



Labour market change  
**Assessment of public initiatives to  
combat labour market segmentation  
in the EU Member States**

**Case study: The Lift Programme –  
A Welsh government project (UK)**

**[Labour market segmentation:  
Piloting a new quantitative and policy analysis](#)**

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## Introduction

The [Lift Programme](#) was an initiative designed to tackle worklessness in Wales. Launched in 2013, the programme was a response to the [Welsh government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan](#) of the same year (Wavehill, 2016a; Welsh government, 2012). The Lift Programme was central to the commitment by the Welsh government to provide training and employment opportunities to 5,000 people by the end of 2017.

## Applied methodological approach

A comprehensive review of available evaluation reports of the Lift Programme has been carried out to provide a detailed analysis of the programme. Further to this, a variety of relevant policy documents were considered, in order to provide an accurate view of the UK public policy context in regard to labour market segmentation (LMS) and workless ahead of and during the programme's implementation. A thorough search of academic literature for independent assessments of the Lift Programme did not prove fruitful, most likely as a result of the programme ending in December 2017.

Consequently, the analysis in this report is primarily drawn from the evaluation of the programme commissioned by the Welsh government, policy papers surrounding worklessness published by the Welsh and UK governments as well as interviews with two experts.

Expert interviews were conducted in December 2018 with:

- Project manager of the evaluation of the Lift Programme commissioned by the Welsh government; and
- Lift Programme manager within the Welsh government.

## Description of the initiative in focus

### Type of initiative

The Lift Programme was a positive activation measure focused upon providing 'wrap around support' to get individuals in workless families back into employment, with flexible funding arrangements designed to enable an individualised approach. The programme's focus on those in workless households had a potential to contribute to tackle LMS by explicitly targeting those deemed farthest from the labour market. Lift functioned as a non-incentive based active labour market policy (ALMP).

### Rationale and objectives

In 2012, over a fifth (21.5%) of Welsh households were workless, equating to over 200,000 workless households across Wales. The proportion of workless households was higher than that of the UK (18.1%) by some 3.4 percentage points, making tackling worklessness a key priority of the Welsh government (Welsh government, 2012). The programme was premised upon research highlighting the lasting negative consequences of long-term worklessness on both working age individuals and their dependents. It did not explicitly seek to address LMS, although through its action had this potential effect. It was anticipated that the social problems borne of worklessness may provide further barriers to work, therefore justifying an ALMP focused explicitly on worklessness (Wavehill, 2016a).

The Welsh government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan (Welsh government, 2012) sought to alleviate poverty through three key objectives:

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Disclaimer: This working paper has not been subject to the full Eurofound evaluation, editorial and publication process.

- Preventing poverty.
- Helping people in poverty to improve their skills and to enhance the relevance of their qualifications.
- Mitigating the impact of poverty.

The Lift Programme was seen as contributing to all three objectives, with its own goal identified at an early stage being ‘contributing to the achievement of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan by piloting an approach of offering to people in long-term workless households 5,000 training or employment opportunities by the end of the calendar year 2017’ (Wavehill, 2016a, p. 12).

More specifically, the logic chain justifying the enactment of the Lift Programme can be summarised as (Wavehill, 2016a):

- Tackling poverty was one of the Welsh government’s highest priorities and a central task of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.
- There was a higher concentration of workless households in certain Welsh communities than the rest of the UK and other parts of Wales.
- Members of households workless for in excess of six months had been proven to be more likely to experience severe and persistent poverty and deprivation, poor health and well-being, and the intergenerational transfer of certain risks and disadvantages.
- It was understood that helping people to address the barriers they face in finding and sustaining employment may protect them against these poor outcomes.
- Effective support required actions to be personalised to individual circumstances and wide-ranging capabilities, with clear pathways to work. It was thought that this could be best achieved through sustained engagement from a named individual, familiar to participants, who can act as their mentor.

## Timeframe

The Lift Programme was commissioned in 2013. The first Lift delivery area became operational in January 2014 and the last of the nine areas commenced work in the summer of that year. In 2016, the Welsh Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty agreed a programme budget for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 to enable the programme to continue up to March 2018; however, the target of 5,000 training and employment opportunities was achieved by November 2017, at which point the programme ended. Though the programme was not continued, its successes were said to have shaped the Welsh government’s subsequent [Communities for Work programme](#).

In terms of individual participation in the programme, specific lengths of engagement targets were not set due to difficulties faced by the target group that may have affected their ability to engage, such as poor health or homelessness. The five-stage delivery model was designed with the view that participants could move through each process at a pace that best suited their needs. This meant that engagement with the programme varied from less than three months to over 15 months (Wavehill, 2016a; Wavehill, 2018b).

## Target groups

The programme sought to target all working age members of families in which all members had been unemployed for more than six months. Participants were typically far from the labour market, and had chaotic or complex needs that may have inhibited access to previous labour market activation measures. Data from the Lift Programme evaluation show that 26% of all Lift participants had never worked and another 65% had been out of work for over two years, with

some variation across implementation areas. Though the programme's focus upon 'workless households' implied households of two or more members, the programme did not exclude single occupant households.

## Delivery methods

The delivery of the Lift Programme was implemented via a five-stage model:

1. Referral and contact: Initial stage, seeking to identify the barriers to employment faced by the individual. Following referral, an employment skills audit would be conducted with the individual as a means of identifying needs.
2. Building trust: Often involving coaching with mentors focusing upon problem solving and looking toward gaining 'gateway' opportunities to employment, such as identifying volunteering opportunities.
3. Development of an action plan: Delivery of advice on gaining employment, personal support and goal setting. Delivered by the mentor, in collaboration with the participant.
4. Building employment skills: Penultimate stage, incorporating aspects such as skills building, employment-focused volunteering and health improvement. The programme's flexible design meant that the delivery of these skills and opportunity differed according to mentors' assessment of individual needs. Examples of provision include training sessions or placement in volunteering opportunities sourced by mentors.
5. Sustained employment<sup>1</sup> for the individual: Final stage.

The delivery model built upon the Welsh government's broader conception of worklessness as a dynamic and individualised process. As such, implementation procedures were designed to be flexible. The barrier fund was the primary agent of this flexibility, designed to operate as a responsive tool for mentors to offer financial support specific to individual needs.

As a voluntary programme, referral to Lift came from a variety of sources that would encourage individual enrolment. The voluntary nature of the programme meant that participants received no cash incentives for participation, nor were any welfare payments conditional upon taking part. Participants were free to join and leave the Lift Programme without any consequences for their income or status as a potential welfare claimant. Due to limited financial resources, it was decided at the programme's outset that recruitment of participants would be the result of effective engagement by delivery area staff with referral agencies such as the [Communities First](#) (CF) clusters and local Jobcentre Plus offices<sup>2</sup>. Further to these two primary routes of engagement with the programme, other routes included referrals from local GP surgeries, via Registered Social Landlords, Probation Services, [Careers Wales](#)<sup>3</sup>, Job Fairs/Employer Engagement Events and [Families First/Flying Start](#)<sup>4</sup> (Wavehill, 2016c). No cooperation agreements were signed, though

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<sup>1</sup> 'Sustained employment' was undefined in the implementation of Lift, though it appears that a definition may have been provided in the Welsh government's unpublished Business plan for Lift. Determination of what constituted sustained employment appears to have been judged by mentors on the nature of the employment gained (Wavehill, 2018a).

<sup>2</sup> Jobcentre Plus is the part of the UK government's Department for Work and Pensions which delivers working-age support services across the UK.

<sup>3</sup> Careers Wales is the Welsh government's national public employment service.

<sup>4</sup> Families First is a Welsh government programme designed to prevent negative outcomes for children, young people and families. The programme is administered by local authorities and focuses upon early

there was a clear message from the Welsh government to public sector employees that engagement with the programme was of importance (information obtained from expert interview).

### **Key actors involved in implementation**

The funding provided by the Welsh government enabled each delivery area to allocate two brokers/mentors to implement the programme. The programme's success was largely reliant on the ability of the broker/mentor to build and sustain strong relationships with the target beneficiaries. This ensured that they had gained beneficiaries' trust, as well as the insight to unearth and understand complex needs. In addition, brokers were required to have a similarly strong relationship with the local support infrastructure. This was to ensure that, having gained the trust of individuals, they were well positioned to secure them the necessary support in cooperation with other agencies.

Staff appointed as mentors typically came to the role with substantial experience of employability related work and community action programming. The importance of existing personal connections with relevant bodies and a good understanding of the local area and labour market were identified as key indicators of successful mentoring (Wavehill, 2016a; Wavehill, 2018a).

Lift Programme was implemented in nine separate delivery areas within Wales. The selection of the delivery areas built upon the Welsh government's existing identification of areas of high deprivation under the 2001 '[Communities First Programme](#)'<sup>5</sup> designed to tackle poverty in Wales. Two members of staff, a 'broker/mentor' and a 'senior broker/mentor', were appointed to each delivery area. During the set-up process, delivery areas were also provided with additional funding to cover initial administrative support involving the creation of data collection systems, designed to be phased out once the programme was established. Staffing was largely dictated by the financial resources available, assuming that this would be sufficient to effectively deliver the programme; notwithstanding risk of continuity and the costs of retraining should staff members become unavailable or leave the role (Wavehill, 2016a).

A programme board, to meet biannually, was also established to provide information, advice and assurance to brokers implementing the project, as well as to identify commonalities and recurrent risks across the entirety of the Lift Programme. The key aims of the board were to provide and advise upon (Wavehill, 2016a):

- Strategic and cross-cutting issues and risks that impact on the programme;
- Effectiveness of communication;
- The adequacy and integrity of governance arrangements;
- The delivery of the outcome and benefits; and
- The resolution of strategic and operational issues from a strategic perspective.

### **Location**

The Lift Programme was operated in nine delivery areas across Wales, with locations being chosen to reflect a diversity of unemployment and employment opportunity density. The choice of delivery areas built upon the Welsh government's existing CF clusters which identified areas

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initiative, prevention, and providing support for whole families, rather than individuals (Welsh government, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> The Communities First Programme was a Welsh government initiative aimed at alleviating poverty in Wales' most deprived areas. The programme was phased out in 2018 (Welsh government, 2018).

of high deprivation – namely, having a higher proportion of the population in receipt of welfare support (30%) than the Welsh national average (12%) (Wavehill, 2016a). Delivery areas were defined and Lift had to recruit from within the boundaries set. Individuals living just outside of the defined areas were ineligible for participation in the programme.

The nine delivery areas were selected after the Welsh government invited bodies running the existing CF clusters to participate. Those that expressed interest were then subject to a selection process. The selection of the final delivery areas was based upon dual criteria:

- The extent to which the clusters had a proven ability to deliver the existing CF programme; and
- The need to trial the model in a range of settings on the assumption that the programme's effectiveness would be influenced by factors such as the geography, population and employment densities and the support infrastructure.

The nine delivery areas deemed to meet these requirements and therefore selected for the programme were Anglesey, Flintshire East and West, Afan Valley, Swansea North West, Llanelli, Ebbw Fawr and Tredegar, Caerphilly Basin and Upper Rhymney Valley, Cardiff East and Taf West (Wavehill, 2016a).

## Funding arrangements

The Lift Programme operated with a relatively small budget considering its objectives. The Welsh government awarded the programme GBP 2.5 million (€2.9 million<sup>6</sup>) of funding for the 2013-2016 initial implementation period. Following the programme's continuation to 2018, a further GBP 1.1 million (€1.3 million) per year was secured, with only the first year being used, as the project achieved its goals ahead of schedule in 2017. The use of CF clusters as the delivery vehicle drew on the assumption that cluster infrastructure offers a degree of efficacy, enabling service delivery with limited resources. Much of the efficacy of this model, however, was reliant upon the Lift Programme linking with or drawing on other forms of support.

The budget for each delivery area over the initial programme period (2013-2016) varied from around GBP 190,000 (€218,823) to GBP 390,000 (€449,163), reflecting the level of funding requested and evidenced by each Lead Delivery Body<sup>7</sup>. Each delivery area was also given a portion of the flexible barrier fund, carrying between GBP 20,000 (€23,034) and GBP 30,000 (€34,551) per year.

The Barrier Fund<sup>8</sup> existed as a resource to be used at any stage of the process when no other funding was available, for instance to counteract barriers to employment, including issues such as travel costs and interview appropriate clothing. Barrier fund expenditure could be justified where it tackled significant barriers to gaining employment such as homelessness or poor health/addiction as well as smaller issues like funding travel (Wavehill, 2016a).

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<sup>6</sup> Conversion date: 25 February 2019.

<sup>7</sup> The evaluation reports do not contain any information describing what the Lead Delivery Bodies were; however some documentation suggests that local authorities could be involved. See, for example, Isle of Anglesey County Council (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Flying Start is a Welsh government early years programme for families with children under four years of age living in disadvantaged areas of Wales (Welsh government, 2017).



## **Linkages with/embeddedness into other measures (national and EU)**

The Lift Programme was one of many programmes funded through the Welsh government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan. 'Building resilient communities: Taking forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan' (Welsh government, 2013) provides a series of key actions that the Welsh government would facilitate with clear measurable targets as to where they sought to make the biggest difference. This included 'the creation of 5,000 training and employment opportunities for people in households where there is no adult in work, starting with at least six of our Communities First areas' (Welsh government, 2013, p. 4), with the aim of the commitment to be fulfilled by the end of 2017. The Lift Programme was developed as the initiative to deliver this commitment. While there was no explicit focus on LMS, it could be assumed that individuals without a track record of work as well as high barriers to work would struggle to find their way into the labour market or would just be able to access relatively low quality jobs that would not greatly enhance their progression in work. The Lift Programme sought to improve the situation of individuals, building their employability attributes which in turn would better support them to enter the labour market. It would thus have a preventative focus in respect of the further marginalisation of an already disadvantaged group.

Though Lift largely existed as a standalone programme, it had linkages with the Communities First Programme as well as bodies such as Jobcentre Plus, on whom Lift was reliant for referrals (Wavehill, 2016b).

The Lift Programme had no connections to the UK government's mandatory [Work Programme](#)<sup>9</sup> for those in receipt of unemployment benefits. However, in order to avoid resource cross-over, Lift was designed to focus resources on participants prior to, or post, engagement with the Work Programme which provides support for up to two years (Wavehill, 2018b).

The Lift Programme received no funding from European Union programmes such as the European Social Fund (ESF), standing in contrast with the majority of employment programmes to have taken place in Wales in recent years (Wavehill, 2016a; Wavehill, 2016b).

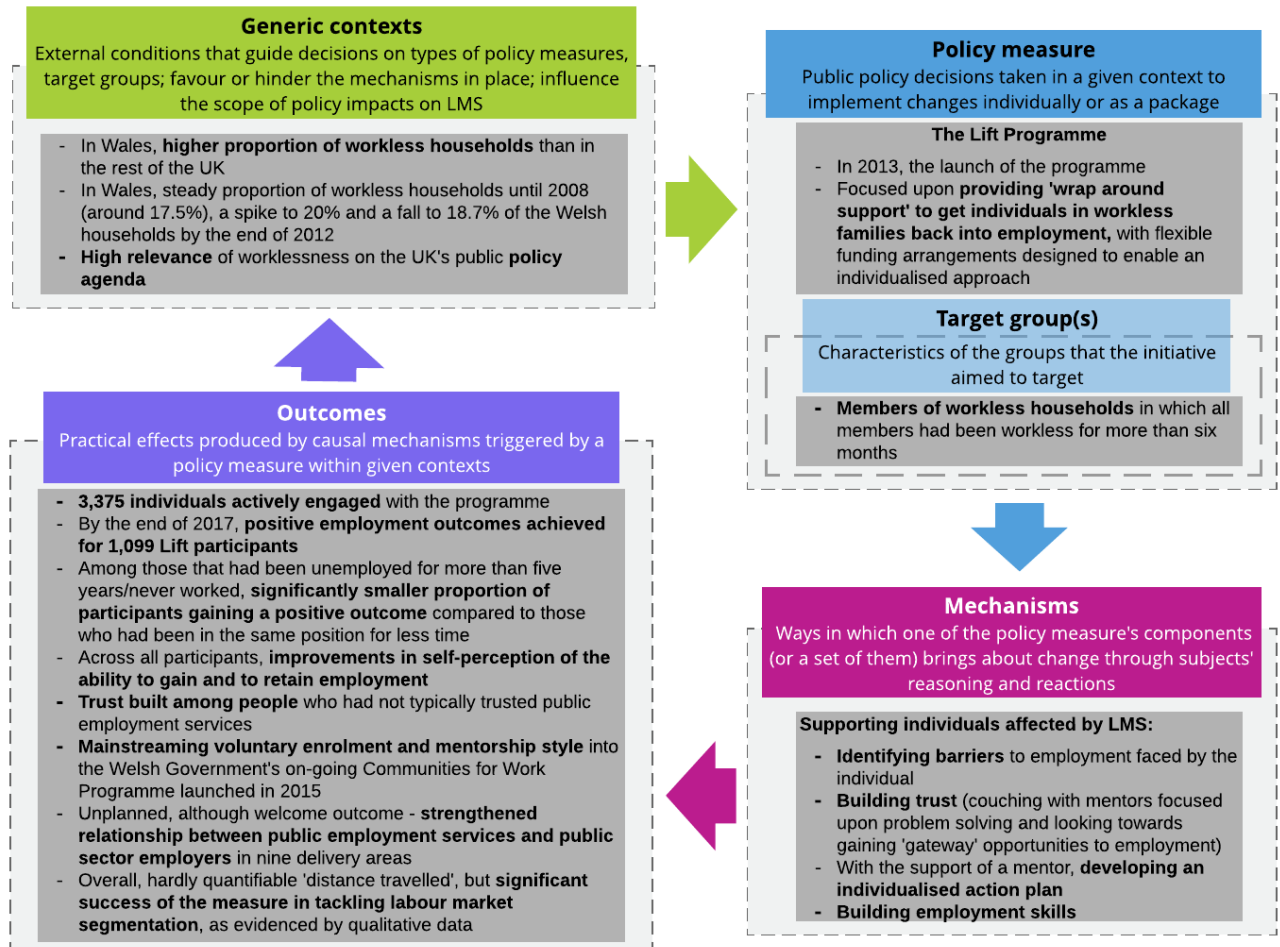
## **In-depth analysis of the initiative in focus**

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the context of the initiative, its details in terms of measures and target groups, mechanisms and outcomes. These separate elements are represented in the figure below.

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<sup>9</sup> See 'Context' below.

Figure 1: Visual presentation of the initiative



Source: Compiled by the authors

## Overview of the context

Worklessness and the persistence of workless households in certain areas represents an enduring policy challenge in Wales and across the UK. Prior to the creation of the Welsh government in 1998 under devolution, Wales was governed exclusively by the UK government<sup>10</sup>.

From the late 1970s, UK government employment policy moved away from the Keynesian demand management thinking that had previously dominated towards deregulated market-led monetary policy. governments of the 1980s increasingly privileged 'efficiency' and price stability, abandoning attempts to regulate demand for labour in favour of a market-led approach to employment (Wiggan, 2012). This approach largely denied structural explanations of worklessness, placing greater responsibility on individuals. This shifted the understanding of

<sup>10</sup> The Welsh government is the devolved government for Wales. Led by the First Minister, it works across devolved areas that include key areas of public life such as health, education, careers and the environment.

worklessness to one in which unemployment was an individualised and voluntary position rather than a structurally explained involuntary state. As such, government employment policy reflected the position that worklessness is a consequence of issues of personal motivation, choices and inefficiency at the level of the individual. In light of this view, labour market policy shifted away from passive policies such as unemployment welfare, towards active initiatives that sought to address individual barriers to employment and create active incentives to work (Wavehill, 2016a).

The turn to ‘activation’ style measures in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s reflected a broader global shift to ALMPs, which almost doubled globally between 1980 and 2003 (Berry, 2014). Such policies included ‘positive’ activation programmes prioritising education and skills, as well as ‘negative’ activation such as conditional welfare and sanctions (Berry, 2014). By 1997, UK employment and worklessness remained high, with wage inequality being at its highest since the 1930s (Department for Work and Pensions, 2010).

The New Labour government of 1997 sought to tackle these issues by adopting an approach that married the market-focused economic thinking of their conservative predecessors with an emphasis on social justice and structural factors. Consequently, the number of activation measures implemented during this period increased. Prior to the 2008 recession, unemployment fell across the UK, though workless household persisted. In Wales, the proportion of workless households had been steady at around 17.5% until 2008, when it spiked to 21.5% of all households. By the end of 2012, this had fallen to 18.7% of all Welsh households (StatsWales, 2019).

The financial crisis of 2008 saw increased unemployment, with a slight increase in workless households across Wales. With the new coalition government of 2010, the UK government’s approach to worklessness returned to the outlook of the 1970’s, through a marked shift away from positive activation measures towards punitive negative activation policies, largely in the form of welfare reductions and sanctions (Wiggan, 2012). The reforms meant that claimants’ entitlement to welfare was premised not just on economic need, but also on demonstrating the fulfilment of behavioural conditions surrounding the extent to which they had sought work (Reeve, 2017). Iain Duncan Smith, the first Secretary of State for Work and Pensions of the coalition government, identified worklessness as a key target in the ‘fight against poverty’. In his 2010 state of the nation report (Department for Work and Pensions, 2010), he framed the issue of worklessness as a crisis borne of the preceding government’s welfare policies, highlighting that at the time:

- The UK had the third highest overall rate of adults living in workless households in the EU, behind only Belgium and Hungary, with 4.8 million working-age people living in a household in which no one is in work;
- The UK had the highest rate of children in workless households in the EU, with 1.9 million children living in workless households;
- The workless household rate had remained consistently above 15.5% since 1999; and
- Around 30% of people who had lived in workless households in the previous 10 years did so for at least half of that period.

Smith’s report also identified that, in 2010, Wales had the second highest level of workless households amongst UK regions (the first being North-East England).

In 2011, the UK government established the Work Programme, a large scale welfare-to-work initiative designed to offer mainly long-term claimants of [Jobseeker’s Allowance](#)<sup>11</sup> or the

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<sup>11</sup> Jobseeker’s Allowance is an unemployment benefit that one can claim while looking for work. Different types of Jobseeker’s Allowance exist. Which types one can get depends on each individual’s circumstances. The applicants for Jobseeker’s Allowance must participate in an interview organised by

[Employment and Support Allowance](#)<sup>12</sup> a programme of up to two years of specialised employment support. This was done through contracting out private providers, meaning PES commissioned out its support for the mentioned groups. The programme was a clear response to Smith's report and growing concerns about worklessness and long-term unemployment. The scheme was run by non-state providers who were given considerable freedom to implement their own schemes to help unemployed people in to work. Providers were paid by the government on the basis of the results they achieved - a job outcome payment after a participant had spent a minimum length of time in employment (either 13 or 26 weeks), and sustainment payments for every four weeks the participant had remained in employment thereafter (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). The Work Programme faced some criticism for its use of privatised provision in supplying services to the unemployed, but otherwise could be seen largely to draw upon existing lessons learned from implementing ALMPs under the New Labour government (Berry, 2014).

What can be seen is that worklessness was high on the UK's public policy agenda ahead of the Welsh government announcing the Lift Programme in 2013. Input from policy experts suggests that the Lift Programme was also partly motivated by the Welsh government's desire to be seen as addressing social issues without the assistance of the ESF (Expert interview; Wavehill, 2018c), as well as to reflect an alternative approach to the more punitive negative activation measure established by the UK government.

The programme was designed with awareness that many of its likely participants would have had negative experiences of the welfare system since the establishment of the UK's coalition government, hence justifying the considerable emphasis on building personal trust between individuals and their mentors. In this sense Lift responded to, and sought to abate, the impact of the largely anti-welfare public policy context on the attitude of the workless to public engagement services. The assumption resulting from this was that participants would be distant from full civic engagement as well as from employment.

## Overview of the mechanisms

Evidence from the evaluation conducted by Wavehill research and input from policy experts suggest that the mechanisms by which the project was delivered were appropriate to the programme's intended outcomes and contributed to the project's success. Broadly, the mechanism for implementing the programme can be understood as the five-stage delivery plan – 'referral and contact', 'building trust', 'action plan', 'building employment skills' and 'moving on to sustained employment' (Wavehill, 2016a).

Engagement with the Lift Programme was on an entirely voluntary basis. As the programme was operated within fairly limited resources, it was felt that funds would be best spent on those who actively wished to engage. Though the programme was voluntary, participants largely came to Lift through referrals from public employment services, though the voluntary nature of the engagement was made clear to individuals. Due to the programme's reliance on external referrals there is no data available on the ability of the programme to reach its target group. However,

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Jobcentre Plus. At this interview, the claimants must sign an agreement about what steps they will take to look for a job – a 'Claimant Commitment'. The payment of Jobseeker's Allowance is made every two weeks and it depends on whether the claimant follows his/her commitments.

<sup>12</sup> Employment and Support Allowance is a benefit for people who cannot work because of illness or disability. Employed, unemployed, self-employed persons and students can claim for this benefit. All claimants receive financial support. Those who can work receive personal help with, for example, finding a job, job goals and improving one's skills.

given that many of those that did engage with the programme had not engaged with public employment for some time, the programme was seen by expert interviewees to have been a success in this regard.

As the programme progressed, Jobcentre Plus, the UK-wide public employment service delivery body, was identified as the most fruitful source of recruitment, and all delivery areas maintained a strong relationship with it. Given the increasingly punitive context of UK welfare structures (see *context* below), many of those referred from Jobcentre Plus were under the impression they were mandated to participate in the Lift Programme in order to receive welfare payments (information obtained from expert interview, 2018). In such cases, mentors were encouraged to stress the voluntary nature of the programme, whilst one delivery area established a physical presence within their local Jobcentre Plus to ensure accurate communication of the programme's nature to potential participants. CF clusters also proved to be an effective source of referrals to the programme.

The programme's considerable reliance on referrals to the programme via Jobcentre Plus and other agencies enabled cost efficiency whilst also posing a potential risk in terms of the volume and consistency of recruitment. Delivery staff found that referrals from Jobcentres were largely reliant upon individual relationships between mentors and specific Jobcentre Plus staff. Consequently, the volume of referrals via this route varied by delivery area, as well as within the delivery areas according to the relationship with different Jobcentres. During the programme's implementation, staff came to understand that some Jobcentre staff were giving inaccurate information regarding the Lift Programme to the individuals they referred. In response to this, one delivery area (Swansea) established a physical presence in the Jobcentre to be able to deliver information of the programme first hand, an approach which proved effective.

Similar results were found with referrals from CF cluster engagement activities. Again, the quality and suitability of referrals from this source varied by delivery area and this was again seen to be influenced by the strength of the relationship between Lift mentors and CF staff. As staff recruited to work as mentors typically had experience of engaging with their specific local services prior to the commencement of Lift, it was understood in the evaluation that many staff were able to develop strong relationships with staff in potential referral bodies, meaning that overall these referral mechanisms worked well (Wavehill, 2016c).

Though largely reliant on referrals, some clusters did conduct their own outreach activities. This was most common, and understood to be most necessary, in delivery areas that were geographically disparate. However, all delivery areas achieved the majority of their enrolments through referrals.

A weakness in the design of the programme in regard to referral and contact was the strictness of the geographical eligibility boundaries. In the past, Communities First programmes had used a flexible boundaries approach, to avoid turning willing potential candidates away. It was identified in the evaluation and in interview with the programme manager that this was a source of frustration for many mentors (Wavehill, 2016c).

According to the mentors, 'Building trust' - the delivery model's second stage focusing mainly on coaching - was essential to the project's success in reaching and engaging a difficult-to-access group. These findings are in line with those of studies on other ALMPs, which describe as a good practice the provision of continuous personal support with an individualised focus (Hasluck and Green (2007)). The flexible nature of the delivery plan enabled mentors to take the slow and informal approaches that were often required with individuals who were particularly far from the labour market and had previously had negative experiences on mandatory employment programmes. Many of those who had been out of employment for a significant period of time had

experienced multiple employment programmes with little or no discernible positive impact. The flexible nature of the Lift delivery model meant that mentors were able to spend time building trust to remove the scepticism unsurprisingly felt by many participants. Building trust was also found to be a prerequisite for a mentor's ability to improve a participant's confidence. One of the experts interviewed also suggested that for many mentors, the opportunity to spend a prolonged period gaining an individual's trust without having to prove any immediate financial gains to welfare staff was the programme's greatest strength (Wavehill, 2018a).

'Action plan', Lift's third stage, was again designed to be flexible in its application. The goal of the action planning stage was to identify the barriers to employment faced by individuals and to find appropriate solutions. The goals identified in this stage enabled brokers to discern the suitability of opportunities available to the individual. The delivery of this stage varied significantly between delivery areas, in some it formed a critical element of the programme, whilst in others mentors felt the process to be somewhat 'ad hoc'. Thanks to the individualised nature of the programme, mentors were able to alter the 'action plan' stage according to individual needs. For instance, in cases where it was felt that the formal setting of goals would deter the participant, the formality of the action plan was reduced. Often, the full complexity of the multiple barriers faced by participants would be unearthed at this stage. Barriers to employment would typically be placed in a hierarchy of needs in collaboration with the individual, dictating the path of the action plan. This meant that for many individuals their action plan would deal with matters such as housing, drug/substance abuse or domestic violence ahead of any explicitly employment-related tasks such as training. Though the programme's 'wrap around' support was integral to its design, mentors noted that it was sometimes difficult to maintain the boundaries of the role, offering support and guidance towards relevant services without unintentionally falling into the role of a social worker (Wavehill, 2016c).

The programme's fourth stage, 'building employment skills', typically involved encouraging participants to partake in volunteering and work placements along with vocationally orientated training courses, in line with the goals identified in their action plan.

In some delivery areas, mentors would themselves run confidence building and interview skills courses for participants, whilst others utilised local government and JobCentre Plus services for similar provision surrounding job search skills and approaches. A recurrent difficulty experienced by mentors at this stage was the expectations of participants being beyond the resources and remit of the Lift Programme. In the evaluation, mentors described how participants would often expect funding for training that did not correspond to the needs of the local labour market. At this stage mentors were often required to reassert that the programme's intended outcome was sustained employment, and that this would most likely be achieved with appropriate training. Availability of training, volunteering and employment opportunities varied by delivery area and as well over time, due to reductions in funding for adult and community learning from other sources.

The barrier fund played a vital role at this stage, with its flexibility enabling an individualised approach that mentors appreciated. Mentors and policy experts interviewed agreed that the fund could not be improved other than if it were to be given increased investment. The only concern felt by mentors in regard to the barrier fund was that its flexibility and simplicity of access meant it came to be relied upon by partner organisations as a source of funding. At times, it was felt that individuals were being referred to the programme with the sole intent of accessing the barrier fund, rather than to receive the full package of support offered by the programme (Wavehill, 2016c).

The final stage of the delivery plan, 'moving onto sustained employment' was achieved by 32.6% of those participating in the programme. This transition did not involve brokerage with the

employers concerned and the programme's evaluation found that many employers were unaware they had hired an individual taking part in a public employment programme, suggesting local employers' awareness of the Lift Programme was low. Following the acceptance of an employment opportunity, mentors typically had contact with participants via telephone to offer in-work support. However, mentors reported difficulty with maintaining contact with participants once they had left the programme. It was suggested that this was an element of the programme that could have been strengthened with a more formal process to facilitate the post-employment relationship (Wavehill, 2018a). It might be that an increased focus on engaging with employers would have strengthened the programme's added value and impact on sustained employment. However, wider evidence, such as that available from the Work Programme evaluation, indicates that individuals hold mixed views towards in-work support involving employers. Some are neutral about this, whereas others believe that those who provide in-work support should always seek for participant's consent before they establish contact with the participant's employer (Department for Work and Pensions, 2014).

### **Overview of the results and impacts**

The Lift Programme was successful in delivering its intended outcomes, having delivered ahead of planning from its launch. The delivery target of 5,000 employment and training outcomes by the end of 2017 was ultimately met two months earlier than initially profiled. The Welsh government's management information concerning the programme shows that by the end of 2017, 1,099 Lift participants were in employment, amounting to 32.6% of those that actively had engaged with the programme (Wavehill, 2018a). Ultimately, 3,375 individuals actively engaged with the Lift Programme, all of whom met the criteria of living within a 'workless household' (Wavehill, 2016c).

Data from the evaluation of the Lift Programme demonstrate that while the measure was successful, the proportion of participants gaining a positive outcome was significantly smaller among those that had been unemployed for more than five years/never worked than those who had been in the same position for less time. Of the participants who had been workless for six months to two years, the conversion rate in respect of movement into sustainable employment was 33%. For those workless for five years or more, or who had never worked, the conversion rate was less than half, at 15% (Wavehill, 2018b).

Consequently, in terms of LMS, the programme can be seen to have greater success with those already closer to the labour market. The evaluation documentation does not contain material on the nature of work achieved, or whether progression was supported by training and development once in work. Nonetheless, a 33% conversion rate constitutes considerable success above comparable labour market activation measures with similar objectives, such as the Work Programme, which achieved a 20.6% conversion rate during the same period (UK government, 2013). Information obtained from expert interviews suggests that, though the Lift Programme was not as successful with those furthest from the labour market, it was the most successful programme of its type in terms of reaching them.

From its inception, the programme approached worklessness as a dynamic state that reflected a multitude of complex factors distancing individuals from the labour market. As such, in its identification of the multiple and entrenched factors present in the creation of worklessness, Lift recognised that outcomes that had brought individuals closer to the labour market without resulting in employment (soft outcomes of the programme) should not be considered as failure (expert interview). The evaluation of Lift found improvements in self-perception of the ability to gain and retain employment across all participants, regardless of eventual employment outcome. Moreover, the evaluation revealed substantial improvement in feelings of well-being (such as life



satisfaction and happiness), especially among those who did not gain a positive employment outcome (Wavehill, 2018b). Such soft outcomes of the programme illustrate the ‘distance travelled’ towards employment amongst those participants who remain out of work. Though gains in self-confidence and well-being effects are difficult to quantify and measure, the importance of these impacts is widely recognised (Wavehill, 2018c). Accordingly, the distance that Lift participants travelled towards the labour market (regardless of the final employment outcome) was a central theme in the expert interviews conducted, and represents a significant success in tackling the persistence of LMS. Furthermore, both experts interviewed agreed that the programme made a significant achievement in building trust of people who did typically not trust public employment services (Wavehill, 2018a).

The focus on individualised support united each of the mechanisms involved in the implementation of the Lift Programme. The understanding of worklessness as a dynamic and fluid process ran throughout the programme from initial design to individual delivery. Policy experts suggested this was the greatest strength of the programme, as it served to tackle the intersecting social factors leading to worklessness that other programmes had failed to achieve.

According to policy experts, an unplanned but welcome outcome of the Lift Programme has been a strengthened relationship between public employment services and public sector employers in the nine delivery areas. Lift enjoyed strong support across departments at government level, and policy experts felt that for one of the first times this support had been communicated effectively to those working at the recruitment end of department’s respective agencies. This occurred across numerous public sector services, but was seen to have been particularly effective in public health services as part of the National Health Service (NHS).

In terms of cost benefit, cost effectiveness analysis reveals a cost per positive employment outcome into sustained employment of GBP 3,744 (€4,360). As mentioned in the evaluation reports, this figure is at the lower end of what was anticipated in the programme’s initial business plan (unpublished) and, given the nature of the target group for the programme, is understood by the policy experts and evaluation team to represent good value for money. Macro-economic analysis of the programme’s cost effectiveness is made difficult by the fact that only a small number of individuals responding to the UK’s longitudinal Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) (as the source of the comparison group) match the key characteristics of Lift participants. Consequently, evaluators of the programme were unable to find sufficient data to effectively control for the socio-economic context in which the target group was based. However, a comparison of Lift with the UK-wide welfare-to-work scheme ‘the Work Programme’ (mandatory for those in receipt of benefits) provides further evidence that the Lift Programme was the case of an efficient use of funding. Cost per active participant for the Lift Programme was GBP 133 (€154) lower than that of the Work Programme (Wavehill, 2018a).

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Lift Programme, which was always viewed as a pilot, is the adoption of the voluntary enrolment and mentorship style mechanisms into the Welsh government’s on-going Communities for Work Programme launched in 2015. This programme is run by the Welsh government and co-sponsored by the UK government’s Department for Work and Pensions (Newton and Burrowes, 2017). To date (2019), the programme has been supported by significant contributions from the European Social Fund; at present it is unclear how the UK’s departure from the European Union will affect the programme. Nonetheless, it can be seen that the identified strengths of the Lift Programme are likely to be incorporated into future efforts by the Welsh government to tackle LMS.



## Conclusions and policy pointers

Given the widely held view of the Lift Programme as a successful initiative by those involved, it is perhaps unsurprising that both the programme's evaluation and expert interviewees felt that a number of useful lessons have been learned from the application of the programme.

The evaluation reports in conjunction with information gathered from policy experts strongly suggest that the Lift Programme's primary strength was its emphasis on an individualised and holistic approach to tackling worklessness. The flexibility with which mentors were able to use allocated funds to provide targeted support meant that the programme's implementation tackled the entrenched and intersecting factors that contribute to worklessness at the individual level. The advantages of this approach were furthered by the enthusiasm and commitment towards the programme from all levels of government. Policy experts highlighted how downward pressure from government departments meant that local public employment services and public employers (such as the National Health Service) took a collaborative approach to successfully achieve positive outcomes for individuals.

Evaluations suggest that the programme had few weaknesses, however the inconsistencies between implementation areas in their collection of monitoring and management information data was noted in the report. This suggests that nationwide measures such as Lift ought to establish a clear framework for the gathering of such information ahead of their launch.

Both the Programme's evaluators and the experts consulted for this case study made a series of recommendations based on the analysis of the programme's successes and shortcomings.

Namely, they identified the following key strengths:

- The flexibility of the Lift Programme in both funding and the support mentors were able to provide (Wavehill, 2018c).
- The pursuit of cross-departmental and intra-organisational collaboration in the provision of public employment programmes (Wavehill, 2018c).
- Lift's recognition of the multiple, complex and intersecting barriers to employment that distance people far from the labour market. This approach enabled the provision of 'wrap around' and sustained support that was effective in removing such barriers (interviewees).
- The programme's focus upon building trust, over many months or years if required (Wavehill, 2018c).

The following aspects were stressed as the main weaknesses of the measure:

- The failure to adopt a consistent means of monitoring Lift participants at the launch of the Lift Programme. The evaluation highlighted the importance of an effective system of data collection to track and monitor participants progress through, and outcomes of, engagement with public employment programmes was stressed. Therefore, it suggested that future programmes should operate with a central database of all participants to allow meaningful analysis and comparative assessment of the programme's effectiveness (Wavehill, 2018c).
- Failure to take steps on funding and staffing arrangements prior to programme delivery, which caused inconsistencies in the implementation of the Lift Programme. The evaluation stressed that funding and staffing arrangements should be formulated to respond to the requirements of the delivery area prior to the implementation of the measure. At this stage the roles of staff involved in delivery should also be agreed to ensure consistency across delivery areas (Wavehill, 2018c).

- Programmes seeking to address LMS ought to be mindful of the value in considering the ‘distance travelled’. Though some participants did not achieve employment outcomes, mentors believed they were far more likely to engage in future employment projects, as a result of their participation in Lift (Wavehill, 2018c).

Particularly regarding LMS, both of expert interviewees stated that the programme had been a significant learning opportunity for the Welsh government in regard to the most effective means of tackling segmentation.

The transferability of the Lift Programme would likely depend upon an acceptance of the view that LMS, and the worklessness that can result, is a ‘dynamic and fluid process’. The widely acceptance of this view by the Welsh government and staff at a variety of levels within government departments and public services/initiatives enabled the flexibility that was vital to the programme’s success. It would also transfer well where labour markets are tight and employment is high as the employers’ might relax restrictive recruitment criteria in order to be able to fill vacancies. This would enable people who have been marginalised in the labour market, and who have made progress through a project such as Lift, to have a greater chance of being taken into employment.

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## List of abbreviations

ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
CF	Communities First
UK	United Kingdom

Table 1: CMO configurations of the ‘Lift Programme – A Welsh government Project’

<b>Initiative</b>	The Lift Programme. Positive activation measure focused upon providing ‘wrap around support’ to get individuals in workless families back into employment, with flexible funding arrangements designed to enable an individualised approach.
<b>Target group characteristics</b>	Members of workless households in which all members had been workless for more than six months.
<b>Contextual features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Wales, the proportion of workless households was higher than in the rest of the UK.</li> <li>• Worklessness was high on the UK’s public policy agenda and in Wales the proportion of workless households had been steady at around 17.5% until 2008, when it spiked to 20.0% of all households. By the end of 2012, the this had fallen to 18.7% of all Welsh households (StatsWales, 2019).</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanisms</b>	Focused on supporting individuals affected by LMS, delivery of the Lift Programme was implemented via a five-stage model. The initial stage, ‘referral and contact’ sought to identify the barriers to employment faced by the individual. Consequently, following referral an employment skills audit would be conducted with the individual as a means of identifying needs. Following this, the second stage of ‘building trust’, would be implemented, this often involved coaching with mentors focusing upon problem solving and looking toward gaining ‘gateway’ opportunities to employment such as identifying volunteering opportunities. The third stage involved the development of an ‘action plan’, in which advice on gaining employment, personal support and goal setting would be delivered by the mentor, in collaboration with the participant. The penultimate stage, ‘building employment skills’, incorporated aspects such as skills building, employment focused volunteering and health improvement, with the final stage intended to be sustained employment for the individual.
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>In total, 3,375 individuals actively engaged with the Lift Programme, all of whom met the criteria of living within a ‘workless household’ (Wavehill, 2016c).</p> <p>By the end of 2017, 1,099 Lift participants had successfully achieved an employment outcome, amounting to 32.6% of those that actively engaged with the programme (Wavehill, 2018a).</p> <p>The proportion of participants gaining a positive outcome was significantly smaller among those that had been unemployed for more than five years/never worked (15% conversion rate) than those who had been in the same position for less time (33% conversion rate).</p> <p>Though the Lift Programme was not as successful with those furthest from the labour market, it was the best programme of its type in reaching them.</p> <p>Lift specifically encouraged improvements in self-perception of the ability to gain and retain employment and feelings of well-being across all participants, regardless of eventual employment outcomes. These soft outcomes of the programme illustrate the ‘distance travelled’ towards employment amongst</p>

	<p>those participants who remain out of work. Although difficult to quantify, gains in self-confidence and well-being complemented the hard (employment) outcomes of Lift and contributed to the overall success of the measure in tackling the persistence of LMS.</p> <p>The programme made a significant achievement in building trust of people who typically did not trust public employment services (Wavehill, 2018a).</p> <p>The initiative fuelled the adoption of the voluntary enrolment and mentorship style mechanisms into the Welsh government’s on-going Communities for Work Programme launched in 2015.</p> <p>An unplanned but welcome outcome of the Lift Programme has been a strengthened relationship between public employment services and public sector employers in the nine delivery areas.</p>
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Table 2: Evaluation studies of the 'Lift Programme – A Welsh government Project'

<b>Evaluation study</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Author's assessment of the quality of the evidence</b>
<b>Wavehill (2016a, 2016b)</b>	2015-2016	Qualitative data collection	Desk-based research and stakeholder interviews	The Lift model aims to address the negative consequences of unemployment and economic inactivity, including reduced income, increased incidence of poverty and material deprivation. It is premised on the belief that a varied support package, tailored to the needs of the individual, is a critical success factor in programmes of this nature.	The evaluation (which does not explicitly refer to LMS) is highly relevant for the purposes of this study as it draws on peer reviewed research and stakeholder interviews to examine the justification and motivation behind the design of the Lift Programme.
<b>Wavehill (2016c)</b>	2015-2016	Survey and qualitative data collection	Telephone survey and qualitative case studies with interviews	<p>Building trust between participants and mentors is crucial to the success of the project.</p> <p>Geographically isolated areas, or those that have accessibility constraints, are most likely to experience challenges in the identification of suitable opportunities for their participants.</p> <p>Participants in the Lift Programme frequently require support for 12 months or more in order to successfully progress towards employment.</p> <p>In the majority of delivery areas, the Lift Programme had aligned well with existing provision.</p> <p>Support for participants once they gain a work placement and/or employment was undefined at this stage, partly due to the challenges of maintaining contact with a participant once they have left the programme for employment.</p>	The evaluation (which does not explicitly refer to LMS) is highly relevant for the purposes of this study as it draws upon substantial primary data with stakeholders and participants. The methodology is robust and serves to build a multifaceted view of the programme success/weaknesses.
<b>Wavehill (2018a)</b>	2015-2018	Survey and qualitative data collection	Stakeholder interviews, a telephone survey with mentors/brokers and a survey of participants.	<p>The Lift Programme operated successfully as a geographically targeted, flexible employability programme supporting individuals distant from the labour market.</p> <p>Analysis of the programme shows clear evidence of accelerating participant transitions into employment and has delivered employment outcomes to almost a third of participants, many of which had never worked or had been out of work for over five years.</p>	The evaluation (which does not explicitly refer to LMS) is highly relevant for the purposes of this study as it draws upon substantial primary data with stakeholders and participants. The methodology is robust and serves to build a multifaceted view of the programme success/weaknesses.

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