeted data to engage participants</li> <li>Current engagement and outreach methods (related to above and below) – gaps</li> </ul>
<b>Locally based models and tailored provision</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small group working (5-8 people) – facilitating peer support</li> <li>Intensive one/two day per week approach</li> <li>Retention of learners on the programme</li> </ul>	<b>Marketing and promotion of the project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of ownership of the promotion process by some learning providers – greater use of local channels required, using project branding</li> <li>Greater clarity required regarding the role of the Digital Champions</li> </ul>
<b>Strong project management and approachable central team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central team support for local project delivery ‘accessible and supportive’</li> </ul>	<b>Targeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying and targeting economically inactive LCR residents</li> </ul>
<b>Progression and outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence and self-esteem is a central outcome for many learners – in relation to digital skills and own wellbeing as a result of engagement and attendance</li> <li>Reduced social isolation – peer support</li> <li>A grass-roots, inclusive community-based</li> </ul>	<b>Promoting sustainability and further progression</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital surgeries and drop-ins - misunderstanding of their role amongst some providers (e.g. many thought they were an engagement tool)</li> <li>Potential for learners to disengage at end of course - due to lack of next stage digital skills training locally or lack of access to data/PC/SMART phone and Wifi</li> </ul>
	<b>Communications within partner agencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is essential that communication around guided learning hours course content and delivery are (continually) cascaded within the organisation.</li> </ul>

<p>approach in which the Include IT approach is a route into longer term involvement in local 'offers' at anchor organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Movement into jobs and training</li><li>• Hugely positive impact on health, wellbeing and aspirations of many learners, even at early stages of involvement by them</li></ul>	<p><b>Participants expenses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Despite budget allocation for participant expenses, few providers are claiming/offering them due to the paperwork requirements. Sefton CVS to raise with funders but Providers must offer to reimburse.</li></ul>
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### Recommendations – areas for improvement

The following areas for improvement have been highlighted through the discussions with the delivery partners and a review of performance to date:

- **Review of the current approach to recruitment and engagement of learners and marketing/promotion of the project.** Retention of learners is excellent with most delivery partners once individuals have been engaged on the programme. Some learning providers currently feel disengaged from the marketing and publicity process and unable to effectively promote or target their offer – despite support from the central team. This message needs to be re-iterated among providers to maximise the offer to market the project more effectively at the local level. Clarification of postcode targeting needs to support this in some instances.
- **Exchange of good practice** – tutors and project managers are keen to share and look at other good practice in relation to:
  - protocols and streamlining of processes around: provision of learner participation/evidence of eligibility evidence/verification of learners (e.g. GTDT with JCP);
  - targeted approaches with specific learner groups including those with learning disabilities; literacy issues; and
  - practical learning resources to supplement Learn My Way Platform.

There is also a need to prioritise the sharing of best practice and what is working well – particularly among the tutors and to ensure that key communications/messages regarding the programme delivery are cascaded among all staff within the delivery agencies.

- **Review of potential accreditation of the courses** – IT functional skills assessment/skills for employment – portfolio approach which is already being considered by several of the Adult Learning Services.
- **Digital Champions** – review and streamline the recruitment of the volunteers, to facilitate greater engagement of the CVS organisations, and refocus/clarify the role of the DCs. This review needs to include consideration of more effective use of the DCs in the classroom and in the digital surgeries to provide one to one intensive support and to bridge the gap for some individuals in making transition to next stage of learning.

- **A wrap-around community-based offer:** consultations to date, suggest that the project is starting to assist individuals to move forward and progress through improved confidence and skills. To consolidate the engagement of these highly excluded individuals (in some instances), the potential to incorporate more active signposting to other local community-based services e.g. (counselling; leisure; volunteering; benefits advice) needs to be explored, to maximise the take-up and wider offer of support available within the localities.
- **Review the timing and provision of the digital surgeries and drop-in sessions** - to embed learning and outcomes achieved and explore the provision of incentives (e.g. smart phones, tablets, access to WIFI and data) to encourage retention and progression among learners.

In addition to the areas for improvement highlighted above, there is also a need for the continued, ongoing delivery of pro-active support by the central team in relation to:

- administration requirements – including a methods statement/manual as to what needs to be recorded and its timing for frontline tutor and administrative support staff working with learners directly; and
- building on best practice, **provision of more intensive support from the central team** in reconfiguring design of local service models/timetabling/local recruitment processes – where learning providers are struggling to achieve targets.

## **Second Stage Evaluation Report (July 2018)**

### **Key findings:**

#### **Training Delivery**

- Very high satisfaction with the IT Training, slightly less so with the employability – less interested in interview skills etc, some just want to show they have done job search to comply with JCP requirements re UC.
- Small groups, supportive tutors and mix/camaraderie of the learners have made this a success – building self-confidence first, then confidence to use the computer.
- Learner difficulties – poor memory, slow learners – is a key issue so regular attendance and practice are key to the learning process.
- Community based offer – working well in some areas, where it is a feeder on to other courses or part of a bigger package.
- Affordability – free lunch/tea/coffee/delivery at local facilities all important in attracting people to the course.
- Perceptions changing, through good news, word of mouth – many feared a repeat of unsatisfactory IT training attended years ago, so have found the small group learning a refreshing change.
- Overall lack of awareness and discussion about move on to other digital and IT courses.

- Lack of access to internet at home remains a key issue – reinforcing the need for the digital surgeries and ability to access computers at libraries etc. Mixed picture around SMART phone access.

**Key successes with a number of particular groups:**

- 63-64 yr olds disinterested in digital/IT skills group (end of JSA, no phone) – they stay throughout, are highly complementary about the course and structure it provides them and the skills they acquire (e.g. ability to access services online). This group also tend to express interest in further training.
- LTU – usually carers – very positive about reduced social exclusion/peer support, provision of structure, confidence building.
- women returners – using the course as a refresher before moving on to further training and employment.
- male mid 50's – with an interest in tech/computers, realise they need to engage to get back into work.

**Digital Champions**

- Key driver for volunteers is being able to teach others and transfer their expertise
- Slight frustration – where they feel they aren't needed by the training providers
- Participants were positive about the DC's involvement where this was applicable, but a number hadn't come into contact with DCs (possibly the earlier cohorts)
- Majority of the DC's felt they were making a difference
- Well managed project, meeting its objectives, but some concerns about equipment, LMW platform

**Recommendations:**

- Menu of further IT or follow-on training courses required and circulated/promoted by tutors and training providers.
- Recruitment – continue to promote through the training providers, word of mouth/good news stories.
- More targeted recruitment of 'economically inactive' residents.
- Digital surgeries – are working best when they are tagged on to the start or end of a training session, to be adopted by training providers where required. Greater marketing and promotion overall to ensure sustainability, as access to hardware is a key issue.
- LMW – central team to provide feedback to the LMW provider with a view to updating the platform in the future.
- Accreditation – to be promoted more widely and offered where possible.

- Continue delivering what works – small classes, group sessions combined with one to one support, flexible/but accessible trainers, use of DCs in the classroom where required.

## Appendix B – Participant Survey Feedback

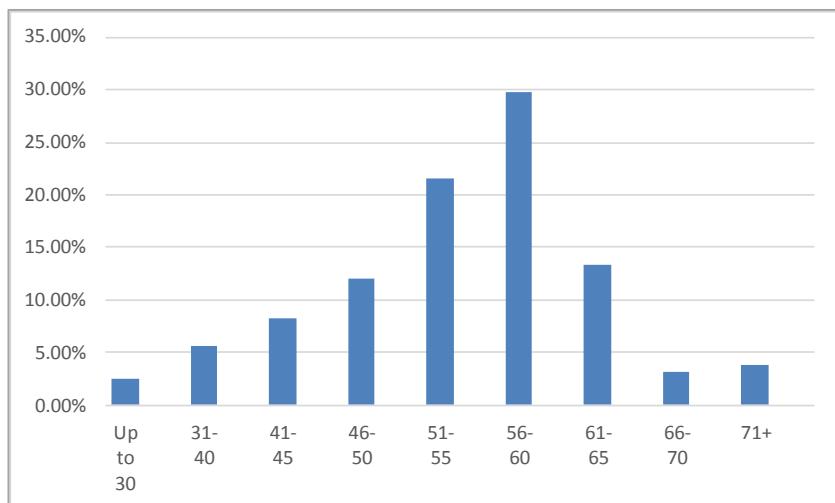
### 1. Participant Survey Feedback

#### Training Provider – which organisation are/did you receive your training from?



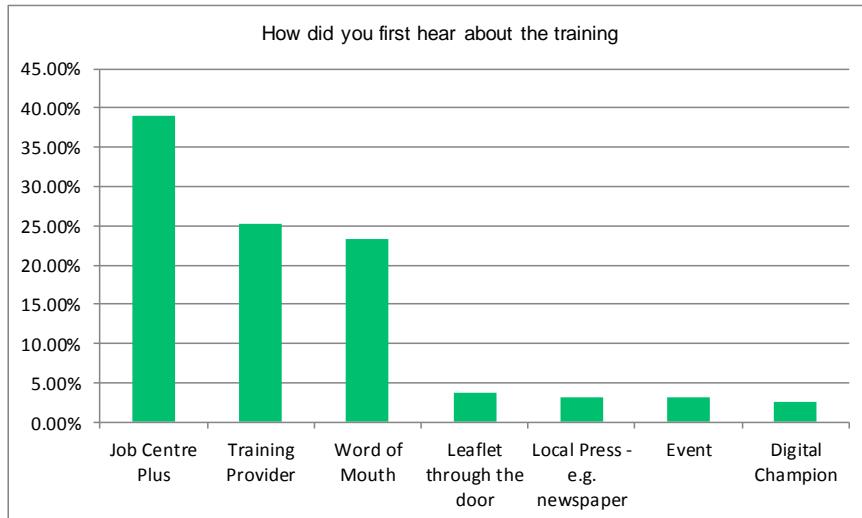
n=175

#### Age Profile – How old are you?



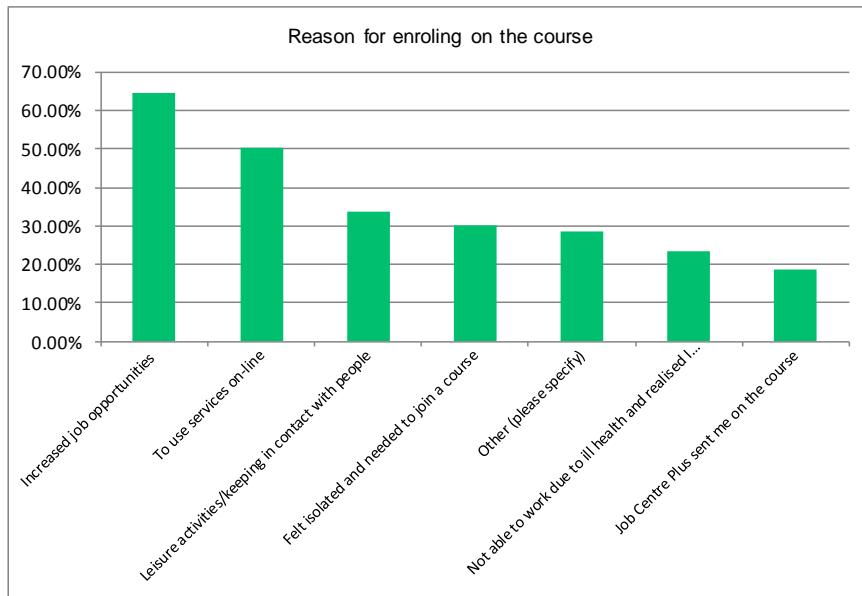
n=158

**Engagement – How did you first hear about the training?**



n=118 (41 other)

**Reason for enrolling on the course?**

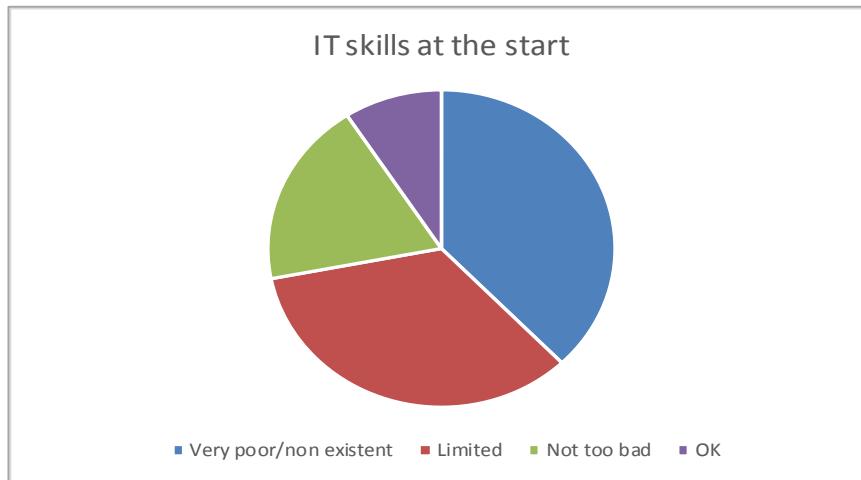


## Satisfaction /Quality

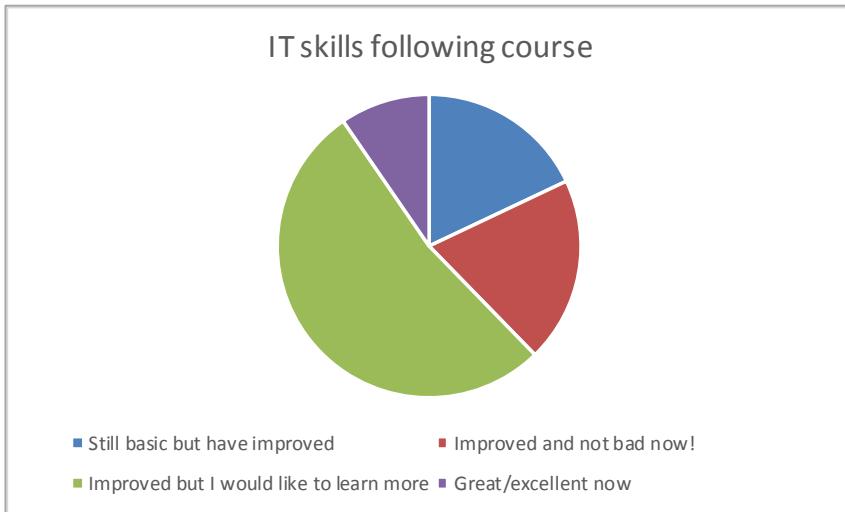


n=156-170

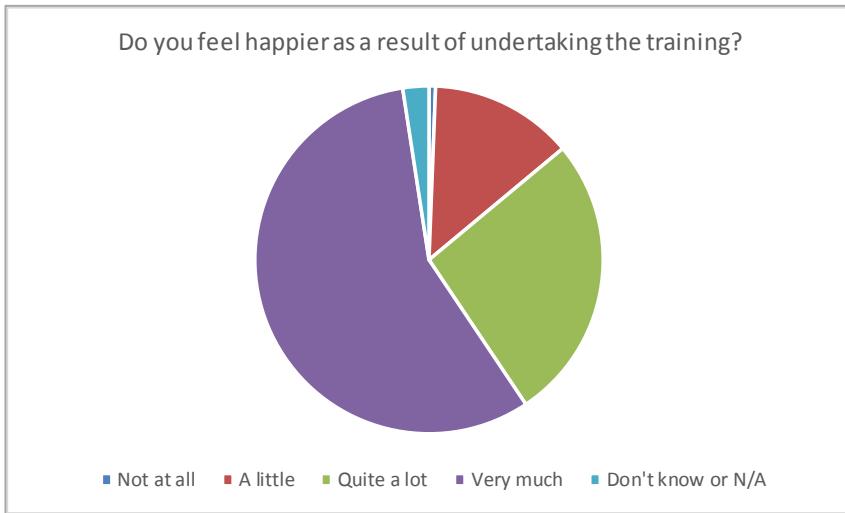
## Benefits of the training - Did you have any IT skills at the start of training?



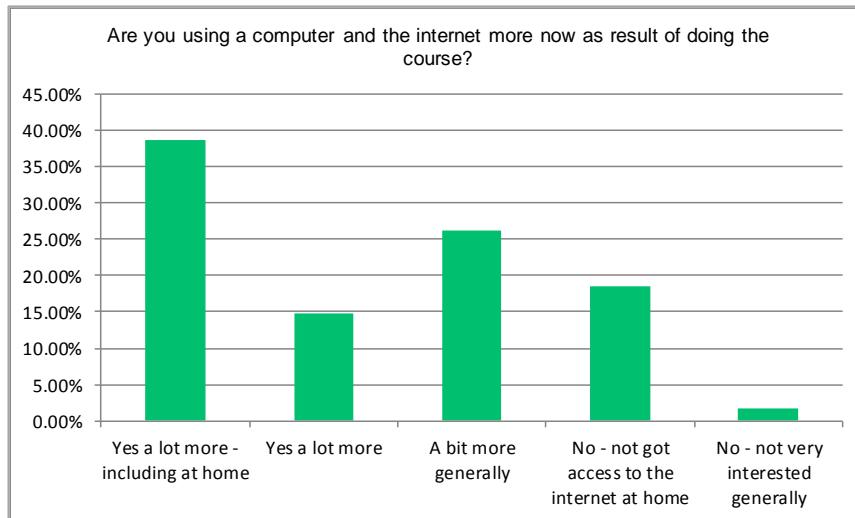
**IT skills following course:**



**Were you happier as a result of the training?**

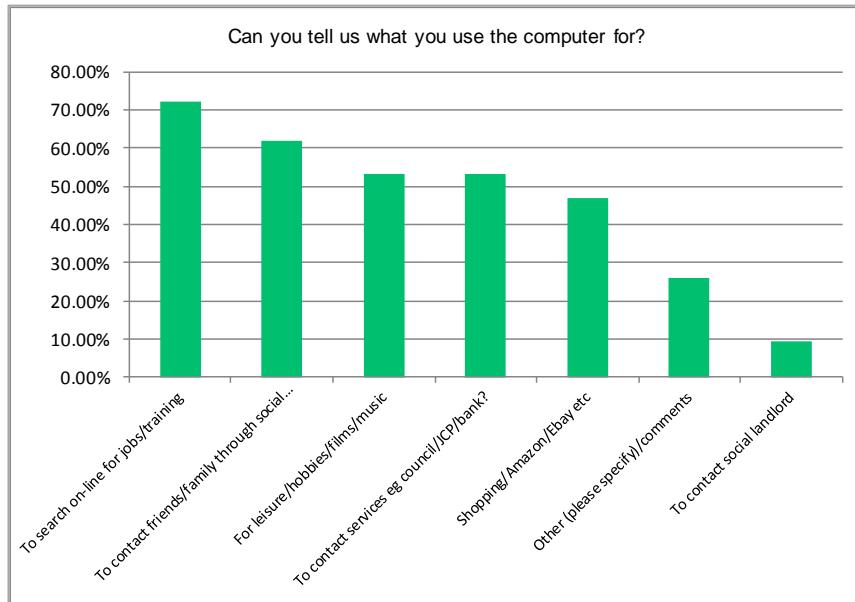


**Impacts and further training – are you using a computer and the internet more now as a result of doing the course?**



n=168

**Can tell us what you use the computer for?**

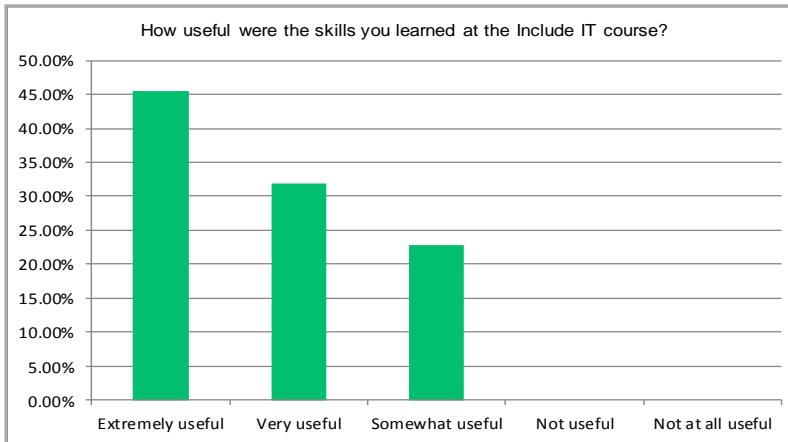


## 2. Follow up Survey Feedback

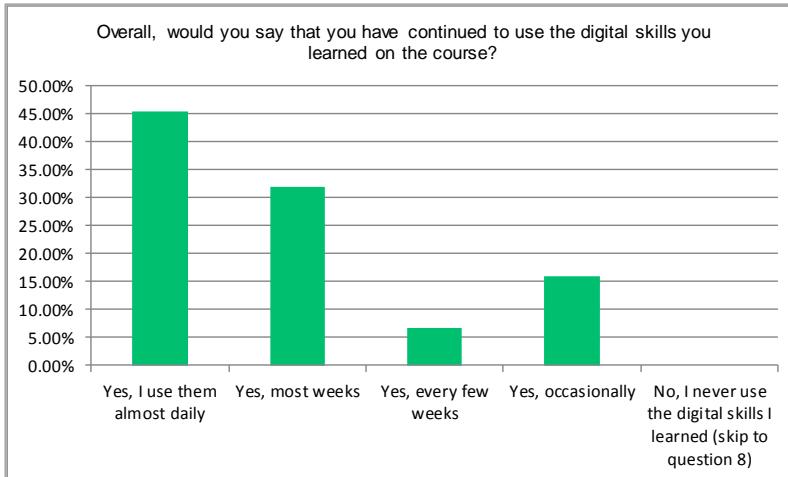
**Training Provider - Please tell us which organisation you received your training from:**



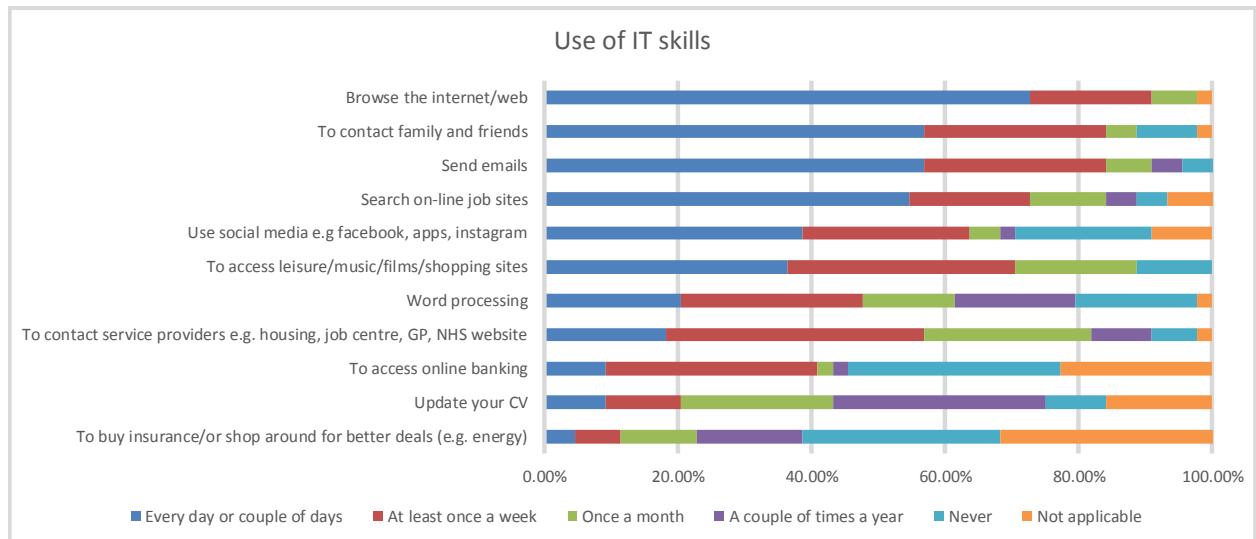
**How useful were the skills you learned at the Include-IT course?**



**Overall, have continued to use the digital skills you learned on the course?**



### Use of IT skills?



### Progress since completing the IT training course

