

# Evaluation of the Construction Skills Fund

## Onsite training hubs

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# Institute for Employment Studies

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## Acknowledgements

The authors are indebted to the lead organisations in the hubs that took part in depth interviews and made time to explain their work to date, as well as the partner organisations, employers and participants who were interviewed for this research. We would also like to thank Aarthi Nandi, Caroline Key, and Kirsty Woolsey at the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and their colleagues Rachel Iredale, and Debbie Johnson along with colleagues at the Department for Education (DfE) for their feedback on the research tools and report. Thank you to the Performance Manager at CITB, Andrea Jones, for facilitating our access to the management information for the programme and for her excellent work in ensuring its completeness and accuracy

We would like to thank the wider research team at IES for their contributions to the fieldwork and analysis: Alex Martin, Robert Gay, Clare Huxley, Megan Edwards, Morwenna Byford and George White-Smith; Matilda Sjöberg for providing project support and designing the theory of change; Sophia Bell for her work designing the infographics; Rowan Munson for his time and attention with proofreading the report, and Helen Gray for her support with the analysis of management information.

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IES project code: 5502

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# Summary

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## Introduction

This report presents findings from the evaluation of the Construction Skills Fund (CSF). The CSF supported the development of 23 onsite training hubs which were mobile training facilities situated on construction sites. The hubs delivered training for in-demand entry level construction skills. By offering trainees the opportunity to learn and apply their knowledge in a real-world industry-led environment, the hubs intended to bridge the gap between training and working in the construction industry.

The CSF was launched in October 2018 and the hubs delivered until March 2020, continuing to support participants into work until September 2020. The hubs aimed for 45 per cent of participants to be from non-traditional entry routes or under-represented groups,<sup>1</sup> and for 15 per cent of participants to be changing careers from employment in other industries.

The programme had targets to support a minimum of 13,000 participants to become employment and site ready (ESR), and for 30 per cent of ESR participants to achieve a sustained job outcome of three months duration. The hubs designed their own intervention, but most consisted of screening, information, advice, and guidance (IAG), training, job brokerage and in-work support. Some hubs delivered prior to CSF, whereas others set up for the CSF. The CSF was part of the government's National Retraining Scheme (NRS).

This evaluation reviews whether, and how, the hubs were effective across different contexts, and what works in delivery of onsite training. The report draws on analysis of audited management information covering the period October 2018 to September 2020 and longitudinal hub case-studies. There were three periods of fieldwork spanning the project's delivery. Together the case-studies consist of 225 interviews with hub staff, partners, employers, and participants. Participants' views were supplemented with two online surveys. One survey was completed by 1,023 participants between two and five months after they registered with the hub (17% response rate). Another survey focused on outcomes and progression, and this was completed five to eight months after hub registration (701 valid responses, a response rate of 11%).

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<sup>1</sup> Non-traditional entry-routes were people without training or work experience in construction. Under-represented groups were women, people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, and people with a disability or learning difficulty.

## Performance against targets

The programme exceeded its targets for the number of hubs established (23 compared to 20). The programme also over-achieved its engagement targets. The proportion of participants from non-traditional entry routes and/or under-represented in the construction industry was 66 per cent against a programme target of 45 per cent, and 41 per cent of participants were career changers from another sector, against a programme target of 15 per cent.

The programme met the target for the number of employment and site ready (ESR) participants, training 13,443 participants (against a target of 13,000). However, the target for the proportion of ESR participants finding sustained employment of at least three months was not met (23% compared to target of 30%). Given the difficulties several hub staff expressed in keeping in touch with participants, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, this is likely to be a lower estimate of the job outcomes achieved by the programme. Of those participants that sustained job outcomes, the average (mean) number of days between their ESR date and employment start date was 43 days. The median number of days was lower however, at 17 days. Almost four in ten participants (37%) who achieved a sustained employment outcome did so within a week, with a further 11 per cent within two week and 15 per cent within four weeks. Combined, 62 per cent of all sustained job outcomes started within a month of the employment and site ready date.

Male participants, those from white backgrounds, people without a health condition or disability, 16-25 year olds, those with a previous level one or level two qualification, those attending an existing hub and those with a background in construction were significantly more likely than their counterparts to achieve a sustained job outcome. After controlling for all other factors participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were 10 percentage points less likely to find sustained work than those from white backgrounds. Further, participants from ethnic minority groups were less likely to have a sustained job outcome than those with identical qualifications that were from white ethnic backgrounds. This was the case across all qualification levels except no/entry level qualifications. It is worth considering whether the recruitment mechanisms used by hubs are open to bias in some respect.

On average, newly established hubs had a lower conversion from ESR to sustained employment than previously existing hubs. This is likely to reflect the time it takes to build strong partnerships with employers to ensure effective job brokerage.

A lower proportion of participants enrolling in the later stages of the programme achieved a sustained job outcome than participants who enrolled earlier in the programme. This may be explained by several factors including more new hubs operating later on, the economic impacts of Covid-19, and high volumes of participants enrolling in later phases making it difficult for hubs to keep in touch to evidence job outcomes.

Seventy-eight per cent of participants did not find work. Of these, almost two-thirds stated that they wanted to work in construction. Those who did not find work most commonly

reported that more training, work experience or a higher-level qualification would help them find work.

Most of the participants that had secured work were in full time employment<sup>2</sup> (86%), with two per cent finding employment on a part-time basis, three per cent becoming self-employed, and nine per cent working on a casual basis, including zero hours contracts.

The vast majority (89%) of participants that achieved a sustained job outcome worked in a construction occupation; with just 11 per cent of employment outcomes being in occupations in other sectors, such as warehousing and manufacturing roles. Of the job roles, just over one in three were labouring positions (36%), and just under one in four (23%) were for a role as an operative in construction (for example, scaffolder, ground worker, bricklayer, painter and decorator). One-quarter of participants (25%) who found sustained work started an apprenticeship.

The programme tended to be seen as a 'step into the industry'. It was assumed that where participants were suitable and their employment was short-term, they would be supported by employers or the hubs to try to develop skills and progress in work. The evaluation found little systematic evidence of in-work progression among participants, although this was not a main feature of the evaluation design.

### **Establishing the onsite hubs**

Hubs worked with a range of partners including: employers, voluntary and community sector referrers, Jobcentre Plus, training providers, colleges, and job matching and brokerage partners. They tended to build on existing partnerships. Where referral from Jobcentre Plus was reported to work well, hub staff had a strong presence. This presence was achieved through hub staff co-locating with Jobcentre Plus, providing training sessions for Jobcentre Plus advisers about the hub, with support from senior staff.

Effective employer engagement activity was characterised by hub staff: having knowledge of the local construction industry, listening to employers' requirements, working with tier one contractors to access vacancies within the supply chain,<sup>3</sup> demonstrating flexibility, delivering good quality candidates for vacancies, and maintaining on-going communication with employers. Where there was leadership and commitment from local authorities, Section 106 agreements<sup>4</sup> and employment and skill plans were an effective mechanism for engaging employers.

Employers contributed to the hubs by hosting the hubs on their sites, committing to providing vacancies, and presenting to participants about what working in construction entails and available jobs. Good employer links with the hubs were characterised by regular formal and informal communication, flexibility from the hub to respond to changing

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<sup>2</sup> Full time work is defined as working 35 hours a week or more.

<sup>3</sup> The primary, or general, contractor works directly with the customer. The primary contractor hires first-tier contractors to perform work on the customer's project. The second-tier contractor is hired by the first-tier contractor to perform specific tasks.

<sup>4</sup> Section 106 agreements are private agreements made between local authorities and developers that are attached to a planning permission to make acceptable a development which would otherwise be unacceptable.

requirements (eg in the training required by the employer), and the involvement of the employers in the training programme. Some employers had also donated equipment, premises, and offered hub participants spare places on training courses they were running for their own staff. Employer engagement was impeded by delays to construction works, lack of existing relationships between hub organisations and employers, and insufficient staff resources within hub core teams. Several hubs noted that in similar future initiatives they would build in more resources for building and maintaining employer relationships.

Many of the hubs made use of other sources of funding for participants, to complement the programme offered by the CSF. These other sources included: the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget, the European Social Fund, the National Careers Service, and in-kind employer contributions. These sources of funding provided wrap-around support for participants, ensuring that they were 'job-ready' before undertaking the hub programme for example.

The length of time for new hubs to set-up and reach capacity, on average, has been longer than the originally envisaged three-month period, in some case taking six to nine months. Due to unforeseen delays in recruiting staff, obtaining planning permission, and making hubs safe and accessible, several hubs ran six to twelve months behind schedule.

### **Implementing the onsite hubs**

The hubs used a range of marketing and recruitment strategies to attract participants, including: working with referral partners, attending job fairs, and displaying marketing materials in community venues. The majority of survey respondents heard about the hub through a training provider or college, a community organisation, or through word of mouth.

Messages emphasised in marketing included: the immediate availability of a job, the opportunity for sustainable employment, and that the training was free of charge. Hubs also tried to challenge common perceptions of the sector by ensuring diverse images in promotion materials. The online survey indicated the potential strength of the messages about finding work. The survey found that six in ten respondents (61%) became involved in the hub in order to gain employment in the construction industry; and one in two (53%) wanted to gain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card.<sup>5</sup>

14,456 individuals started the programme. Participants were largely male (92 per cent). Eight per cent of participants were female, compared to an industry average of 13 per cent<sup>6</sup>, although females make up only one per cent of those who work in manual construction occupations<sup>7</sup>. Some hub staff discussed the working practices of the sector

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<sup>5</sup> CSCS cards provide proof that individuals working on construction sites have the appropriate training and qualifications for the job they do on site. Although not a legislative requirement, most principal contractors require workers on their sites to hold a card.

<sup>6</sup> Construction is defined as SIC 2007 Industry F: Construction. Source: NOMIS provided by the Office for National Statistics, ONS.

<sup>7</sup> Manual occupations in construction are defined here as those in SOC 2010 occupations: 531 Construction



which might need to be reviewed to enable more female participation, including a greater degree of flexible working.

One-third of participants (34%) had ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to seven per cent of the construction workforce<sup>8</sup> and five per cent of the manual construction workforce<sup>9</sup>.

The onsite delivery model was welcomed by employers, hub staff and participants. It had several benefits in facilitating: employer-hub communication, participant opportunities for understanding the construction sector and gaining work experience, and employer involvement and interaction with participants.

The programme typically included: information, advice and guidance and screening; a series of training components; and a CSCS card test. Developing participants' employability behaviour and attributes required to work safely and effectively onsite were key features of the programme. Occupationally specific courses were undertaken additionally as required to meet the requirements of specific vacancies. These included asbestos awareness and working at height. The intervention typically lasted one to two weeks. Respondents to the participant survey indicated that the length of the training was about right (82%). One in ten participants (9%) felt that the programme was too short, with the remaining 5 per cent reporting it was too long.

Most hubs involved employers in planning and delivering their interventions. However, whether employers maintained an active involvement on an ongoing basis varied. In some cases, employers delivered activities, and hosted question and answer sessions about the sector. Employers' commitments to deliver vacancies also varied. Some hubs had strong commitment from employers to recruit hub participants, and other hubs promoted roles with different contractors, at different sites and with agencies.

The extent of job search support for participants varied between hubs. Several hubs felt that they had underestimated the staff time and resource required to achieve sustainable job outcomes. With hindsight these hubs would have made sustainable job outcomes a greater priority in the resourcing. Most of the contact hubs had with participants after they entered work was procedural and involved getting in touch to check whether participants were still in work after 13 weeks, the hubs evidenced 23 per cent of ESR participants in sustained employment.

### **Longer-term programme outcomes**

Many CSF participants who found work had previously been unemployed, suggesting that CSF offered substantial benefits to individuals. There were no contractual targets related

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and Building Trades, 532 Building Finishing Trades, 814 Construction Operatives and 912 Elementary Construction Occupations.

<sup>8</sup> Construction is defined as SIC 2007 Industry F: Construction. Source: NOMIS provided by the Office for National Statistics, ONS.

<sup>9</sup> Manual occupations in construction are defined here as those in SOC 2010 occupations: 531 Construction and Building Trades, 532 Building Finishing Trades, 814 Construction Operatives and 912 Elementary Construction Occupations.

to in-work progression and as such, hubs did not focus on this. Hub leads identified barriers to in-work progression including the short-term nature of many employment contracts in the industry, use of recruitment agencies and high levels of self-employment. Survey respondents working in construction had positive perceptions of job quality (83% rated this as good or very good) and job security (70% rated this as good or very good). They tended to be less positive about progression and career development in the industry (60% rated this as good or very good). Overall, younger respondents were more likely to feel that there were opportunities for development and progression within the construction industry.

The CSF programme has long-term ambitions to support an improved image of the construction industry. Around 4 in 10 survey respondents agreed that the construction industry is a highly desirable sector to work in and that there are training and development opportunities in construction. This increased to nearly 6 in 10 for younger participants. Interestingly, respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to have favourable views on these issues than those from white backgrounds. These survey results suggest that the CSF programme has the potential to contribute to improving the image of the construction industry in the long term.

### **Sustainability**

Most of the hubs saw a long-term need for their training offer to help address local skills shortages and to support construction and regeneration projects in the area. Only two hubs were not planning to continue to deliver the CSF model in future. They were not planning to continue because the CSF model had not proved sustainable for them, in part due to difficulties securing job outcomes. For the hubs seeking to continue, many had applied for, and were hoping to secure, a second round of CSF funding. Many hubs noted that it was only via the CSF funding stream that they could continue to operate on the same scale.

Other potential funding sources being considered depended on partnerships, relationships with employers, other funding sources used within the lead organisation, the availability of regional funding. Other options for funding included monies through Section 106 commitments, council funding, or funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget. It was common for several of these sources to be considered, with a potential pooling of resources being explored. Aside from funding, future success of the hubs was predicated on them having strong relationships with employers and partners, as well as them being attached to on-going long-term construction projects. Many hubs felt that they would be able to improve efficiency going forward because they were more established and had built their reputation in the local area during CSF. This meant there would be fewer marketing and engagement costs, as referrals routes were established.

### **Lessons learned**

The hubs filled a gap in publicly funded training and they presented stakeholders with new approaches to training and recruitment of entrants into the construction industry. In the

context of changes to the labour supply resulting from the UK leaving the European Union, and the labour market restructuring resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the CSF model will continue to be useful for the construction sector, and other industries. Supporting retraining and reskilling is even more important now than when the CSF model was launched. Where delivered well, and with the right conditions, the CSF model is an effective means to support retraining and entry level recruitment into the construction sector.

Several aspects of the programme design supported its success at retraining participants and giving them skills employers required. What made this programme successful was primarily that it: involved employers, was responsive to their requirements, and was delivered onsite. The programme's broad eligibility criteria enabled the hubs to tailor training to the needs of local employers. The programme length (one to two weeks on average) was attractive to both participants and employers because it enabled successful participants to start work relatively quickly.

The time required to establish a new hub was variable and it depended on the strength and scale of existing resources and partnerships, as well as issues pertaining to the site. Several of the hubs less successful at meeting targets under-estimated the length of time required to establish their infrastructure prior to implementation and this shortened their delivery period; in some cases, the set-up period had taken six to nine months. The extra time needed to establish themselves effectively shortened their delivery period. Understanding these risks around establishing infrastructure and identifying contingencies is important to manage a timely set-up process in future programmes.

There is a balance in programme design between quantity of participants and quality of participant support and outcomes. In some instances, the quantity of participants that hubs needed to engage, to meet their agreed employment and site ready targets, affected the personalisation of the training and support participants received. Hub staff did not always have the time to get to know participants, their circumstances and the issues that prevented their entry into employment. If the programme's target for employment and site ready participants had been lower overall, arguably this would have left more staff time to develop and maintain employer relationships and support participants individually.

Hubs in urban areas, with many (large-scale and long-term) construction projects nearby, found it easier to flourish and meet targets. This is because these hubs had a pool of closely located potential employers and participants, supported by large scale construction activity. Hubs covering more rural areas, or smaller dispersed construction sites, were more likely to have had to work across several sites with lower volumes of recruitment.

The hubs have created new pathways into employment in the construction sector, and indicate several aspects that they need in-place to work effectively:

- Good working relationships with a broad range of partner organisations who understand the programme and refer a diverse range of suitable participants.
- Effective and robust screening to ensure the potential job-readiness of participants with one to two weeks training and motivation to work in construction.

- A flexible training programme tailored to meet the needs of participants and to the recruitment needs of the employer.

Hubs also need to do several things to work effectively. They need to:

- provide information, advice, and guidance to participants;
- engage with recruiting employers in the programme design and delivery;
- provide mentoring and advice beyond the completion of the programme to support job search and ensure sustainment or to facilitate changes to other job roles; and
- seek to secure quality employment for their clients.

The occupations where many participants found work, are those where the sector has identified skills shortages, such as general labourers and plant and machine operatives.<sup>10</sup> The CSF model is therefore an effective way for industry to meet these recruitment demands. Additionally, the hubs have engaged a high proportion of younger participants, thereby ensuring a skills supply and recruiting new talent into the industry, which is positive in the context of challenges posed by an ageing workforce.

CITB and the construction industry have a focus on attracting people from diverse backgrounds to the construction industry. While the programme had some success with diverse engagement, there were differential outcomes for sustained employment. Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were 10 percentage points less likely than those with a white background to obtain sustained employment, holding all other factors constant. It is worth considering whether the recruitment mechanisms used by hubs are open to bias. While there may be several explanations for the differing job outcomes rates, a clear message to recruiting employers about diverse recruitment would have helped to align the programme's vision with delivery in practice. Job outcome targets could have also been set by participant type to ensure outcomes were delivered equitably for all groups.

The hubs offer many salient learning points about the time taken to build capacity, the pathway to employment, and the risks involved in working with the uncertainty faced by businesses. The model has worked best where it is employer-led and is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing requirements and participant needs. Both the initial screening; the information, advice and guidance; and the support following the training itself are critical in the achievement of a job outcome.

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<sup>10</sup> CIOB (2019), *Shortage Occupations in Construction: A cross-industry research report*, Chartered Institute of Building

# 1 Introduction

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This chapter provides a summary of the Construction Skills Fund (CSF), its aims and performance indicators, and sets out the evaluation objectives and methodology.

## 1.1 The Construction Skills Fund

The CSF was provided by the Department for Education (DfE) and administered and implemented by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). The fund was part of the National Retraining Scheme (NRS) in England which is a government programme to prepare adults for future changes to the economy, including automation, to help them retrain. The CSF supported the development of construction onsite training hubs. Collectively the hubs planned to support a minimum of 13,000 people who were either unemployed or looking to make a career change, to become construction site-ready. The hubs aimed to create entry level pathways into the construction sector. These pathways included: the delivery of information, advice and guidance; training and testing for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card; training in commonly demanded entry level construction skills; job brokerage; and in-work support. By offering trainees the opportunity to learn and apply their knowledge in a real-world industry-led environment, the training hubs intended to bridge the gap between training and working in the construction industry.

Over 60 projects applied, and funding of more than £18 million was awarded to 24 projects, with a further two hubs funded by CITB. During delivery one hub left the programme, and its delivery targets were reallocated to other hubs. The CSF was delivered over 18 months between October 2018 and March 2020, with hubs required to monitor participants' progress and outcomes until September 2020. The key performance indicators included:

- Creating capacity: The CSF aimed to support 20 hubs to establish themselves.
- Engagement: Each hub initially had a minimum engagement target of 200 participants, with an average of 650. Of these participants:
  - 45 per cent should be from non-traditional entry routes (someone who has not had previous training or work in construction) and from under-represented groups (defined as women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and individuals with a disability or learning difficulty); and
  - 15 per cent should be changing careers from employment in other industries, particularly those at risk of automation in future.<sup>11</sup> Eligible participants in this group

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<sup>11</sup> There is not an agreed definition of the types of job roles and/or occupations most at risk of automation.

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could either be employed or unemployed individuals with experience in other industries.

■ Outcomes:

- The number of individuals considered employment and site ready by construction employers (a minimum of 13,000 by March 2020); and
- 30 per cent of employment and site ready participants obtaining a job offer with sustained employment or engagement as a contractor (of a minimum three months in duration).

The CSF was delivered in a specific political, economic, and social context. It is important to understand this context when assessing the CSF's effectiveness, challenges and enablers to its successful delivery and the transferability of learning from this evaluation to other sectors of the economy and contexts.

Nationally there was a shortage of (affordable) housing, and increasing housebuilding was a national priority. At a local level, government had been responding to this priority by identifying and bringing forward development sites, creating demand for construction skills. Combined with the relatively buoyant national economic context during much of the CSF delivery period, and investor confidence in recent years, this context created several (significant) construction sites and skills shortages.

There were other contextual factors during the delivery period. These factors included changes resulting from the UK leaving the European Union and the wider labour market context. During most of the delivery period, the national unemployment rate was at its lowest since the 1970s. This low unemployment rate created a tight labour market, with skilled individuals in relatively short supply. During the final month of delivery, March 2020, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic affected the programme, both in how it could deliver face-to-face interaction, and the employment opportunities that participants could expect. The nationwide lockdown came into force from 23<sup>rd</sup> March and affected the face-to-face delivery of the programme.

The hubs each operated in specific local labour markets and specific geographic contexts. There were examples of hubs in urban metropolitan areas which benefitted from a density of construction activity, a large pool of employers to work with, and populated areas from which to recruit participants. Hubs in urban metropolitan areas also benefitted from good transport networks which enabled participants to travel to several development sites for work, thereby supporting their ability to achieve job outcomes in the sector. By contrast, some of the hubs working in rural locations faced more widely spread construction activity and populations, including construction opportunities dispersed over a wide geographic area.

## 1.2 Evaluation aims and objectives

The hubs had different starting points and different planned ways of working. The evaluation aimed to explore whether and how the hubs were effective across different contexts, and what worked when delivering onsite training and engaging employers. The



evaluation explored: partnership working, governance, delivery, including recruitment, the training and wider support, participants' experience, employer experiences, the pathways to employment, and sustainability. More specifically the evaluation aimed to:

- understand the success of onsite training hubs from the perspective of people in the construction sector;
- evaluate the pathways to employment developed by the hubs and the impact of each hub in enabling employment;
- evaluate the similarities and differences between the hubs;
- analyse aggregate management information to inform future needs and strategies;
- evaluate the extent to which CITB has helped the NRS achieve its objectives;
- provide examples of the contribution the hubs made to government policy; and
- make recommendations about how the evaluation findings can contribute to policy development for both the DfE and CITB.

The [evaluation framework](#) containing the evaluation questions in more detail is in the technical appendix. The evaluation was not designed to explore value for money.

### 1.3 Overview of evaluation method

The evaluation of the CSF used a theory of change (ToC). ToC is an approach used to map and describe the connections between activities and outcomes within an intervention, to generate hypotheses about how the intervention will achieve the desired change. The advantages of a ToC based evaluation approach include that it makes explicit the underlying assumptions about how interventions are expected to work and that it enables a more systematic focus on explaining *how* and *why* an intervention works (or does not work). Initial interviews with hub leads, and a review of programme documentation, were used to develop a ToC for the CSF (see the Technical Appendix).

The evaluation used longitudinal hub case-studies to regularly document progress. Interviews were undertaken at three time points: during the set-up phase (January-February 2019), part-way through implementation (May-June 2019), and in the final months of operation (January-March 2020). Case-studies were conducted to varying depth depending on the pace at which hubs delivered, alongside ensuring detailed coverage of a range of ways of working and geographical locations. Light-touch case-studies involved interviews with 2-3 hub staff and partners. In-depth case-studies involved interviews with 2-3 hub staff and partners in addition to interviews with 2-3 participants and 2 employers. A small number of additional participant interviews (c.8) were undertaken in Spring 2020 to gather more detail about participant experience and progression up to eight months after enrolment. In total, there were 255 interviews with hub staff and partners, employers, and participants.

The report presents analysis of audited management information submitted by the hubs covering the period from October 2018 to September 2020. The management information covered the demographic characteristics of participants, prior education attainment, details of the intervention, and outcomes data. The outcomes data included outcomes

such as whether the participant was employment and site ready following the training, and whether they had achieved a job outcome during that period.

The report presents responses to two online surveys of participants: an experiences survey completed between two and five months after participants had registered with a hub, and an outcomes survey administered five to eight months after registration. The surveys were undertaken quarterly throughout the evaluation. The samples were drawn from management information. Each survey was sent to the participants that had both registered in the relevant period and had agreed to be contacted via email for the evaluation.

- The experience survey included participants enrolling between January 2019 and March 2020. In total there were 1,023 valid responses to the survey, a response rate of 17 per cent. The survey data are unweighted due to a large proportion of missing data in both the survey responses and within the management information which provides the sample frame. Differences reported in text are significant at the five per cent level.<sup>12</sup>
- The outcomes survey administered to participants enrolling between October 2018 and March 2020, five to eight months after they enrolled. In total there were 701 valid responses to the survey, a response rate of 11 per cent. The survey data are unweighted due to a large percentage of missing data in both the survey responses and within the management information which provides the sample frame. Differences reported in text are significant at the five per cent level.

Full methodological details are contained in the technical appendix.

### 1.3.1 Implications of the method

The qualitative case study research is designed to draw out deep insights from a range of individuals, including: hub staff, partners, participants, and employers. However, because a limited number of individuals were included within each case study, responses are not representative of all interviewee types. This limitation also means that it is not possible to provide a quantification of the number of case study interviewees that hold a particular view or have particular experiences. However, where necessary for understanding, some indication of scale is provided, using statements such as 'some', 'many' and 'most'. Generally, though, in reporting the qualitative evaluation data, the aim is to present the range of views and experiences and explore the factors that drive these perspectives.

The management information analysed for this report covers the period October 2018 to September 2020. Some data fields are more complete than others, but a large amount of the data on prior education level, and whether a participant comes from another occupation was missing. Missing data can be due to data not being collected for certain

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<sup>12</sup> Significance testing was used to explore differences in responses between various groups, using a chi squared test. The 'Don't know/Not applicable' response category was excluded for the purpose of this analysis. Where chi-square analysis was not possible according to the assumption that only 20% of expected counts should be less than 5, one-way ANOVA was used to compare average responses.



participants and therefore caution should be used when interpreting the findings. All tables that display the management information detail the number of missing values.

There are some key differences between the characteristics of the population supported by the hubs, and the respondents to the two online participant surveys. The achieved samples for both the experience and outcomes survey are skewed slightly towards females; with slightly more than one in ten survey respondents being female compared to slightly less than one in ten in the participant population. Those with higher levels of qualifications (NVQ 3 and above) were also slightly more likely to be represented in the survey. These differences should be considered when interpreting the findings, and they should be treated with caution.

## 2 Performance against targets

This chapter draws on audited management information covering the period October 2018 to September 2020 to present the programme outputs.

### Key findings

- The programme exceeded its targets for number of hubs established, participants from groups traditionally under-represented in the construction industry and career changers and the number of participants becoming employment and site ready (ESR).
- However, it did not meet its target for the proportion of ESR participants finding sustained employment of at least three months (23% compared to target of 30%)<sup>13</sup>.
- Of those participants that sustained job outcomes, the average (mean) number of days between their ESR date and employment start date was 43 days. The median number of days was much lower however, at 17 days. Almost four in ten participants (37%) who achieved a sustained employment outcome did so within a week, with a further 11 per cent within two week and 15 per cent within four weeks. Combined, 62 per cent of all sustained job outcomes started within a month of the ESR date.
- Male participants, those from white backgrounds, people without a health condition or disability, 16-25 year olds, those with a previous level one or two qualification, those attending an existing hub and those with a background in construction were significantly more likely than their counterparts to achieve a sustained job outcome.
- After controlling for all other factors: participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were 10 percentage points less likely to find sustained work than those from a white background. Further, participants from ethnic minority groups were less likely to have a sustained job outcome than those with identical qualifications that were from white ethnic backgrounds. This was the case across all qualification levels except for participants with no or Entry level qualifications.
- On average, newly established hubs had a lower conversion from ESR to sustained employment than previously existing hubs. This is likely to reflect the time it takes to build strong partnerships with employers to ensure effective job brokerage.
- A lower proportion of participants enrolling in the later stages of the programme achieved a sustained job outcome. This may be explained by several factors including: the economic impacts of Covid-19, more new hubs operating later on, and high volumes of participants enrolling in later phases making it difficult for hubs to keep in touch evidence job outcomes.
- Employer involvement in the design and delivery of training, and active participation in recruitment and selection of participants meant the employer was more committed to the hub and therefore more likely that it delivered job outcomes.

<sup>13</sup> The programme finished delivery at the end of March 2020 and the sustained job outcomes achieved were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Around three-quarters of survey respondents in or about to start work reported that the hub contributed to helping them to get their job.
- Seventy-eight per cent of participants did not find work. Of these, almost two-thirds stated that they wanted to work in construction. When asked what might help them to find work, respondents not in work most commonly reported that more training, work experience or a higher-level qualification would help them.

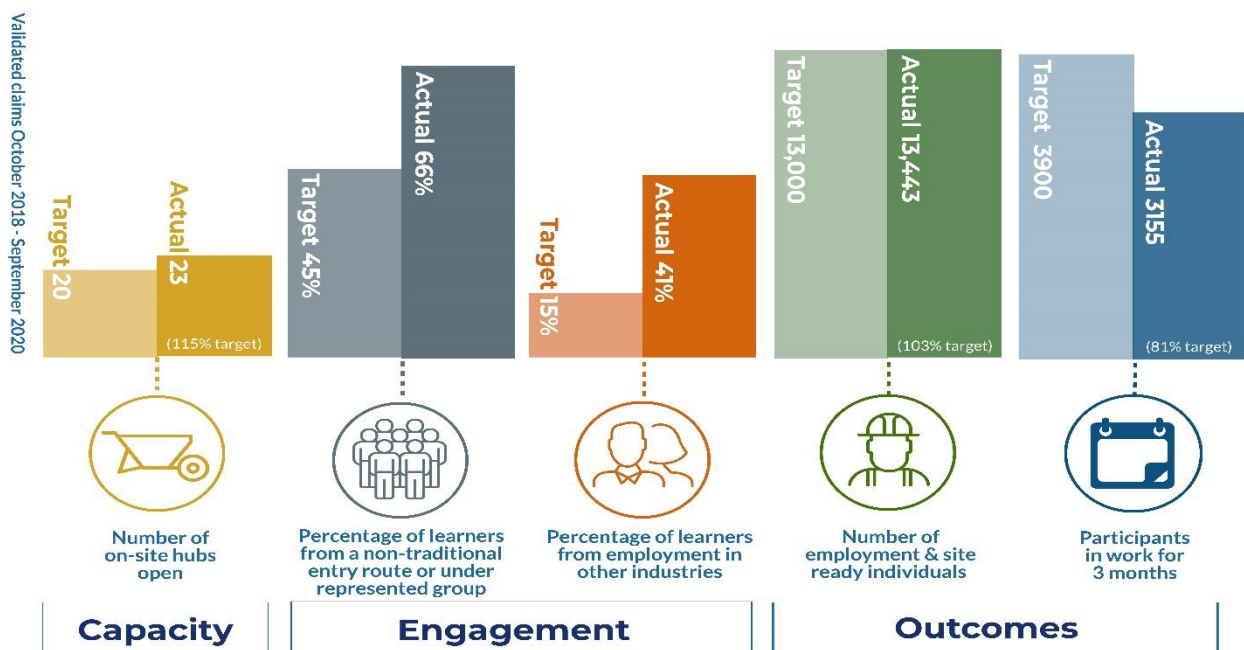
## 2.1 Capacity building and engagement

The programme had targets for:

- Building capacity, with 20 onsite hubs operating.
- Diverse engagement, with an aim for 45 per cent of participants to be from demographic groups traditionally under-represented in the construction workforce, and 15 per cent to be career changers.

Both the capacity-building and engagement targets were met. Twenty-three hubs were opened. Figure 2.1 shows that 66 per cent of participants were from demographic groups traditionally under-represented in the construction workforce; and 41 per cent last worked in sectors other than construction (career changers).

**Figure 2.1 Performance against programme targets**



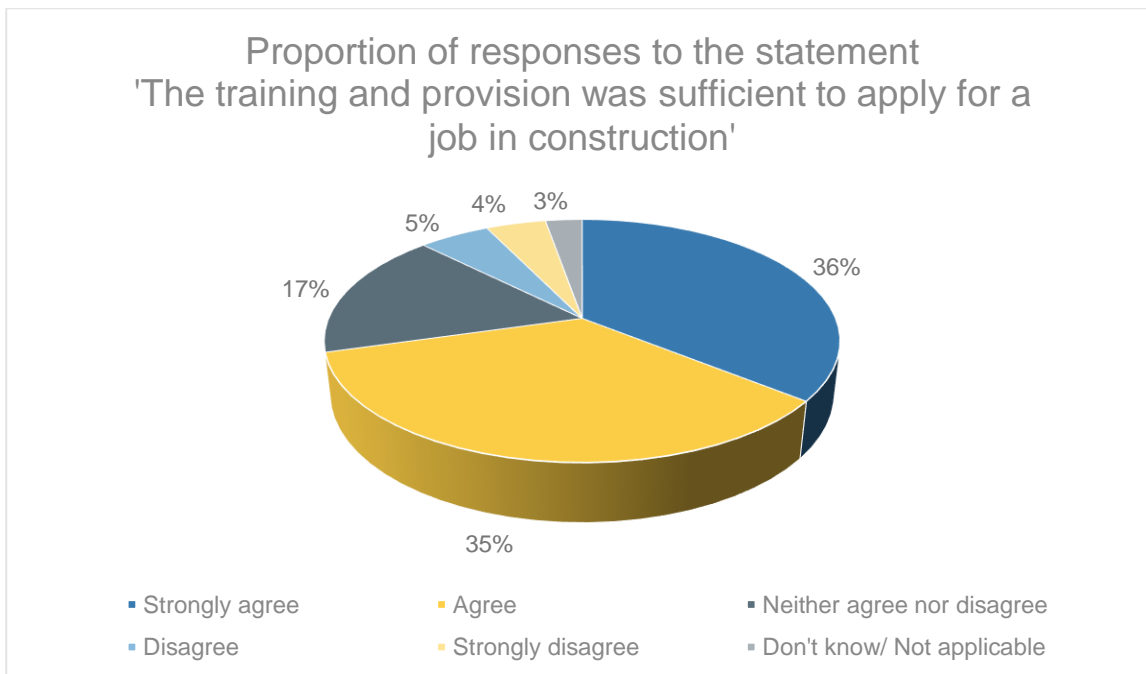
## 2.2 Number of site-ready individuals

The CSF aimed to support a minimum of 13,000 individuals to become construction site-ready. There were 14,456 individuals registering with the hubs, of which 13,443 were deemed after the intervention to be employment and site ready (93%).<sup>14</sup>

The hubs that met their targets for employment and site ready participants explained the importance of good relationships with referral partners to ensure sufficient volume and quality of potential participants. These hubs also provided information, advice and guidance alongside screening to ensure that participants were interested in working in the construction sector and relatively job-ready.

Respondents to the participant survey were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the training and provision from the hub was sufficient to enable them to apply for a job in construction. Figure 2.2 shows that the majority strongly agreed or agreed (71%) with this statement, with just 10 per cent strongly disagreeing or disagreeing.

**Figure 2.2 The training and provision was sufficient to apply for a job in construction**



N = 982.

Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data

<sup>14</sup> The hubs had varied approaches to managing data collection from participants upon registration, with some collecting and submitting data and others not. Therefore, as these data are not complete or comparable it is not meaningful to undertake analysis of differences between the characteristics of participants registering with the hubs, and the characteristics of participants becoming employment and site ready.

There were several significant differences in the extent to which different participant groups considered that the hubs had sufficiently prepared them to apply for a job in construction.

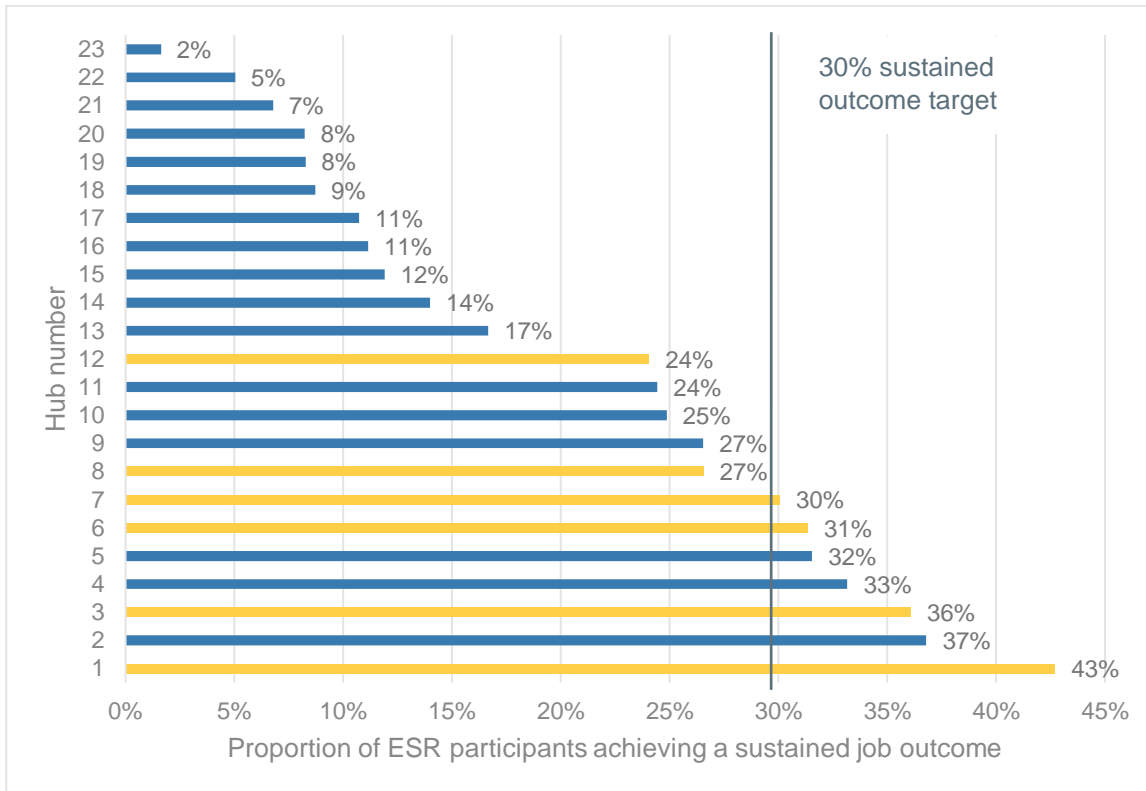
- Women (56%) were less likely to feel that the training and provision was sufficient for them to apply for a job in construction, compared to men (75%).
- Participants who were new to construction (63%), were less likely to feel that the training and provision was sufficient for them to apply for a job in construction, than those who had prior construction experience (77%).
- Young participants were more likely to agree that the training and provision was sufficient for them to apply for a job in construction: participants aged 16-20 (78%), and aged 21-30 (77%), compared to those aged 31-40 (68%); those aged 41-50 (66 per cent; and aged over 50 (68%).
- Participants that were qualified at level three or higher (66%) were less likely to agree that the training and support was sufficient for them to apply for a job in construction than participants with level 1-2 qualifications (76%) and those with no or entry qualifications only (84%).

## 2.3 Sustained job outcomes

The programme had a target of 30 per cent of employment and site ready (ESR) individuals achieving job outcomes (sustained at three months). The Management information (MI) shows that 3,925 participants started work (29 per cent of ESR participants). The analysis of MI shows that 2,884 participants (23 per cent of ESR participants) were recorded as finding and sustaining work for at least three months. Given the difficulties several hub staff expressed in keeping in touch with participants, this is likely to be a lower estimate of the job outcomes achieved by the programme. The job entry figures towards the end of programme are likely to be affected by changes to labour demand resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Sustained job outcome figures for the later part of the programme are likely to be affected by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. Under the CJRS employers could claim 80 per cent of the salary of furloughed employees in post prior to 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020. Whilst it is not clear the extent to which hub employers have made use of the CJRS, it is likely to have influenced the programme's job sustainment figures for participants finding work in the final quarter of programme delivery.

There was considerable variation between hubs. Figure 2.3 shows the proportion of ESR individuals achieving a job outcome by hub, with existing hubs shown in gold and new hubs shown in blue.

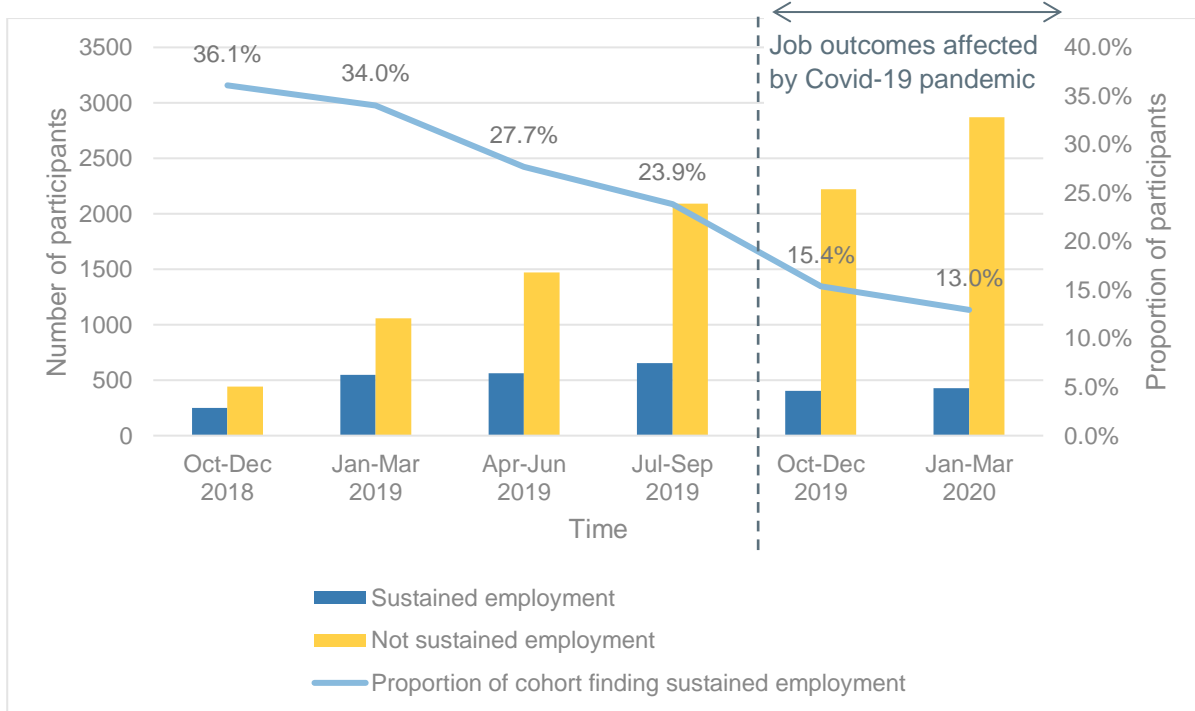
**Figure 2.3 Percentage of ESR participants achieving a sustained job outcome, by hub**



Source: IES analysis of CSF management information, October 2018-September 2020

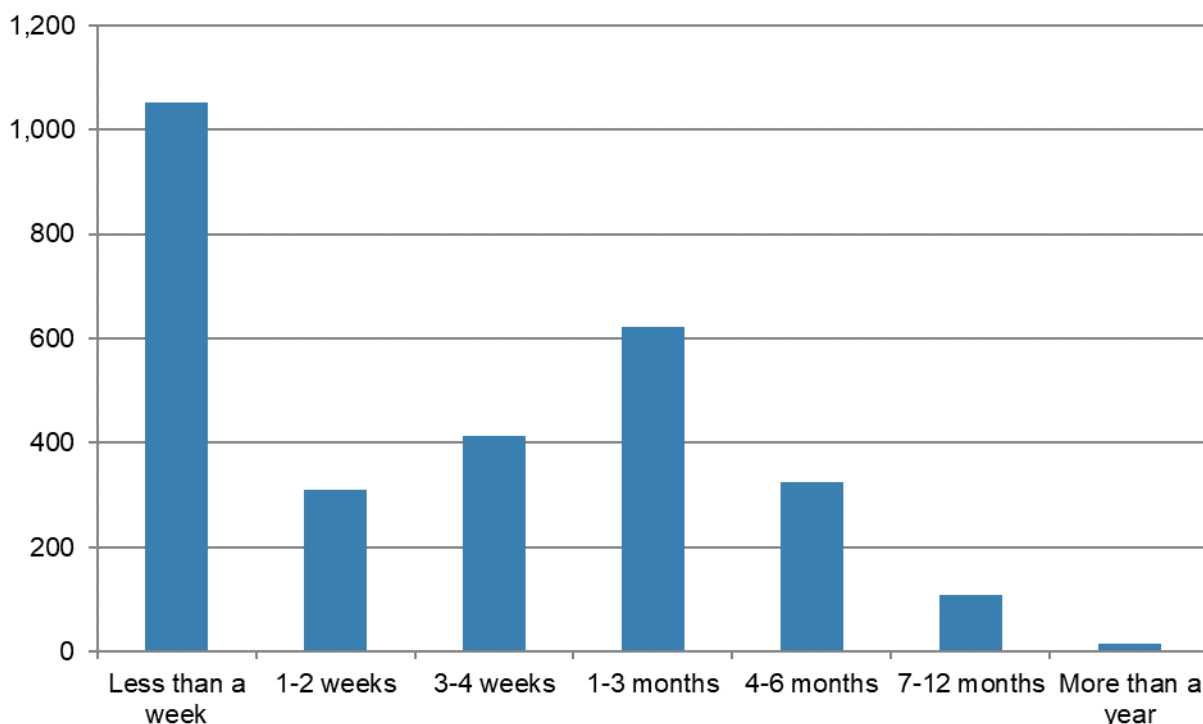
Looking at the data on a quarterly basis, Figure 2.4 illustrates the declining proportion of participants registering in each quarter that were recorded as achieving a sustained employment outcome over time. Whilst the pandemic will undoubtedly have influenced the ability of participants registering after October 2019 to secure employment, the changes could also be explained by newer hubs establishing from January 2019 onwards (on average the job outcomes conversion of new hubs was lower than that of previously established hubs). It is also worth considering the capacity of hub teams to support individual participants. As a large proportion of enrolment happened in the latter stages of the programme, staff may not have been able to keep in touch sufficiently well and evidence job outcomes from such a high number of participants.

**Figure 2.4 Percentage of participants finding sustained employment, by time**



Source: CSF management information, October 2018-September 2020

Of those participants that sustained job outcomes the average (mean) number of days between their ESR date and employment start date was 43 days. The median number of days was much lower however, at 17 days. Almost four in ten participants (37%) who achieved a sustained employment outcome did so within a week, with a further 11 per cent within two week and 15 per cent within four weeks. Combined, 62 per cent of all sustained job outcomes started within a month of the ESR date. These results are all shown in Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5 Days until employment start after employment and site ready date**

Source: IES analysis of CSF management information, October 2018 – September 2020

Hubs secured participant job outcomes via two main sources: either directly with employers (through section 106 commitments<sup>15</sup>), or via recruitment agencies. Where hubs were reliant on agencies as their main source of vacancies, several commented that these were often for short-term positions. A few providers highlighted how the short duration of some of these roles meant that they did not count as a sustained job outcome unless they could then find additional roles, and provide supporting evidence, to make a claim. Even where the duration of these posts surpassed 12 weeks, several hubs encountered difficulties in obtaining evidence of sustainment.

There were several approaches felt to be effective at securing job outcomes. These included ensuring employers committed vacancies for hub participants. Where hubs secured employer participation in the hub programme, they reported a greater likelihood of job outcomes. Employer involvement in the design and implementation of the programme, for example by attending and running sessions, and undertaking recruitment and selection during the programme, were also effective ways to ensure job brokerage. Where participants competed in an open market for vacancies, perhaps applying for vacancies online, this was a less effective way to gain job outcomes.

<sup>15</sup> Section 106 agreements are private agreements made between local authorities and developers that are attached to a planning permission to make acceptable a development which would otherwise be unacceptable.



While a few hubs reported that it was challenging to maintain contact with participants after they left the programme, to document their job outcomes, there were contrasting views on this. Staff at other hubs reported that they maintained contact with participants through post-programme touch points. These touch points included, for example, participants coming in to collect their CSCS cards. Staff discussed post-programme support during the training and promoted it to participants as part of the aftercare. Discussions included, for example, checking if participants who found work were happy in their new role, and for those who had not found work, re-engaging them with additional job brokerage support.

### 2.3.1 Who found work?

More than a fifth of participants who were employment and site ready reported a sustained (12 week) employment outcome (23% compared to a target of 30%). There were several significant differences between the demographic characteristics of participants securing sustained work:

- Male participants were more likely to report a sustained job outcome (22%) than female participants (18%) This shown in Table 9.7.
- Participants from a white background (26%) were more likely to have sustained employment compared to participants from a minority ethnic group (15%) This shown in Table 9.8.
- Participants without a health condition or disability (23%) were more likely to have a sustained employment outcome than participants with a health condition or disability versus (19%) This shown in Table 9.9.
- Sustained job outcomes were more common amongst younger participants: 25 per cent of participants aged 16-20 years had a sustained job outcome, compared to 18 per cent of participants aged 50 or over This shown in Table 9.10.
- Job outcomes varied by level of educational attainment. Individuals with a previous level one or two qualification were more likely to have a sustained job outcome (26%) compared to participants with a level three or 4 qualification (20%), or those with no or entry Level qualifications (19%). This shown in Table 9.11.
- Sustained job outcomes were more likely for those who attended an existing hub (31%) compared to a hub set-up under CSF (18%). The case-studies found that existing hubs tended to have extensive and well-developed employer involvement, and strong employer networks This shown in Table 9.12.
- Participants with a construction background (27%) were more likely to secure a sustained job outcome than participants new to construction (19%). This shown in Table 9.13.

Table 8.5 shows a logistic regression that was conducted on the MI. This regression explored what factors were associated with increased or decreased likelihood of having a sustained job outcome (employment lasting 12 weeks or longer starting post intervention). Results are presented using marginal effects. After controlling for factors at baseline, there is no significant difference between men and women on likelihood of employment at

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12 weeks. Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were 10 percentage points less likely than those with white backgrounds to obtain sustained employment, holding all other factors constant.

- Those without a disability were five percentage points more likely to obtain employment for 12 weeks than those with disability or long-term health condition, holding all else constant.
- Those aged 45-49 and those aged 50 or over were six and seven percentage points less likely respectively, to have a sustained job outcome than the reference category (those aged 16-17). These two age bands had the lowest levels of sustained job outcomes across all age groups.
- Compared to those who were in employment at enrolment those who were unemployed were no less likely to be employed at 12 weeks. Those who were in education and training at enrolment were 18 percentage points less likely enter sustained employment than those who were employed at enrolment, holding all other characteristics constant
- Those with level one qualifications at enrolment were five percentage points more likely, and those with full level two and full level three qualifications at enrolment were both seven percentage points more likely respectively to find sustained employment than those with none or entry level qualifications below level one (the reference category). There was no difference in likelihood of sustained employment between those with low qualifications and those with higher level qualifications (level four or above). This indicates the intervention was most supportive to those with level one to three qualifications prior to participating in the hubs.
- As expected, those with a construction background were more likely to find employment than those without (by seven percentage points), holding all else constant.
- Those who undertook the intervention with a hub that existed prior to CSF were nine percentage points more likely to find sustained employment than those who were from a newly started hub.
- The Covid-19 pandemic and the rising numbers of CSF participants over time affected sustained job outcomes. Those enrolling between July to September 2019 were 11 percentage points less likely to find sustained employment than those enrolled between October 2018 and December 2018. Participants that enrolled between October and December 2019, and between January and March 2020 were 20 and 21 percentage points less likely, respectively, to find sustained employment than those that enrolled in the first three months of the programme. The cause of this difference in sustained job outcomes is hard to disentangle. Many factors are at play including: the scaling up of the programme, the impact of this scaling up on support that the hubs gave to the participants to find employment, the deep economic shock caused by Covid-19, and the poor labour market conditions that also resulted from the pandemic.

These results led to investigation of the interactions between education and ethnicity. This showed that across all qualification levels except no/entry level qualifications, participants

from ethnic minority groups were less likely to have a sustained job outcome than those with identical qualifications that were from white ethnic backgrounds.

- Out of those in the lowest education group (no/entry level qualifications) seven in ten were white. Here, however, there were no differences in outcomes between those from white backgrounds and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Out of all the participants with level one and level two as their highest levels of qualification, one-third came from ethnic minority backgrounds. Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were 14 and 10 percentage points less likely than those with white backgrounds (and those with the same level of qualifications) to have obtained sustained employment.
- Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds and qualified at level three were 11 percentage points less likely to obtain sustained employment than those with white backgrounds with this level of qualification, holding all else constant.
- Even amongst those with the highest level of qualifications, where ethnic minority participants comprise 57 per cent of the sample, participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were seven percentage points less likely to find sustained employment than those with white backgrounds and this level of qualification.

### 2.3.2 The quality of job outcomes

#### Employment status

Table 2.1 shows that most of the participants that secured work were in full time employment, working 35 hours a week or more (86%), with two per cent employed on a part-time basis, nine per cent undertaking casual work, and three per cent becoming self-employed

**Table 2.1 Employment status of participants securing work**

Employment status	N	%
Employed - full time	2,279	86
Employed - part time	54	2
Casual work (eg zero hours, freelance)	233	9
Self-employed	71	3
Total	2,637	100

*NB Data for 247 participants (9%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018-September 2020*

The outcomes survey captures data beyond the three-month job outcomes required by the programme to explore the longer sustainment of work. Among respondents who were working or were about to start work at the time of the survey, the majority were in permanent work: one-half were in full time permanent work (53%); and six per cent were in permanent part time work. Reflecting wide-spread self-employment in the sector, Table

2.2 shows that one in five were self-employed (18%). There were also participants undertaking less stable forms of work, such as casual work (including agency work). Respondents from white ethnic backgrounds (57%) were significantly more likely than those from minority ethnic background (44%) to have full-time permanent work.

**Table 2.2 Employment type of participants securing work (5-8 months after participating in the hub)**

Employment type	N	%
Permanent work (Full time)	190	53
Self employed	64	18
Casual work (Including agency work)	41	11
Permanent work (Part time)	22	6
Fixed term contract (Longer than 6 months)	16	5
Zero hours contract	12	3
Fixed term contract (Less than 6 months)	6	2
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	8	2
Total	359	100

*Unweighted data NB: Data for two participants (<1%%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF progression and outcomes survey*

## Working hours

Table 2.3 shows that most participants who found sustained employment were working full-time (35 hours a week or more). Male participants were significantly more likely to work 35 hours or more per week (96%) compared to female participants (85%).

**Table 2.3 Working hours per week of participants securing work (5-8 months after participating in the hub)**

Working hours	N	%
Less than 16	15	1
16-25	33	1
25-35	71	3
35 or above	2,208	95
Total	2,327	100

*Data for 897 participants (31%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF management information, October 2018-September 2020*

## Salary

Table 2.4 shows that 43 per cent of participants that started work were earning between £300 and £399 per week, with one-quarter earning less than £299 per week, and another 23 per cent earning between £400 and £499 per week.

**Table 2.4 Gross weekly salary of participants securing work**

Gross weekly salary	N	%
Less than £299	613	25
£300-399	1,079	43
£400-499	576	23
500-599	156	6
600-699	34	1
£700 or more	41	2
Total	2,499	100

*NB Data for 385 participants (13%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.  
Source: CSF management information, October 2018-September 2020*

Existing hubs were more likely to support participants into more highly paid work than new hubs:

- Individuals who attended a new hub were more likely to earn less than £299 (32%) or £300-399 (40%) than those who attended an existing hub (20% and 47% respectively)
- Existing hub participants were more likely to earn £400-499 per week (27% compared to 17%), as shown in Table 2.5.

Several existing hubs emphasised the importance they placed on recruiting to roles that paid a minimum of the (London) Living Wage. Interviews with new hubs suggested some were reliant on agency work, and that they did not emphasise pay as strongly as existing hubs.

**Table 2.5 Gross weekly salary of participants securing work, by new and existing hubs**

Gross weekly salary	New hubs		Existing hubs	
	N	%	N	%
Less than £299	328	32	195	20
£300-399	412	40	452	47
£400-499	178	17	254	27
500-599	69	7	44	5
600-699	22	2	1	0
£700 or more	20	2	12	1
Total	1029	100	958	100

*NB Data for 897 participants (31%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF management information, October 2018-September 2020*

Table 2.6 shows the occupations in which most participants found work. This data was recorded for 2,816 participants with sustained employment outcomes. The vast majority (89%) found work in a construction occupation; with just 11 per cent of employment outcomes in occupations in other sectors, including warehousing and manufacturing roles. Of the job roles, just over one in three were labouring positions (36%), and just under one in four (23%) were for a role as an operative in construction (eg scaffolder, ground worker, bricklayer, painter and decorator), with a further six per cent finding an operative role not in construction (eg warehousing). One-quarter of participants (25%) who found sustained work started an apprenticeship. Of these apprenticeships, 75 per cent were in construction, 24 per cent were outside construction, and one per cent were at a technical level in construction.

**Table 2.6 Occupations where participants secured work**

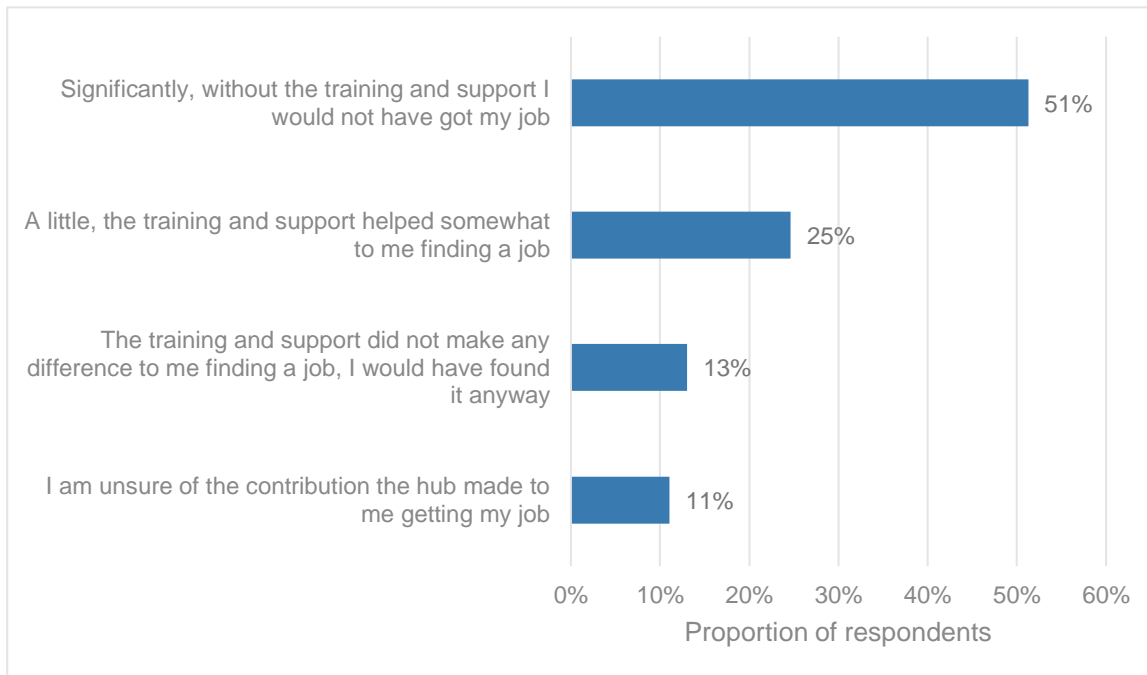
Occupations	N	%
Labouring	1,006	36
Operative - in construction	641	23
Apprentice - in construction	528	19
Operative – not in construction	156	6
Apprentice - not in construction	145	5
Management and supervisory	71	3
Technical	74	3
Plant Operator	56	2
Support Services	67	2
Administrative	41	1
Apprentice – technical	31	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,816</b>	<b>100</b>

*NB: Data are not shown for 98 participants that had found work (2%) as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid. Data were assigned to these occupation codes by CITB as part of auditing*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

### 2.3.3 Perceived contribution of the hub

In the outcomes survey, one-half of respondents (51%) who were in or were about to start paid work said the hub contributed significantly to helping them getting their job, and that without the training and support, they would not have got their job. Figure 2.6 shows that one-quarter (25%) answered 'the hub contributed a little – the training and support helped somewhat' to them finding a job. Respondents with no or low-level qualifications were most likely to report that the hub helped them significantly (66%), compared to those with level three qualifications or above (41%).

**Figure 2.6 How much would you say that the hub contributed to you finding employment?**

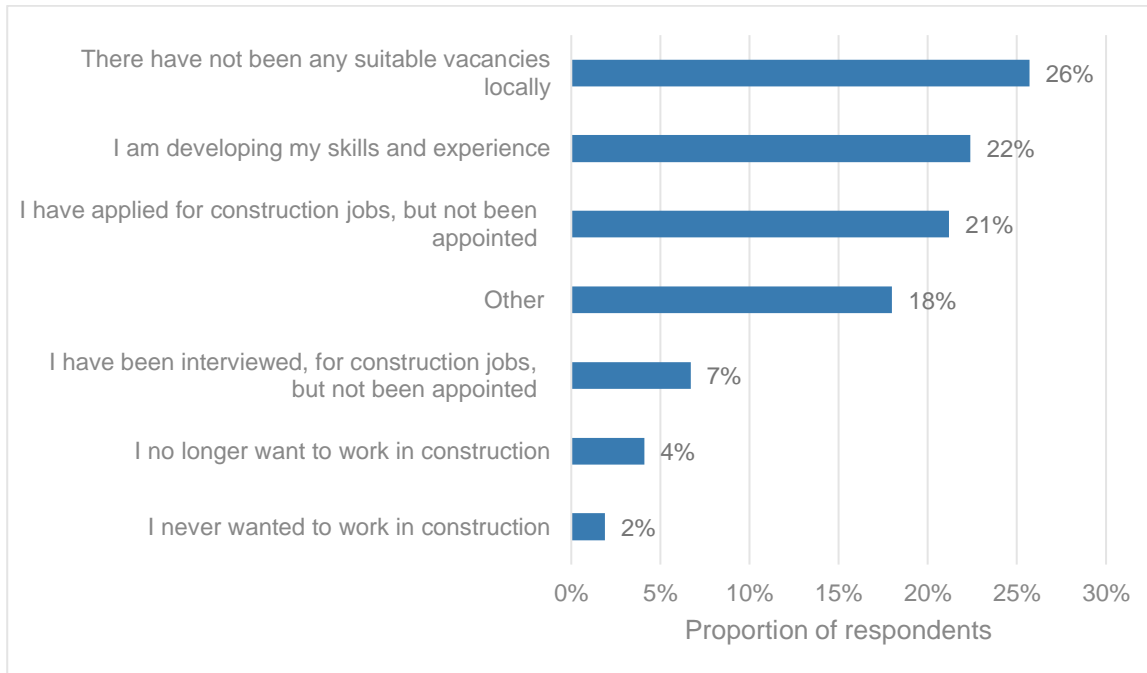
*N = 353, Data for 8 participants (2%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.  
Source: CSF progression and outcomes survey, Unweighted data*

### 2.3.4 Experience of participants not in work

There are also 78 per cent of participants who did not find sustained employment in construction. The outcomes survey asked respondents in this group about their experiences of looking for work and additional support needs. Among respondents to the outcomes survey not working in construction, one-third were unsure whether they wanted to work in construction, and seven per cent said that they did not want to work in construction, but the majority (64%) wanted to work in construction in the future. This indicates a significant group of participants that are motivated to work in the sector, have received hub training, but are not in employment.

When asked for reasons why they felt they had not found work in construction, one in four (26%) said that there had not been any suitable vacancies locally. One in five respondents stated they had applied for construction jobs, but not been appointed (21%). It was also common for those out of work to say that they were continuing to develop their skills and experience so were not looking for work (22%). There were numerous responses to the other category which included several respondents outlining difficulties and delays in obtaining a CSCS card, a change in health, and the effects of the pandemic and associated restrictions.

**Figure 2.7 Which of the following best describes why you are not working in construction?**



*N* = 416

Source: CSF progression and outcomes survey, unweighted data

Just under one-half of respondents stated that more training (49%); work experience in construction (47%) or a higher-level construction qualification (44%) would help them find employment in construction. Figure 2.8 demonstrates that others felt that it would be beneficial to receive support from construction employment specialists (22%) or refreshed contact with the training hub (19%).



**Figure 2.8 What would help you find employment in construction?**

*N = 305; Data for 63 participants (9%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.  
Source: CSF progression and outcomes survey, Unweighted data*

There were some significant differences in the responses to additional support needs by respondent group.

- Respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to say than those from white ethnic backgrounds that:
  - further training would help them to find employment in construction (59% compared to 41%);
  - refreshed contact with the hub would help them to find employment in construction (28% compared to 13%); and that
  - they would benefit from support from construction employment specialists (eg interview skills and writing job applications) (29% compared to 17%).
- Two-thirds of women (65%) believed that work experience in construction would be beneficial in helping them find employment in construction compared to 44 per cent of men.
- Respondents who identified themselves as having a disability or a long-term health condition (23%) were more likely than respondents without a health condition or disability (9%) to believe they would benefit from support from construction employment specialists (eg interview skills and writing job applications).

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## 3 Establishing the onsite hubs

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This chapter sets out the aims and vision for the hubs, before discussing their governance and partnership working. It then the experiences of setting up a new hub, including staffing and infrastructure.

### Key findings

- Hubs worked with a range of partners including: employers, voluntary and community sector referrers, Jobcentre Plus, training providers, colleges, and job matching and brokerage partners. They tended to build on existing partnerships.
- Effective employer engagement activity was characterised by having staff with knowledge of the local construction industry, listening to employers' requirements, working with tier one contractors to access vacancies within the supply chain<sup>16</sup>, demonstrating flexibility, delivering good quality candidates for vacancies, and maintaining on-going communication with employers. Where there was leadership and commitment from local authorities, section 106 employment and skill plans were an effective mechanism for engaging employers.
- Employers contributed to the hubs by hosting the hubs on their sites, committing to providing vacancies, and by presenting to participants about what working in construction entails and available jobs.
- Employer engagement was impeded by delays to construction works, lack of existing relationships between hub organisations and employers, and insufficient staff resources within hub core teams. Several hubs noted that in similar future initiatives they would build in more resources for building and maintaining employer relationships.
- Although there were many positive examples of training provider partners working flexibly to meet employers' changing needs, there were instances where contracting arrangements for training partners did not enable sufficient flexibility.
- Many of the hubs made use of other sources of funding for participants to complement the programme offered by the CSF. These other sources included: the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget, the European Social Fund, the National Careers Service, and in-kind employer contributions.
- The length of time for new hubs to set-up and reach capacity, on average, has been longer than the originally envisaged three-month period. Due to unforeseen delays in recruiting staff, obtaining planning permission and making hubs safe and accessible, several hubs ran six to twelve months behind schedule.

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<sup>16</sup> The primary, or general, contractor works directly with the customer. The primary contractor hires first-tier contractors to perform work on the customer's project. The second-tier contractor is hired by the first-tier contractor to perform specific tasks.

### 3.1 Aims and vision

The hubs aimed to be employer-led. Most worked closely with employers, involved them on their governance boards, and engaged them informally. Hubs engaged employers informally in order to develop good relationships with them and to identify and understand their skills and recruitment needs. Most hubs ensured that employers were involved in designing the training. Employer engagement enabled the hubs to better meet skills gaps.

The hubs also aimed to deliver benefits for local communities and to leave a lasting legacy of increased skills, employment and improved employability. They planned to achieve this aim by enabling construction employers to fill vacancies with local residents therefore reducing their recruitment from out of the area. It was hoped this plan would reduce the perceived disconnect that some hub staff reported can emerge when a construction project does not offer local employment and skills opportunities.

Reflecting the strategic aims of the CSF, all hubs aimed to increase the skills supply. The hubs aimed to meet the (entry level) construction skills need of local construction opportunities, employers, and residents. Some hubs focused on training participants to fill a specific vacancy. Other hubs aimed to equip participants with skills that could be useful for a number of job roles, with the aim of enhancing their flexibility and resilience in the labour market. Hub leads noted a previous gap in publicly funded provision to support short, focussed interventions which built the capability of individuals and enabled them to effectively apply to entry level construction vacancies. The hubs' programme included training and testing for the CSCS card, which was not supported through existing funding streams such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget (AEB), Jobcentre Plus, or European Social Fund (ESF). The hubs did not have many eligibility requirements for participants, in contrast with some mainstream provision where age and previous qualifications restrict training eligibility.

Hubs aimed to provide onsite experience for participants to see and explore construction job roles so they could ascertain whether it was an attractive career option. Lack of onsite experience was identified as a skills gap, particularly among people leaving college-based courses and for individuals that had not worked in construction previously.

Some of the hub leads wanted to change perceptions about the construction industry by working with young people and schools. They wanted to ensure that young people knew about job roles in the industry and the potential for career progression. A few hub leads also planned to provide information to families to help counter negative stereotypes and promote less well-known aspects of construction work such as problem-solving and creativity.

### 3.2 Governance

The hubs tended to build on existing partnership structures to provide governance, with some hubs expanding these networks to meet their vision. This partnership approach enabled the hubs to link into and complement other related programmes. However this also meant that in some cases the hubs' progress was reviewed alongside other similar

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local projects and initiatives. For those boards that were focused solely on the hub, the main aim was to provide a forum to discuss the quality of support and whether provision was meeting employer requirements. Boards reviewed the hubs' progress against targets and managed risks. Most hubs complemented the role of a board with an 'operational' working group which met more frequently.

The make-up of the governance boards varied, but typically included representatives from local authorities, training providers and/or further education colleges, and employers, as well as public sector organisations such as Jobcentre Plus. One hub noted that they ensured representation from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on their working group so that any participants claiming benefits were not mandated to take part or subject to conditionality when being supported by the hub. Other hubs also mentioned the importance of participants attending the hub's activities on a voluntary basis and were working with Jobcentre Plus to ensure this. Generally, interviewees felt that the governance structures worked well and that the right range of organisations were involved.

### 3.3 Partnership working

The hubs built on existing partnerships to implement their vision. Some had very extensive pre-existing partnerships. For example, one hub worked with a stakeholder forum of over one hundred local voluntary and community sector organisations to support referrals. The hubs used partners to support their delivery, from participant referrals, through to training, and job brokerage. The nature of partnerships varied between the hubs, but commonly included construction organisations, the voluntary and community sector, Jobcentre Plus, colleges and training providers. The roles of each of these organisations are discussed in turn below.

#### 3.3.1 Construction organisations

The hubs aimed to be employer-led, and many had good working links with organisations developing the sites that they were based on, as well as more broadly across the construction sector. Creating new employer links and building a positive reputation with construction organisations took time. Some hubs appointed staff that had worked locally in the construction sector to their boards to utilise their networks and existing employer links. Other hubs had strong relationships with construction employers from previous projects.

It was emphasised by several hub staff, that to develop and maintain effective links with construction employers it was important to listen to their requirements, demonstrate flexibility and deliver good quality candidates, as well as ensure on-going communication with them. A few hubs went further and said they discussed the 'quid pro quo' when engaging employers: setting out what the hub could do for them. For example, helping the

employer meet recruitment shortages or Section 106 agreements<sup>17</sup> whilst also discussing the engagement and commitment the hub would like from the employer in return.

Hubs identified Section 106 agreements as a useful mechanism to engage employers and support the recruitment of residents. Conversely, the hubs were identified by some employers as a useful mechanism for helping them to meet their commitments and to reach good quality local candidates.

The hubs reported varied practice in whether Section 106 agreements were written into developer's contracts. Where there were Section 106 agreements, whether local authorities had the resources to enforce the commitments was reported to vary. Where supporting the delivery of Section 106 agreements was a council priority, hubs tended to have good relationships with the relevant council staff that referred employers to the hub. There were several hub leads however, that reported Section 106 agreements were not effective to ensure engagement due to a lack of enforcement. They perceived that some employers were not committed and that they preferred to pay fines associated with non-compliance instead.

More generally, hub leads discussed the spectrum of construction employers and the varied extent to which corporate social responsibility was important in business values. There were examples of corporate social responsibility being embedded, such as in one hub where the lead and employer described the community ethos at the heart of the development site; supporting the hub and recruiting from the local community was part of making that commitment into reality. The employer explained that the development was based on localism, and 'it's a mind-set we expect and encourage' throughout the supply chain. They viewed their Section 106 agreement not as a carrot or stick, but the basis for a collaborative relationship: it's a 'shared vision'.

Examples of employer commitment included contractors offering to host the hub on their site, commitments to provide vacancies, and presenting to programme participants about working in the construction sector, the development site, or the vacancies within their organisation. Hub staff noted that they needed to fulfil promises and deliver good candidates to gain and maintain credibility with employers and secure repeat business.

There were a few hubs which struggled to engage employers. In some cases, this was due to a lack of working relationships, and in others because of changes to building work. For example, one hub planned to operate from a site developed by a public sector organisation, but due to delays to the works the number of planned vacancies did not materialise during the CSF timescales. In other instances, hubs prioritised engaging participants and establishing the training programme before undertaking substantive employer engagement. Several hubs reflected that they did not have sufficient capacity to build new relationships effectively. Working with employers required staff time and resource, and generally hubs felt that they had underestimated this requirement during

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<sup>17</sup> Section 106 agreements are private agreements made between local authorities and developers that are attached to a planning permission to make acceptable a development which would otherwise be unacceptable.

the planning and set-up process. With hindsight several said that they would increase the capacity of their team to build and maintain employer relationships.

A common theme relating to employer engagement, was how best to engage and work with the supply chain, as tier two contractors undertake much of the construction work and therefore recruitment. Several hub staff reported difficulties in developing partnerships with tier two contractors and had explored different ways to try and build these relationships. For example, one hub ran regular breakfast mornings for sub-contractor staff on site, and another hub had a member of staff attending builders' merchants on a regular basis to try and develop these links. It was easiest for hubs to engage the supply chain where this was facilitated by the tier one contractor, especially where responsibility for local recruitment in Section 106 agreements was passed down through the contracting process. Below are two examples of how this worked: one is focused on contracting and in the other the tier one contractor provided a supporting and coordinating role.

### Examples of tier one contractor engagement with their supply chain

The main contractor linked to one hub started their build in 2017, with 2021 as the scheduled finish. The main contractor was part of the steering group and contributed to the CSF bid. They were very supportive of the hub, and for example, took part in the recruitment of a project manager and training co-ordinator alongside other hub partners. The main contractor has a Section 106 agreement for the development and has been using the hub to work with their sub-contractors to deliver on this agreement. They work with the hub staff to report on upcoming vacancies and requirements across the site. As part of this they undertook a gap analysis with their sub-contractors and identified two job roles with several vacancies where there were skills shortages. They worked with the hub staff to tailor the hub programme to meet these requirements and asked for some participants to have additional occupationally specific tickets, which would enable them to apply for job roles requiring additional levels of certification above and beyond the CSCS card, such as scaffolding.

The main contractor supported the sub-contractors' use of the hub, by attending the programme and presenting to participants about the opportunities across the development, within both tier one and tier two contractors, and by undertaking initial interviews with hub participants on their behalf and identifying suitable candidates.

In another hub, the main contractor discussed the Section 106 and other social value requirements associated with their development and noted that they were mandating partnership contribution through their supply chain. For example, writing into contracts that suppliers would support referral, training, and job brokerage for specific groups of individuals. These measures, along with others, formed part of the performance management and review process.

### 3.3.2 Referral partners

The hubs relied on partnership working to generate participant referrals. The hubs worked with organisations from across the voluntary and community sector to produce suitable referrals, including: charities supporting homeless individuals, organisations supporting young people, those working with individuals that had worked in the armed forces, people facing redundancy, and other organisations including housing associations, and probation



services. Some hubs focused on how they could increase the engagement of women, and a number tried to build links with and seek support from Women in Construction.

Most hubs had engaged with Jobcentre Plus to make referrals. Where referrals from Jobcentre Plus were reported to work well, there was senior commitment to the hub from managers. Furthermore, hub staff had a strong presence, for example by co-locating in the Jobcentre building to ensure they had regular formal and informal contact with Jobcentre Plus staff. Some hub staff provided training sessions for Jobcentre Plus advisers about the work of the hub and the type of referrals they sought; the requirement for participants to be fairly job-ready and to have an interest in working in construction.

A few hubs had found it challenging to engage Jobcentre Plus and gain referrals. Where the geography meant that hubs could draw participants from across several Jobcentre Plus offices and/or districts then building multiple links was time-consuming. Some hubs also reported that Jobcentre Plus staff did not have time to explain the hubs to potential participants during appointments because they needed to spend time supporting claimants with their benefits claim, and other tasks. One hub lead that had struggled to gain referrals from Jobcentre Plus said they would have liked some centralised support from Jobcentre Plus to encourage local offices to engage with the hubs.

### **3.3.3 Training partners**

While employers were involved in delivering aspects of the CSF programme to participants, many of the core elements were sub-contracted and delivered by training partners. The exact specification varied between hubs, but training partners delivered employability training, and specialist health and safety training, as well as training in basic construction skills.

Where it worked well, training partners had been procured with an element of flexibility in their contract to support the needs of employers as they varied over time. However, there were instances where contracting arrangements for training partners did not enable sufficient flexibility. In two cases hub co-ordinators felt that their training providers were too focused on providing generic employability skills and not sufficiently on employability skills for construction.

### **3.3.4 Partners supporting jobs brokerage and wider partners**

A variety of partners supported jobs brokerage, including Local Authority-run job-matching services. In London, Central London Forward<sup>18</sup> was used as a job brokerage service, supporting hub participants to access work on construction sites in other London boroughs.

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<sup>18</sup> Central London Forward is the strategic partnership that oversees the Central London Works employment programme. Funded through DWP and European Social Fund monies, the programme supports people who are long-term unemployed or have long-term health conditions into work.

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Several hubs had links to local schools and colleges and provided information sessions to learners about working in the construction industry.

### 3.4 Alignment with other funding

Many of the hubs drew on other sources of funding to complement the programme offered by the CSF. For example, a few hubs had embedded delivery funded by the National Careers Service (NCS) into the hub where a NCS adviser was co-located in the hub to support the screening process, provide on-going advice to participants, support participants not suitable for the programme on alternate pathways.

Several of the hubs were also in receipt of funding from the Adult Education Budget (AEB), administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency on behalf of the DfE. This was being used to support the learning and development of participants aged 19 or over. The AEB was used by some of the hubs to prepare participants prior to their engagement with the hubs. For example, prior to registration the AEB could be used to support candidates that were less work-ready to undertake employability skills training, confidence building or with English and Maths.

Some hubs had access to the European Social Fund, as well as funding supporting local and regional economic development. Employers also made in-kind contributions to the hubs, for example by delivering input to the programme and providing premises (see 4.3.2 Employer involvement in the intervention).

### 3.5 Staffing and resourcing

The CSF funding was used to pay for hub staff, training, and capital costs. Capital costs included classrooms (a temporary building or mobile unit), as well as hardware and equipment. Resources were also allocated to training costs and staff. Functions such as generating referrals, providing information, advice and guidance, and jobs brokerage often relied on partnership working, and therefore other funding sources (see section 3.3).

Some hub leads felt that their CSF bids were tightly costed and many discussed how the financial resourcing of the project affected what could be delivered. This financial constraint particularly affected staffing, as it was a large cost to most projects. Because of the way that project budgets were formulated, some hubs could only recruit to posts on a part-time basis. Due to the project-based funding, most advertised posts were also fixed term contracts. These two factors resulted in some hubs not filling roles as quickly as planned. In addition, the financial position of some hubs meant they could only recruit staff after they had received initial payment from CITB. This shortened the length of the fixed term contracts offered and some staff believed it made the advertised roles less attractive. Where hubs advertised externally for candidates, in some cases there were few suitable applicants and posts were re-advertised.

Delays with recruiting staff caused a few hubs to delay their project implementation. Some hubs were able to second staff from other departments or organisations. This was more common for Local Authority-led hubs and college-led hubs. Examples included training



and delivery staff transferred from similar adult education or employability programmes. Hubs that were developed from existing provision were able to use the CSF to maintain or increase existing staffing levels and did not face the same recruitment challenges as hubs starting delivery for the CSF.

The number of staff employed by each hub varied, but they typically had these main roles:

### **Project manager and hub manager/coordinator**

Staff across these roles worked with an external and internal focus. They worked with local organisations to support referrals, manage relationships, and attend meetings with relevant organisations such as construction employers, and recruitment agencies to source job vacancies. Experience of working in construction or on similar adult skills training projects was thought to be useful as these staff had existing links which could be utilised for CSF.

### **Administrator**

Representatives from the hubs described the substantial administrative requirement of the CSF. Administrators were required to undertake pre-screening and eligibility checks; manage course bookings; and to track participants and gather evidence of sustained job outcomes. Some hubs combined the compliance and monitoring element within an administrative role while others kept these separate.

### **Job brokers/information, advice and guidance (IAG) staff**

There were two aspects of this role, providing participants with IAG and securing vacancies; and two groups to work with, participants and employers. The IAG role was intended to help participants to understand their transferable skills and identify potential routes into employment. The way hubs structured staff for these tasks varied. Some had two separate roles and others had the same staff undertaking both aspects. In others, aspects of these roles were fully or partially undertaken by partners, such as National Careers Service (see also section 3.3.4). The job brokerage and employer engagement aspects were integral to the success of the hubs achieving job outcomes because these staff matched trainees to jobs and sourced vacancies. Several hubs reported that with hindsight they would have put more resource into employer engagement and job brokerage, because it was so critical to successfully securing job vacancies. Some hubs had staff in this role and these hubs tended to perform strongly in achieved job outcomes.

### **Training delivery staff**

Many staff used trainers with construction backgrounds to deliver at least some elements of the programme, if not all. Some used adult education trainers to deliver general employability and introduction to construction content. There were examples of hubs contracting out the delivery of training to specialist training organisations.

Overall, it was important for hub staff to have good understanding of the construction industry because they were reliant on relationships with local contractors and/or large

building sites to understand skills needs and challenges, and to arrange site visits and work experience. The hub coordinators and project managers needed to be able to translate employer skills needs into relevant and cost-effective training to help move participants into work. Brokerage and IAG staff also needed to have a good understanding of the local construction industry job market, and to know where jobs were advertised and how to apply for the roles. Where staff did not have this knowledge and capability initially, it took time to develop, and this affected the pace at which hubs could achieve job outcomes.

### 3.6 Infrastructure set-up

Some hubs operated prior to the CSF and used existing onsite facilities and training centres to begin delivery at the outset of the contract. Others delivered the programme for the first time but could use existing onsite facilities. Hubs setting up new onsite training facilities for the CSF faced a specific set of challenges. For example, hubs that required planning permission experienced risks related to timing. There were two hubs whose planning permission took longer than envisaged to be processed. The hub leads reported that local elections and the associated period of *purdah* had exacerbated planning delays. In these cases, the delivery of the intervention from the site was significantly delayed.

In other cases, building the onsite hub and ensuring access to utilities and physical access had taken longer than anticipated. For example, in one hub there were delays to digging the foundations and installing plumbing, as well as delays to works to ensure safe pedestrian access to the hub. Whilst some hubs stalled implementation while these issues were resolved, others found ways to work around them. There were examples of the hub programme being delivered from a temporary venue and delivering training offsite with other ways of providing an onsite experience.

### 3.7 Time required to establish a new hub

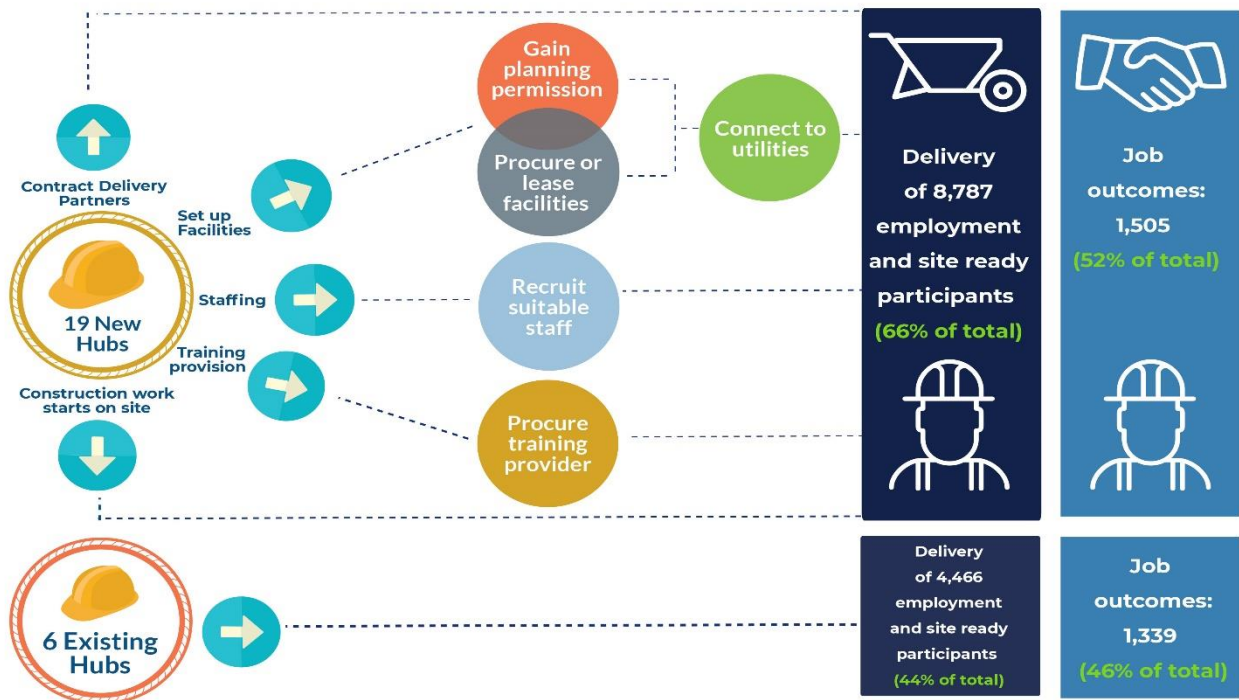
The length of time for new hubs to set-up and reach capacity, on average, has been longer than the initial planning assumptions of the CSF which assumed that new hubs could operationalize within three months. Due to unforeseen delays, several hubs ran six to 12 months behind schedule, and a few providers agreed lower overall targets with CITB to accommodate this delay. The lead-in time required to establish a new hub varied and was affected by several factors:

- There were delays to the start of the building works, particularly large central government funded infrastructure projects which could be subject to political uncertainty. Political uncertainty severely affected one hub attached to a high-profile national development; where the main contract was severely delayed and therefore the hub was very delayed.
- There were changes (reductions) to the scale of planned building works. This could be caused by several factors, but in some cases uncertainty around Brexit led to the developers reducing the scale of the build, and a reluctance from contractors to commit to new projects and contracts.

- Securing planning permission for the onsite facility took time.
- Connecting the onsite facility to utilities (eg electricity, water) took time.
- Building safe (vehicle and pedestrian) access to the onsite facility took time.
- Agreeing and signing a lease for the hub premises took time.
- There were difficulties recruiting hub staff (on part-time and/or fixed term contracts).
- Procuring suitable (flexible) training provision took time.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the steps to reach delivery that the new hubs had to work through compared to the existing hubs that were able to move straight to delivery. The six existing hubs supported 4,466 participants to become employment and site ready (44% of all CSF participants) and achieved 1,339 sustained job outcomes (46% of the programme total).

**Figure 3.1 Steps to reach delivery: new versus existing hubs**



Source: IES, 2020

## 4 Implementing the onsite hubs

This chapter draws together qualitative data from the case studies alongside the analysis of audited management information covering the period October 2018 to September 2020 and responses to the participant surveys. It covers staffing and resourcing, marketing and recruitment of participants, the demographic profile of participants, the nature of the intervention, including employer involvement, before discussing approaches to job brokerage and supporting in-work progression.

### Key findings

- The hubs used a range of marketing and recruitment strategies to attract participants, including working with referral partners, attending job fairs, and displaying marketing materials in community venues. The majority of survey respondents heard about the hub through a training provider or college, a community organisation or word of mouth.
- To recruit, hubs emphasised the immediate availability of a job, the opportunity for sustainable employment, and that the training was free of charge. They also tried to challenge common perceptions of the sector, ensuring diverse images in promotion materials. The message of a route into employment in construction was likely to most appeal to participants.
- 14,456 participants started the programme. Hub participants were largely male (92%). Eight per cent of participants were female, compared to an industry average of 13 per cent, and one per cent female participation in manual roles. Some hubs felt that there needed to be more challenge to employers about flexible working.
- One-third of participants (34%) had ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to seven per cent of the construction workforce, and five per cent of the manual construction workforce. Participants had a younger age profile than the construction workforce. Most participants were unemployed when they enrolled (82%).
- Hub staff, employers and participants viewed the onsite mode positively. The benefits related to communication, opportunities for understanding the construction sector, and gaining real experience.
- The programme typically included: information, advice and guidance and screening; a series of training components; and a CSCS card test. Occupationally specific courses were undertaken as required. Each intervention typically lasted one to two weeks.
- Most hubs involved employers in planning and delivering the intervention. However, whether they maintained an active involvement on an ongoing basis varied. In some cases, employers delivered activities, and hosted question and answer sessions about the sector.
- Some hubs had strong commitment from employers to recruit hub participants, and others promoted roles with different contractors, at different sites and with agencies.
- The extent of job search support varied between hubs. Several hubs felt that they had underestimated the staff time and resource required to achieve sustainable job outcomes

and with hindsight would have invested more in this. Most of the contact hubs had with participants after they entered work was procedural and involved getting in touch to check whether they were still in work after 13 weeks.

## 4.1 Participant marketing and recruitment

The hubs complemented the work of referral partners with their own publicity activities. Hub staff attended local jobs fairs (construction focussed and generalist job fairs) and events; put marketing materials in community venues such as libraries, in builders' merchants and cafes; included details of the hub in local residents' newsletters; and posted on social media. Hubs were attentive to the barriers that potential participants may face in accessing the hub training and subsequent work and so they advertised within their local travel to work areas.

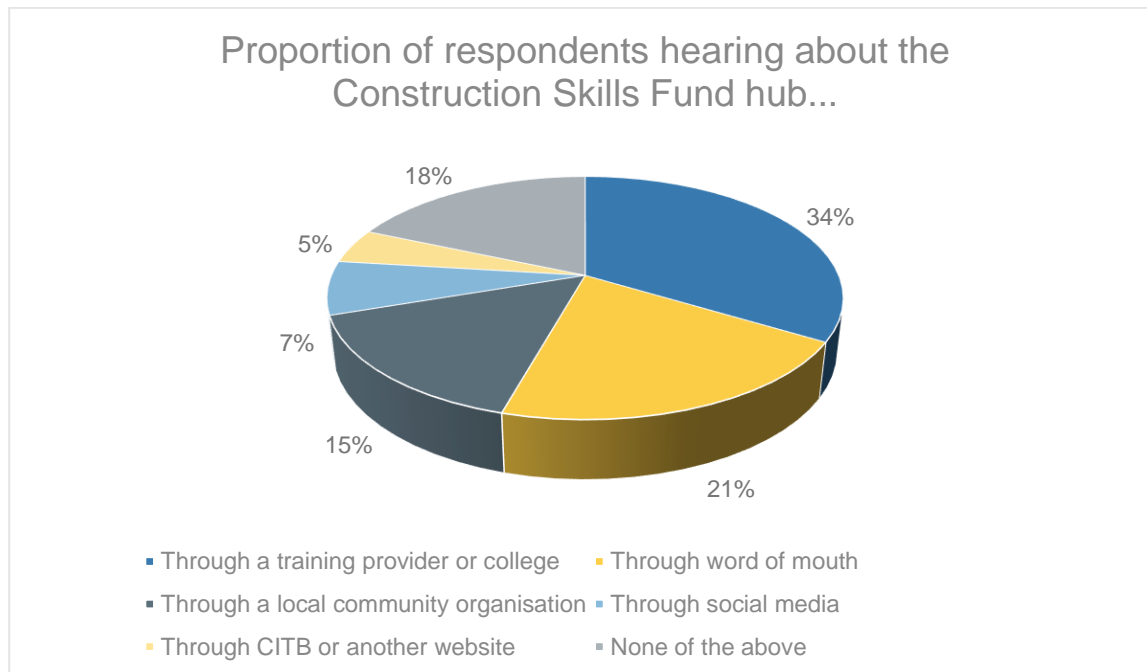
Social media activities included Facebook groups, videos, and virtual job boards. Not all hubs agreed that social media was a useful marketing tool as some found this approach less effective at reaching the right potential participants. However, many felt participant case studies and video case studies were a useful marketing tool, whether delivered by social media or other routes.

Traditional media was successfully used by one hub that advertised on local drive time radio. They did this with the intent of appealing to career changers who would be likely to be listening at that time and reported good success with this approach.

Over the course of delivery, the power of word of mouth from past participants within the community to generate interest and referrals increased. Some of the existing hubs reported that this was their primary source of referrals and newer hubs cultivated this over time.

### 4.1.1 How respondents heard about the hub

The most common ways respondents to the experiences survey heard about the hub included via a partner: a training provider or college (34%), or a local community organisation (15%). Word of mouth referrals increased throughout the delivery period, with one in five (21%) of participants reporting they heard of the hub via friends and family. A further 19 per cent of respondents had heard about the hub in another way. They were asked to specify the source and examples given included Jobcentre Plus, and schools. Figure 4.1 shows that social media generated seven per cent of referrals.

**Figure 4.1 How did you hear about the Construction Skills Fund hub?**

*N* = 1,023

Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data

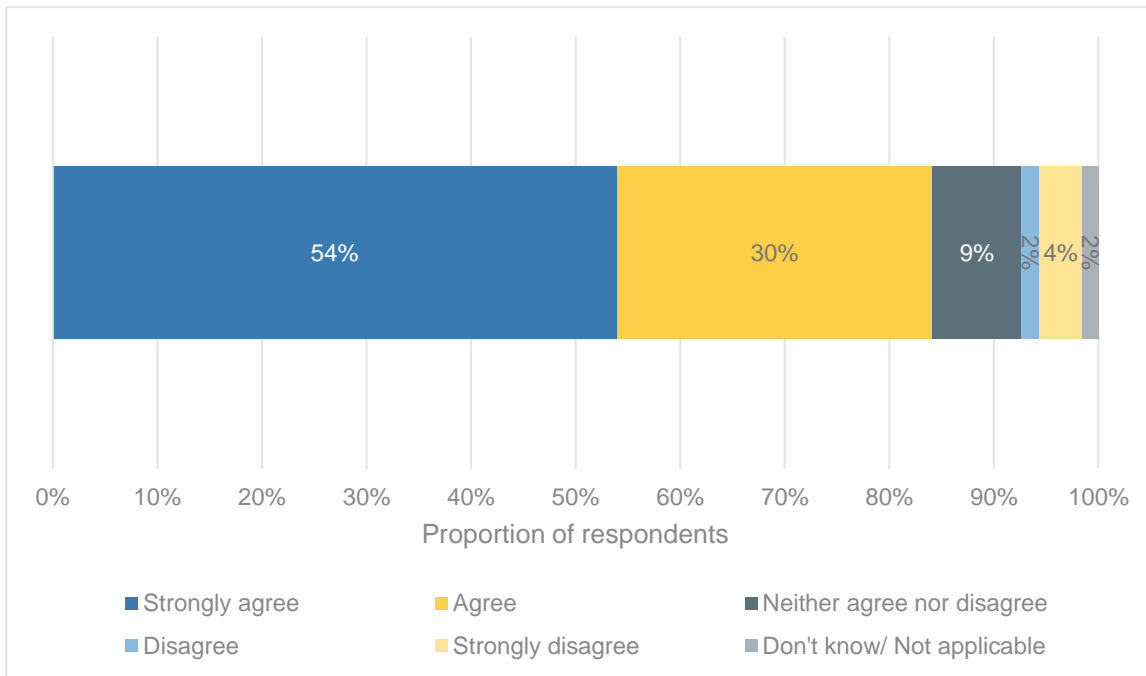
There were some significant differences in where groups of participants heard about the hubs, suggesting the need for a varied engagement strategy to reach a diverse range of groups.

- Men were more likely than women to hear about a CSF hub through a college or training provider (35% compared to 23%). Women were more likely than men to hear about the hub through a local community organisation (21% compared to 15%).
- Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely than participants from a white background to have heard about the hubs via word of mouth (25% compared to 19%), and were also more likely to have heard about their hub via a local community organisation (19% compared to 14%). Participants from a white background were more likely than participants from ethnic minority backgrounds to have heard about the hubs through a training provider or college (36% compared to 30%) or via social media (8% compared to 5%).

Word of mouth referrals were how one in five participants heard about the hub (21%). Respondents to the participant survey were asked about whether they would recommend the hub to other people aiming to find employment in construction. The majority (84%), either strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend the hub. Figure 4.2 shows that six per cent of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that they would recommend the hub to others, and nine per cent of respondents were neutral. Overall, this suggests a strong likelihood of creating word of mouth referrals from previous participants. However, there were some significant differences in the likelihood of recommending the hub between different groups:

- Men (86%) were more likely to recommend the hub than women (76%).
- Participants with no or entry level (lower) qualifications were more likely to respond very positively that they would recommend the hub (94% agreed or strongly agreed) compared to participants qualified to a level one or two (87%), and participants qualified at level three or above (80%).

**Figure 4.2 I would recommend the hub to others aiming to find employment in construction**



*N = 983, data for 40 participants (4%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.  
Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data*

### 4.1.2 Effective recruitment messages: the promise of work

Across the range of marketing and outreach activities used by hubs there were common messages that were emphasised to recruit participants to the training:

#### The immediate availability of a job.

Those hubs working closely with employers to fill immediate vacancies made clear that their training was not a generic development opportunity but led directly to a job.

#### The opportunity for sustainable employment.

Some hubs emphasised that building works would take place over 10-15 years and that this provided a secure and long-term option for employment.

#### The fact that the training was being offered free of charge.

This was particularly important for hubs in the most disadvantaged areas.

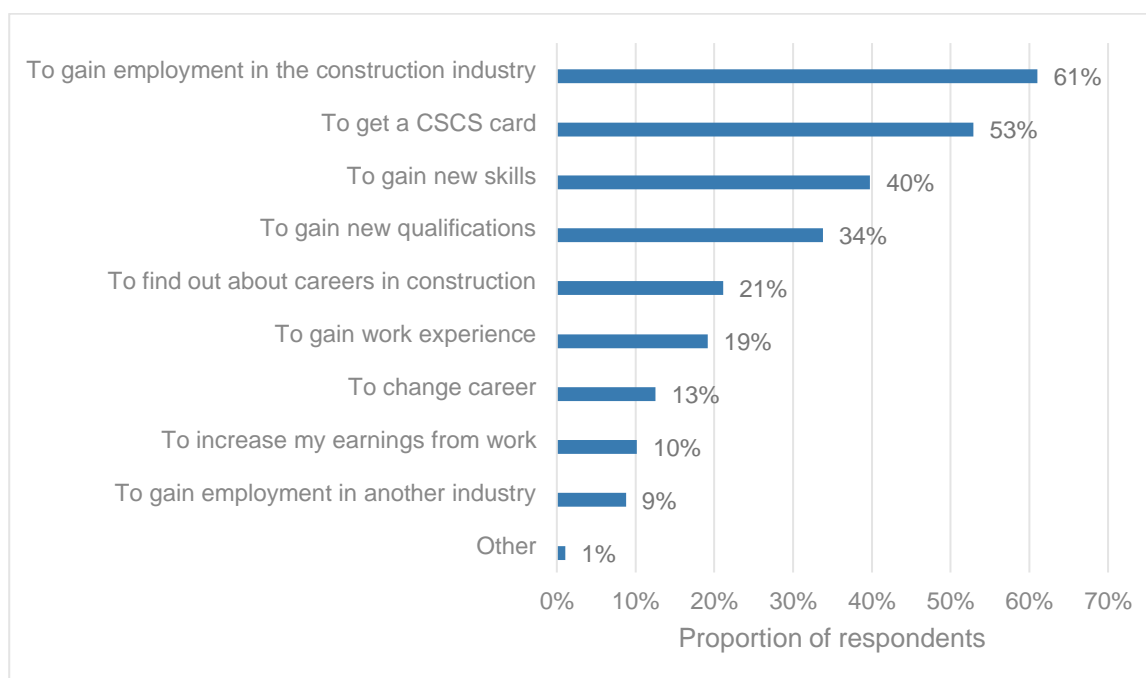


### ‘Myth-busting’ and challenges to common perceptions of the sector.

Many hubs indicated that their marketing approach consciously tried to challenge stereotypes about the sector only offering manual labour roles and being male dominated. They did this by emphasising the possibility to command high wages and the progression opportunities. They also tried to demonstrate the quality of work and the full range of professions in the sector. Case studies of individuals from under-represented groups, including women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds, were used to break down misconceptions about the range of people working in construction. Hubs indicated that they used this message to also contribute to longer term changes in perceptions of the construction industry.

Respondents to the experience survey were asked why they chose to register with the hub and could indicate more than one reason if appropriate. Answers to this question, and their frequency is depicted in Figure 4.3. The message that the hub programme offers an effective route into employment in construction is likely to most resonate with participants: six out of ten respondents (61%) wanted to be involved with the hub to gain employment in the construction sector, or to gain a CSCS card (53%). Other motivations included wanting to gain new skills (40%) and to gain new qualifications (34%). One in five respondents participated in the CSF hubs to find out about careers in construction or to gain work experience. Whereas one in ten became involved to increase their earnings from work or to use this as a gateway to gain employment in another industry.

**Figure 4.3 Why did you become involved in the Construction Skills Fund hub?**



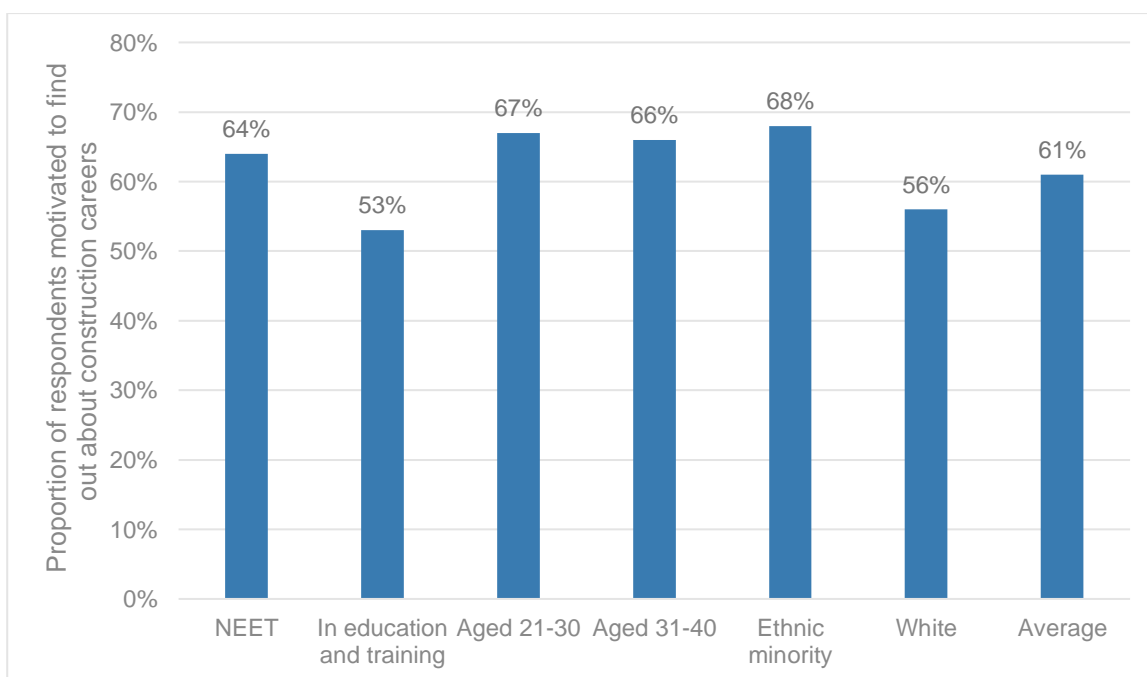
Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data (N=1,013)



There were some significant differences in the motivations to become involved in the hubs expressed by participant groups reflecting their labour market status, prior experience, and prior understanding of construction careers.

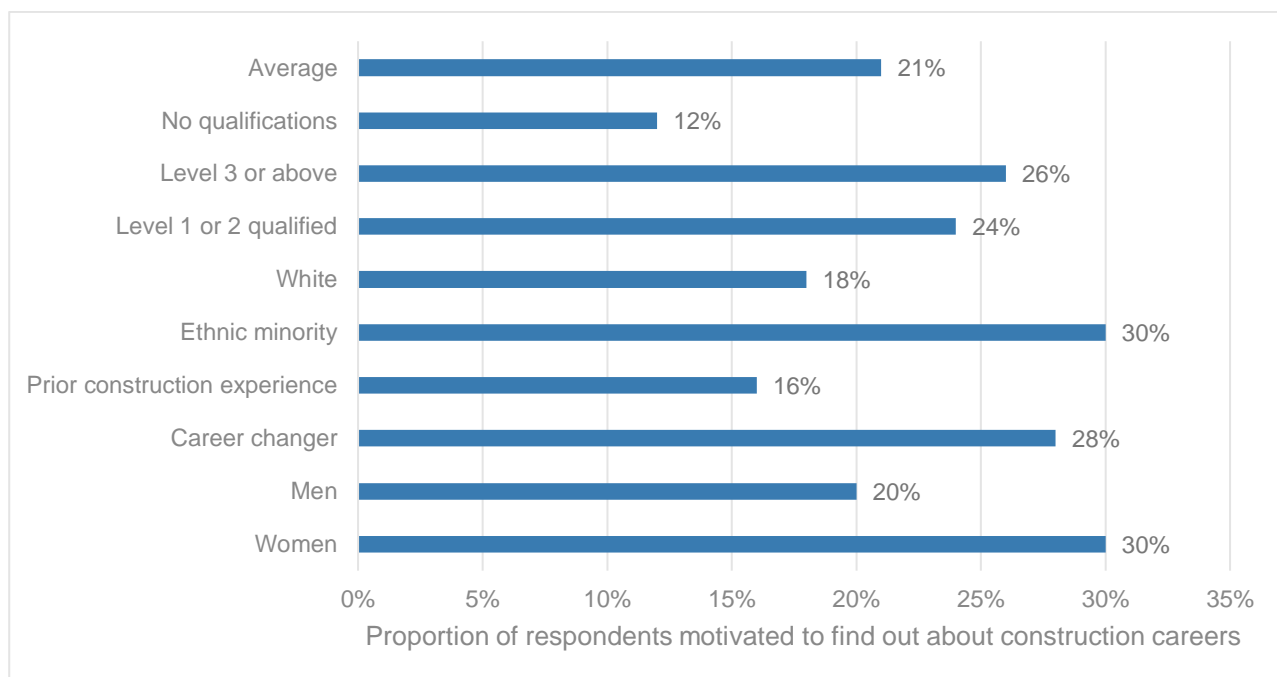
- Participants most motivated by gaining employment in the construction industry were those that were NEET prior to enrolment (64%), those aged 21-30 (67%), or 31-40 age group (66%), and participants from ethnic minority backgrounds (68%). These results are visualised in Figure 4.4.
- Participants motivated by gaining a CSCS card were more likely to be men (55%) compared to women (40%). Participants with entry level or no qualifications (60%). The proportion fell among participants with higher level qualifications, 49 per cent of participants qualified at level three or above participated for this reason.
- Participants motivated by gaining new qualifications were more likely to be careers changers (40%) compared to participants that had worked in construction before (30%), and younger. Participants aged 21-30 (38%) and 31-40 (39%) were more motivated to participate to gain new qualifications than older age groups. For example, one in five (20%) of participants aged 50 or over became involved in the hub for this reason.
- One in five (21%) of participants wanted to find out more about careers in construction. Participants who were more likely to give this reason included women (30%), participants seeking to change career (28%), participants from ethnic minority backgrounds (30%) and participants qualified at level one or two (24%) or level three or above (26%). These results are depicted in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.4 Proportion of participants motivated by gaining employment in construction, by group.**



Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data (N=1,013)

**Figure 4.5 Proportion of participants motivated to find out about construction careers, by group.**



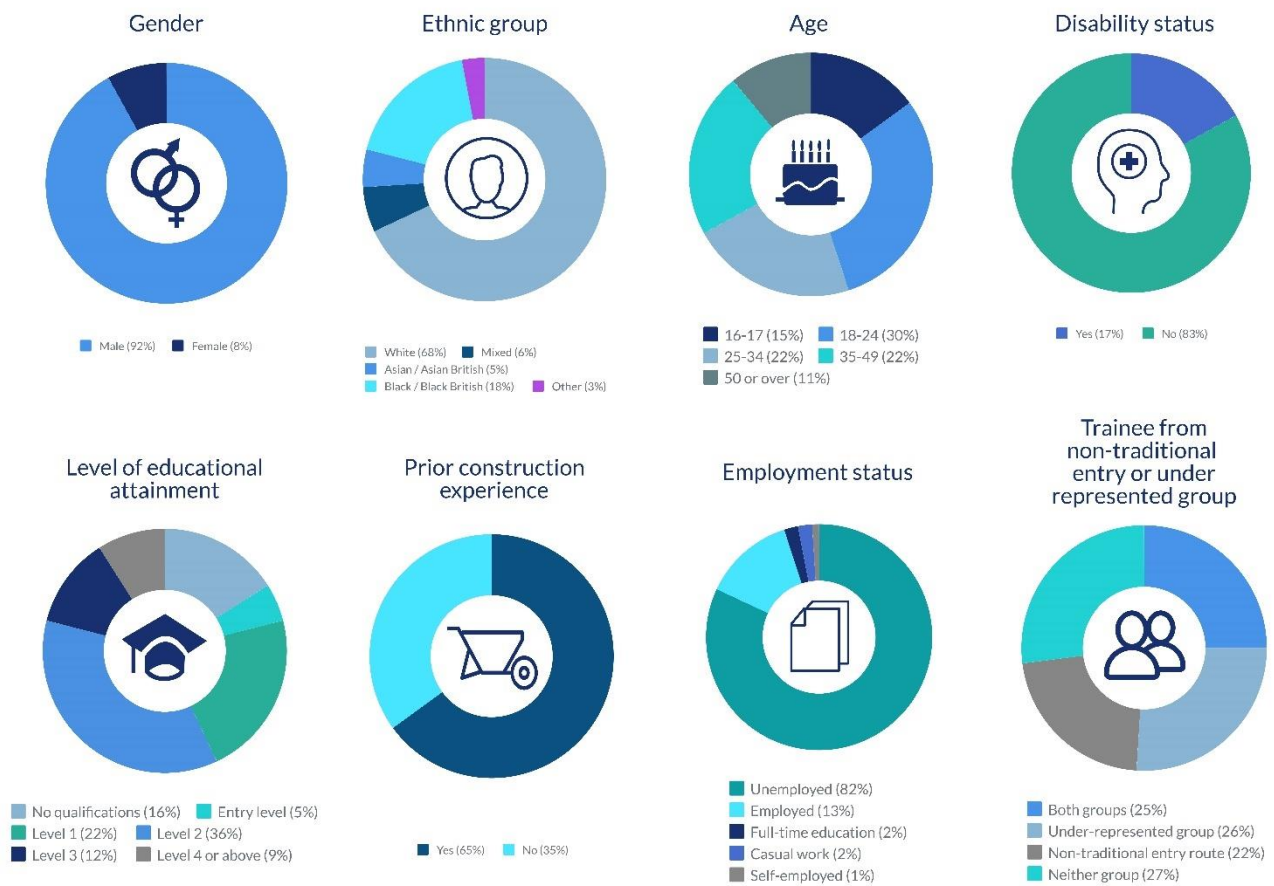
Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data (N=1,013)

## 4.2 The profile of hub participants

The hubs had targets associated with reaching people from backgrounds that did not typically work in construction. The data presented in this section draws on the management information and covers the period between October 2018 and September 2020. Some measures have a large amount of missing data and this is noted where relevant to aid interpretation.

In total, 14,456 participants started the programme between October 2018 and March 2020. Figure 4.6 provides an overview of the demographic profile of the hub participants.

**Figure 4.6 Overview of participant characteristics**



Source: CSF management information, October 2018 – September 2020

### 4.2.1 Gender

Hub participants were predominantly male (92%), and just eight per cent participants were female. Although the programme aimed to increase female participation in the construction sector, and women were part of the target for under-represented groups, female participation was below the industry average. Women made up 13 per cent of the construction sector workforce in England for the twelve months to June 2020<sup>19</sup>, although females make up only one per cent of those who work in manual construction occupations<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Construction is defined as SIC 2007 Industry F: Construction. Source: NOMIS provided by the Office for National Statistics, ONS.

<sup>20</sup> Manual occupations in construction are defined here as those in SOC 2010 occupations: 531 Construction and Building Trades, 532 Building Finishing Trades, 814 Construction Operatives and 912 Elementary Construction Occupations.

Some hubs tried very actively to attract female participants and five worked with Women into Construction (WIC) an independent, not-for-profit organisation that promotes gender equality in construction. One hub said that this partnership was driven by the monitoring of their targets by the governance board and their direction to create positive action to change the status quo. These hubs co-hosted events with WIC, ensured diversity in their marketing images, and sought to represent the skills required in the sector which might be more appealing to women. One hub asked WIC to help them understand the barriers to more women working on site. These included the timing of work. The hub therefore ran training between 10am-2pm. Other issues included always asking whether there could be flexibility of working hours for advertised roles and using diverse industry role models when speaking at schools and colleges.

Some hubs ran women only cohorts. They perceived that these would be less intimidating and would enable a tailored focus and content of the programme, focusing on construction careers that might appeal more to women (eg site administration), and to engage in discussions about flexible working and childcare. For example, one hub co-ordinator noted that they had a conversation with an employer to enable a new female starter to be briefed after colleagues, as she needed to take her child to school in the mornings and therefore missed the team briefing (7:30am). There was discussion from a few of the hub leads about the working patterns of the sector, and some felt that there needed to be more engagement with and challenge to employers about flexible working. While several hubs initially reported gender diversity would be a focus as they moved beyond their set-up phase, the drive to achieve the programme volumes took priority.

### 4.2.2 Ethnicity

The programme aimed to increase participation from people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the construction sector. Of the people working in the construction sector in England for the twelve months to June 2020, seven per cent had ethnic minority backgrounds<sup>21</sup>, and five per cent of the manual construction workforce<sup>22</sup>. Around one-third of all CSF participants had ethnic minority backgrounds (34%), with one in five participants (19%) being from a Black / African / Caribbean / Black British ethnic group.

The confidence of hub leads in their ability to reach ethnic minority participants depended on the location of the hub. Data from the latest wave of APS data (July 2019- June 2020) shows the proportion of the population from ethnic minority backgrounds in a hub area ranged from 2-52 per cent across the hubs. In cities and areas with ethnically diverse

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<sup>21</sup> Construction is defined as SIC 2007 Industry F: Construction. Source: NOMIS provided by the Office for National Statistics, ONS.

<sup>22</sup> Manual occupations in construction are defined here as those in SOC 2010 occupations: 531 Construction and Building Trades, 532 Building Finishing Trades, 814 Construction Operatives and 912 Elementary Construction Occupations.

populations, the hub leads were confident that they would reach this target group, whereas in less diverse locations, hub leads were not confident about reaching ethnic minority groups.

Hubs regularly monitored the diversity of their participants and took steps to try to increase participation of groups as needed. For example, hubs focused outreach and marketing activities at specific community groups or charities supporting individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds. Hubs tried to challenge stereotypes of the construction industry and used images of non-traditional construction workers in their publicity materials.

### 4.2.3 Other demographics

Almost one-half of participants were aged less than 24 (46%). However, there was a wide range in the age of participants, with, for example, 1 in 10 participants aged 50 or above (11%). Overall, the hubs engaged a young profile of participants when compared to the age of the construction workforce overall. The latest wave of APS data show that 10 per cent of the construction workforce in England were aged 24 or under and 34 per cent were aged 50 or above. Within the manual construction occupations 13 per cent in England were aged 24 or below, where 31 per cent were aged 50 or above. The hubs conducted some focused activities to attract different age groups. Hubs more frequently reported the work that they were doing to recruit young people than older people, such as working with schools and colleges and youth offending teams. Older people were targeted in the main through activities focussed on career changers.

Seventeen per cent of participants disclosed a disability or health condition to the hubs. This compares to 12 per cent of the construction workforce in England identifying as disabled under the Equality Act (APS data, July 2019- June 2020). Some hubs described working with participants that had mental health issues or learning difficulties. One hub had been working with employers to find work placement opportunities for their disabled cohort. They had secured work placements on construction sites for people with autism, in roles including office support, catering, cleaning the site and the surrounding hoarding.

Most participants had low levels of prior educational attainment, with 15 per cent having no prior qualifications, 27 per cent having qualifications at level one or lower, and 36 per cent qualified to level two. However, there was some diversity; nine per cent of participants were qualified to Level four or above (N=10,486).

### 4.2.4 Prior work history

The majority of participants were unemployed when they enrolled with the hub (82%), with 16 per cent in work (either employed, self-employed or undertaking casual work), and the remaining two per cent in full-time education.

Some hub staff discussed challenges with reaching career changers who were still working. There is an inherent degree of risk in leaving paid work without another role to move into, so most participants recorded as being from another occupation were out of

work at the time of their engagement. Financial commitments and responsibilities were also mentioned as reducing the likelihood that individuals would seek to retrain.

The experience of participants with work history was mainly in occupations other than construction. Where data was recorded for those participants who were new to construction, they were most commonly moving from retail, hospitality, leisure, creative and other sectors (52%), or agriculture, energy, manufacturing or transport (25%), although data is missing for over two in five participants so caution should be exercised with these data.

**Table 4.1 Previous occupation for participants new to construction**

Previous occupation	N	%
Retail, hospitality, leisure, creative, and other	2,930	52
Agriculture, energy, manufacturing, transport	1,417	25
Administration and support services	425	8
Education, health and social work	413	7
Business and professional services	334	6
Other	142	3
Total	5,661	100

*NB Data for 5578 participants (39%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

## 4.3 The intervention

Each hub lead described a varied programme, informed by the needs of local construction employers. The CSF-funded aspects typically included:

- initial information, advice and guidance and screening for suitability and interest in working in the construction sector;
- a series of components, including health and safety and developing employability; and
- working towards, and testing for, the CSCS card.

To increase participants' awareness of working on a construction site, some hubs included site tours and tasters (eg in mock areas on site to undertake specific tasks, or work experience placements). These elements are discussed in turn below.

### 4.3.1 Screening and initial information, advice, and guidance

Effective screening was perceived to be a key success factor in determining the suitability of candidates and their potential job-readiness for construction after a short intervention. Where the local labour market had near full employment, participants were more likely to be far from the labour market, and this intensified the need for effective screening. Several hubs who reported low levels of unemployment required more referrals and greater use of screening to assess an individual's work-readiness and capability prior to



commencing the programme. Some hubs adapted their approach and increased the focus on screening potential participants as the programme progressed.

Potential participants received information, advice or guidance and were screened for their suitability and interest in working in construction. The screening was typically done by the hub manager, but in some instances was delivered by hub partners, such as organisations delivering the National Careers Service contract locally.

The screening element was generally a group sign-up session where the hub manager gave more detail about the offer and what is expected of participants (eg time-keeping, drug and alcohol policy of the site). The screening session was also a chance for the hub manager to meet the participants and find out more about their background, including whether they had prior experience in the sector, and their work aspirations. In one hub the sign-up event was more selective if there was a guaranteed job outcome attached to the successful completion of the programme.

In a small number of hubs, the sign-up also included assessments of participants' levels of English and Maths. However, in most cases participants were only screened on the basis of qualities and attributes such as time-keeping and motivation. One hub adjusted their assessment process from being open to all, to only being open to individuals that demonstrated genuine interest in the course and construction sector. This approach was reported to have had positive feedback from employers and to have increased the number of job outcomes.

Some of the hubs used an enrolment/screening event to determine which cohort participants were allocated to, and the most suitable length and content of the intervention. In one hub the screening included a discussion with one of the hub directors and a practical demonstration of their current skill level. Candidates who showed a high level of skill were fast-tracked to completing the CSCS part of the programme. In another hub the group sign-up session was followed by one-to-one sessions with the hub manager to determine the candidates' existing skills level. Participants were then directed to a one or two week programme depending on their prior experience.

The example below illustrates the provision of information, advice, and guidance in one hub. First at the start of the programme, and then on-going in the form of advice and mentoring.

### **Example of hub providing initial IAG and on-going support**

The hub was in a metropolitan area where lots of employers sought to fulfil their Section 106 requirements. This meant the hub had a steady stream of vacancies. The hub aimed to ensure high quality matches by providing participants with information, advice and guidance as well as on-going support following the completion of the training.

After referral, the participants had a meeting with an information, advice and guidance (IAG) advisor. Together they developed an individual action plan tailored to the participant's preferences and needs. All eligible candidates deemed job-ready received training for and sat the CSCS card test. Following this, depending on the individual's needs, they were directed by the IAG advisor to some of the other CSF-funded 1-2 day interventions in entry level construction skills as required.

After the programme, the IAG advisors provided candidates with on-going support, including CV writing and interview preparation. They also provided mentoring support and discussed issues such as housing, benefits and drug and alcohol misuse. The advisors supported participants in addressing these issues and provided advocacy where they could, for example by liaising with Jobcentre Plus work coaches, or signposting them to further support from third sector organisations.

The IAG advisors aimed to find the right opportunity for each candidate, even when they had started work. In the past advisers have helped participants to secure alternative apprenticeships and jobs if participants encounter problems initially.

### 4.3.2 Employer involvement in the intervention

Most hubs involved employers in the planning and delivery of the intervention to some extent. The most notable difference was between hubs where employers had maintained an active level of involvement and engagement with the hub activities since the bid-writing phase, and those where employers were consulted at the start but were not involved regularly after that. Also, belonging to the latter category were the small number of hubs where bid-writers analysed skills data on a regional or city-level to determine skills needs as opposed to directly consulting employers or including them in the bid. These hubs tended to have the least active employer engagement in the intervention programme.

In hubs with active employer engagement, employers had helped design the programme or delivered activities on the courses, such as ‘meet the employer’ sessions, employer-led skills training sessions, and hosted question and answer sessions about the sector. In some hubs the employer co-designed the intervention and remained in constant communication with the hub about whether the programme still met their needs. The box below provides an example.

#### Example of employer-led provision

The hub was based on a strong partnership between the lead contractor, the local authority and training delivery partner. Both the training partner and hub manager engaged with employers using Section 106. Because the local authority was a lead partner, the hub manager joined meetings with contractors and used this introduction to secure employer involvement.

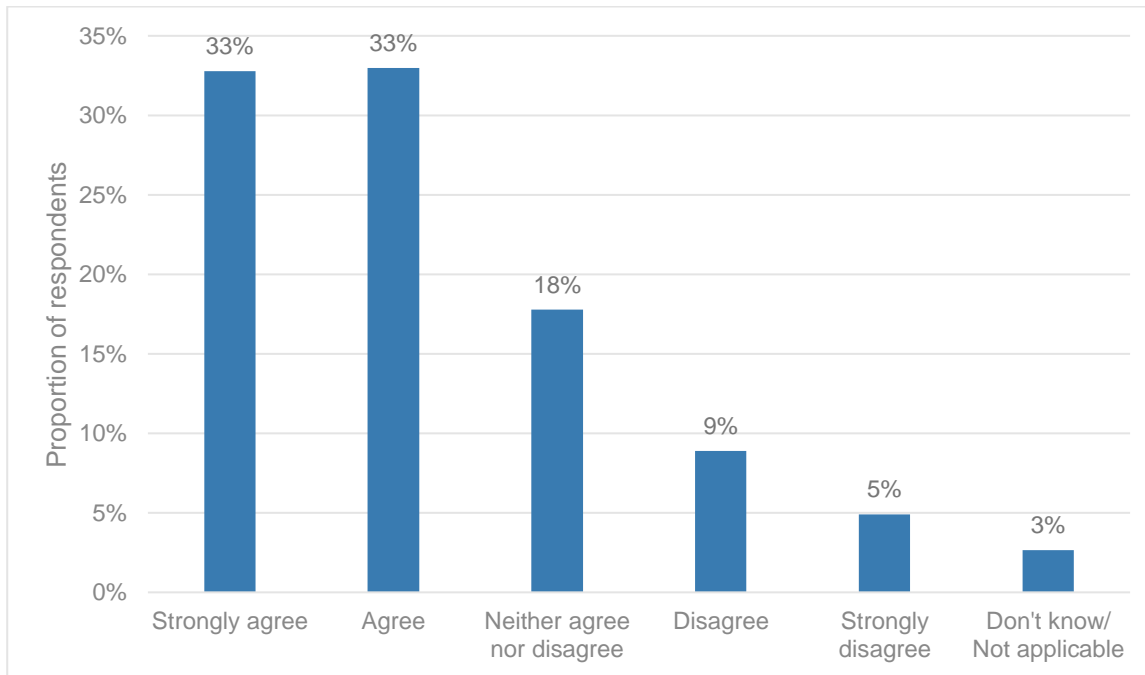
Employers were involved in the design of the programme at the outset to make sure it would meet their needs. They continued to have an active role in reviewing and refining the programme content. The hub chose to partner with the training provider because they were both highly regarded by employers and able to work flexibly to meet changing employer needs. The lead contractor wanted to avoid a situation where training providers dictated the training content to ensure they could deliver employer-responsive provision. Hence the training partners were not contracted to deliver a pre-agreed set of training, although they always included core elements such as health and safety level one and CSCS card. Employers could request training that aligned with specific vacancies, such as bricklaying or traffic marshalling, and the training partner was able to offer extra training in addition to the core programme.

The variability in whether hubs involved employers in the delivery of the training was reflected in responses to the participant experience survey. Most participants strongly



agreed (33%) or agreed (33%) that the training had enough involvement from construction employers. However, some strongly disagreed (5%) and others disagreed (9%), with the remainder neutral (18%).

**Figure 4.7 The training had enough involvement from construction employers**



*N = 979, Data for 44 participants (4%) was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data*

### 4.3.3 Onsite delivery model

Most hubs delivered training from one main site, but there were exceptions. First, in some rural hubs training was delivered in multiple sites because of the large distances between sites. Second, the set-up of premises was delayed in several hubs. In some cases, this was due to delays in the construction project, and in others due to delays in gaining planning consents for the onsite premises. In response, some hubs started delivery from temporary locations, for example, at a college or with a training partner.

The hubs were commonly adjoined to a building site of an employer partner. As some of the programme was classroom-based, hubs tended to use portable cabins on site for this aspect of delivery. The extent to which the hubs used the construction site varied based on the programme content and most included site tours and 'tasters' (eg mock areas in which specific tasks were undertaken).

Overall, hub staff, employers, and participants held positive views of the onsite delivery model. The benefits related to communication, opportunities for understanding the construction sector, and gaining real experience:

- By being onsite, participants got a first-hand taste of the construction sector. This helped to inform their career decisions as they saw the diversity of roles available and ways of working. In some cases, participants said they could relate to the types of

people onsite, as a female respondent to the experience survey explained: ‘Seeing women undertaking the work was encouraging to me to also undertake similar tasks’.

- Viewing a working site shaped participants’ behaviour and gave them an understanding of the reasons why employers expected certain behaviours (eg safe manual handling). The box below provides an illustration.
- The hub could offer a flexible approach to delivering work experience and tasters, as employers could involve participants on an ad hoc basis should an opportunity on the build arise which participants could either observe or participate.
- Employers valued participants that had site experience and gaining onsite experience gave participants the opportunity to draw on construction-related examples during the recruitment and selection process.
- The hub could use any spare materials from the site to facilitate real world simulations.
- The proximity supported on-going communication between hub staff and employers and enabled them to be involved in the delivery and to get to know participants.
- Where job vacancies were from the site, it ensured they were accessible for hub participants (eg travel time and location).
- Where participants found work on the site, the hub staff could easily provide ongoing support.

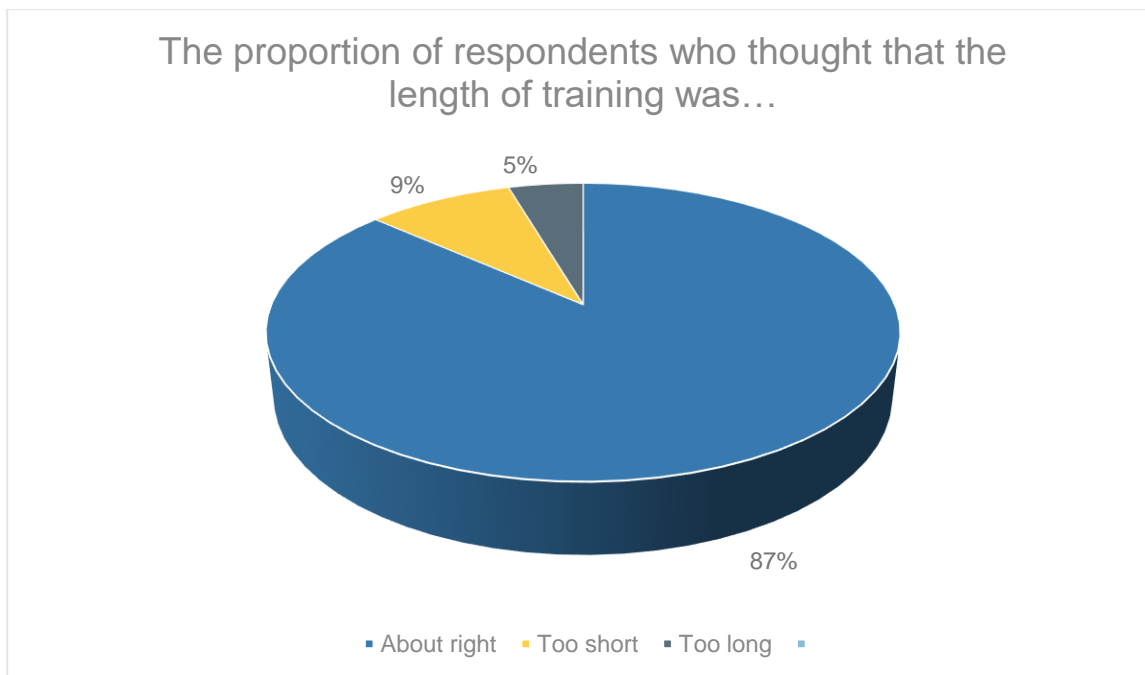
#### **Example of participant experience of onsite hub**

One female participant was unemployed prior to the programme. She was aware of the construction site and interested to see what was involved and to understand the opportunities. She attended the first week of training and a site supervisor course, which was an additional two days. Afterwards she undertook a week’s work experience on the site. During this, she was able to work shadow different people (eg the slinger team, material movement, and checking equipment) and see what work on the site entailed. The participant found the site tour especially important. It made her realise the impact of the health and safety training she was doing, as well being able to see the varied roles on the site first hand. Since the training she had been offered a permanent job on the site, and at the time of the interview had been in work for eight weeks.

#### **4.3.4 Intervention length and content**

Each intervention typically lasted one to two weeks. The core components of the programme included: working towards and testing for the CSCS card; developing employability skills; onsite tasters; and undertaking occupationally specific qualifications as required.

Respondents to the participant survey indicated that in general the length of the training was about right (87%). Figure 4.8 shows that one in ten participants (9%) felt that the programme was too short, with the remaining five per cent reporting they felt that it was too long.

**Figure 4.8 The length of the training was...**

*N = 989, Data for 34 participants (3%) was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020, Unweighted data*

There were some significant differences in the proportion of respondents saying the training was too short between participants groups:

- Women (23%) were more likely than men (7%) to consider the training too short.
- Participants that were career changers (15%) were more likely to feel that the training was too short compared to those with prior experience of construction (8%).
- Older participants were more likely to consider the training too short: 17 per cent of participants aged 50 or over, compared to four per cent of 16-20 year old participants.
- Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds (12%) were more likely to consider the training too short compared to participants with a white (8%) ethnic background.
- Participants qualified at level three or above were least satisfied with the length of the training: 13 per cent of this group considered the training too short and seven per cent felt that it was too long.

Some of those learners who felt that the programme was too short and therefore did not match to their current skill level or experience, reflected this in their open text response to the survey about their experience:

*'It was too short for what you're there to learn and I struggled with taking it all in'*

*'Feel more training is required to secure longer terms of employment. Training for a specialism would help with job security.'*

In most hubs the 'core' of the programme was focused on working towards the CSCS card test. Individual half-day or full-day sessions were delivered in the classroom and

focused on health and safety, environmental and asbestos awareness. Other components of the programme typically focused on short interventions ('taster' sessions) on entry level construction skills, such as groundwork, manual handling and working at heights, delivered either in the classroom or onsite. Further examples of interventions included mental health and resilience training and emergency first aid training.

In addition to timetabled IAG sessions, many of the hub leads described how trainers conveyed expectations of someone looking to work in construction, including timekeeping, and drug and alcohol policy on site. These were typically woven throughout the training rather than delivered in standalone sessions.

Some hubs supplemented the core programme with training in a specialised area of construction. For example, in scaffolding, dry lining, plastering, tiling, painting, and decorating, bricklaying, carpentry, abrasive wheels safety, and traffic marshalling. These components were included to address employer needs.

Other hubs supplemented the first part of the programme focused on CSCS card testing with work experience. These placements were important ways in which participants gained access to construction employers with a view to achieving a job outcome if the placement went well. Employers, for their part, viewed work experience as a way of 'trying before you buy'. However, hub staff had mixed views about offering work experience. Some hubs did not want to offer it and preferred to get candidates into entry level roles because they wanted participants to find paid work after completing their training.

Most hubs aimed to develop participants' employability as well as entry level construction skills and held sessions on employability skills, such as CV writing and interview preparation. Hubs typically also offered information and guidance on the construction sector, such as sessions on self-employment and pathways into construction.

### 4.3.5 Number and types of interventions delivered

The management information contained details of 14,430 individuals undertaking interventions. Table 4.2 demonstrates that one-quarter of participants took part in one intervention (26%), while 28 per cent received two interventions, 20 per cent had three and 26 per cent took part in four or more.

**Table 4.2 Number of interventions delivered per participant**

Number of interventions	N	%
1	3,725	26
2	4,046	28
3	2,853	20
4+	3,806	26
Total	14,430	100

*NB Data for 26 participants (<1%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018-September 2020*

The most common types of interventions were: CSCS training and testing, undertaken by 83 per cent of participants, with just over one-half of participants undertaking occupation specific training (55%), and around one-half undertaking an employability (construction-focused) intervention (51%). The employability construction-focused programmes include generic employability skills such as writing a CV, as well as providing advice and guidance about the employability skills required by the construction sector. One-third (31%) of participants received information, advice, and guidance.

**Table 4.3 Interventions delivered to participants**

Interventions	N	% of participants
CSCS training and testing (inc health and safety level one)	12,037	83
Occupation specific training	7,988	55
Employability (construction-focused)	7,364	51
Information, advice and guidance	4,445	31
Manual handling	1,820	13
Mentoring	958	7
Work experience	868	6
First aid at work	379	3
Environmental awareness	39	0
Apprenticeship	24	0
Traineeship	2	0
Other	1,207	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,131</b>	

*NB Data for 26 participants (<1%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.  
Source: CSF management information: October 2018-September 2020*

Of the occupation specific training, interventions typically focused on technical courses (75%), but there was variety with 16 per cent of participants undertaking an occupational specific intervention receiving asbestos awareness training, and 13 per cent working at height. Other courses were undertaken by fewer than one in ten participants undertaking an occupationally specific training intervention, but they illustrate the variety of employer need that the hubs were responding to.

**Table 4.4 Occupation specific training interventions delivered to participants**

Occupation specific training interventions	N	% of participants
Technical courses- entry level (Specified)	3350	61
Asbestos awareness	883	16
Technical courses- entry level (Not specified)	780	14
Working at height	709	13
House building skills	471	9
Traffic Marshall	417	8
Hazardous substances	330	6

Dumper/ roller	171	3
Understanding concrete and reinforcement	158	3
Fire Marshall	116	2
Waste disposal	84	2
Principles of steel	74	1
Slinger/ signaller	26	1
Excavator	18	0
Other	401	7
Total number of occupational specific interventions	7,988	
Number of participants	5,540	

Base: All participants undertaking an occupationally specific intervention (N= 5,540)

Source: CSF management information: October 2018-September 2020

## 4.4 Participant experience of skills development

Respondents to the participant experience survey were asked for their views about the training and support received. On each measure around four in five respondents were likely to (strongly) agree. Respondents were likely to agree or strongly agree that they were satisfied with the support they received (86%); that the training met their needs (85%); and that the training helped them to develop new skills (82%).

**Table 4.5 Participant views of the training**

	The training met my needs <sup>a</sup>		The training helped me develop new skills <sup>b</sup>		I was satisfied with the level of support I received <sup>c</sup>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly agree	438	45	434	44	488	50
Agree	392	40	373	38	353	36
Neither agree nor disagree	82	8	99	10	66	7
Disagree	29	3	25	3	29	3
Strongly disagree	30	3	35	4	41	4
Don't know/ Not applicable	13	1	13	1	7	1
Total	984	100	979	100	984	100

Unweighted data NB: Data for a.39 participants (4%); b.44 participants (4%); c.39 participants (4%), are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF experience survey: Participants registered January 2019 – March 2020

There were significant differences in views of the training depending on the age of participants:

- Participants in the younger age groups were more likely to agree that the training met their needs: 89 per cent among participants aged 16-20; 87 per cent among those aged 21-30; and 79 per cent among those aged 50 or over.
- Participants from younger age groups were more likely to report that the training helped them to develop new skills: with those aged 16-20 (88%) and aged 21-30 (88%) agreeing or strongly agreeing to this statement; 31-40 group (76%); 83 per cent of participants aged 41-50; and the group aged over 50 (71%).

Some respondents to the participant experience survey reported they had learned about the construction sector and career options, developed new skills, and increased their employability via the support from the hub:

*'The training and certifications, provided by the hubs are a big step upwards into the highly technical construction industry. The national standards used in training allows you to work safely and efficiently on any site and project. The initial training allows personal career development.'*

*'I never knew there was so much to construction and when I did this course it felt like it was something I wanted to be more involved in'*

Many participants worked towards gaining a CSCS card. Some hub leads discussed that the time taken between passing the CSCS test to the card being issued could lead to delays in them taking the next steps in the programme of support offered by the hub (eg discussing progression routes), and participants' progression into employment. This was a more widespread issue in the later stages of delivery when there was a change in the contractor issuing the CSCS cards and changes to the process. Many hubs noted that these issues around the CSCS cards prevented the achievement of some job outcomes they had secured, as employers were generally unwilling to allow recruits to work onsite without a CSCS card. There were some exceptions to this, where hubs had a strong relationship of trust with the employers they worked with, or could provide some other evidence that the participant had passed their test and was waiting for their CSCS card to be issued. The qualitative feedback from the participant experience survey, also captured this, and suggests that delays to successful participants receiving their CSCS card could negatively impact on their starting work:

*'I am still awaiting my CSCS card. I've got a job offer which may be lost if I don't receive my card soon.'*

## 4.5 Job brokerage

Finding work in the construction sector was the main motivator for participants joining the programme. The hubs aimed to support 30 per cent of employment and site ready participants into work.

Some hubs had strong commitment from contractors to recruit hub participants and they recruited to job vacancies at the end of each training programme. Other hubs ensured that the contractors onsite had committed to recruit from the hub and ensured that recruitment agencies also made this commitment and they then encouraged participants



to apply for vacancies. In other cases, hubs tried to promote roles more widely across their travel to work area with different contractors, at different sites and with agencies.

Some hubs employed or had seconded brokerage staff to support participants with their job searching activity. These staff provided IAG about working in the construction sector, provided help with CVs, looking for work and working with agencies and interview skills. Some hubs set up online portals or job boards where relevant job vacancies were posted, others described working with recruitment agencies as a key route into work for many entry level jobs.

There were varied degrees of support from hub staff to help participants access vacancies. In some hubs, job application and interviews were part of the training programme, but in others, staff reported that participants were given job search information but that job brokerage support provided to participants was light-touch. In these hubs participants were expected to look for jobs on their own, or with other organisations that they may be working with.

Several hubs felt that they had underestimated the degree of staff time and resource required to achieve sustainable job outcomes for participants and with hindsight would have invested more in this. This was echoed in some responses to both participant surveys, although there is notable variation between the hubs as these contrasting examples illustrate:

*'Well, I am a bit disappointed with the outcome of the training because I thought that I will be helped by the hub to find a job in this area. The hub itself really need to have closer ties with the construction branch to put the people back in work.'*

*'The hub was a perfect opportunity to learn more about the construction industry and gain new skills to help towards that. There was plenty of chances to engage with employers within the construction industry. I would definitely recommend the training hubs to anyone who wishes to expand their employment opportunities.'*

### Example of an approach to job brokerage

One local authority-led hub made use of an existing specialist job broker team and seconded them to work part time with the hub. These brokers worked with participants to support them into work. The brokers provided one-to-one support giving participants advice and information about starting work in construction and support to progress in work. They identified people to refer to vacancies generated by the hub coordinator and arranged group interviews and 'speed networking' events where participants met several employers one-to-one for a short time. At the end of the course they supported participants with identifying their next steps, whether this was employment or further training. They provided in-work benefit calculations to ensure that people knew whether they would be financially better off in work and by how much. These staff understood different routes into employment in construction, including the use of employment agencies, self-employment, and apprenticeships.



## 4.6 In-work support

The focus was on achieving 'site readiness' and sustained job outcomes for participants. In this respect, most of the contact the hubs had with participants after they entered work was procedural and involved getting in touch with former trainees to check whether they were still in work after 13 weeks. If participants were not in work, the contact would be focussed on supporting them to find alternative work, which could still count towards a sustained job outcome if secured within a certain timeframe.

Once participants found work, generally hubs planned to maintain contact directly, but in some cases did so indirectly via the employer where they had an existing relationship. Support in between starting work and 13 weeks tended to be on an ad hoc and informal basis, and reactive, responding where there was an issue, such as with attendance. This was due to the level of staffing resource, which did not allow for more structured, proactive support.

## 5 Longer-term programme outcomes

The hubs aimed to support 30 per cent of their employment and site ready participants to find and sustain work for at least three months. This chapter details the programme outcomes planned to result from securing sustainable job outcomes identified in the theory of change (ToC): an increase in the employment rate in construction among local residents; increased income from work in construction; and progression in work of new starters in the construction sector (for example, through apprenticeship starts).

### Key findings

- Many CSF participants who found work had previously been unemployed, suggesting that the CSF programme offered substantial benefits to individuals. Consequently, there is potential for a longer-term impact on employment rates in the sector, but this is not evident in available data.
- There were no contractual targets related to in-work progression, and as such hubs did not focus on this. Hub leads identified barriers to in-work progression including the short-term nature of many employment contracts in the industry, use of recruitment agencies and high levels of self-employment.
- Survey respondents working in construction had positive perceptions of job quality (83% rated this as good or very good) and job security (70% rated this as good or very good). They tended to be less positive about progression and career development in the industry (60% rated this as good or very good). Overall, younger respondents were more likely to feel that there were opportunities for development and progression within the construction industry.
- Hubs aimed to show that construction entry level roles offer decent wages. Participants mostly entered entry level positions, including labourers, gatekeepers, traffic marshalls and bricklayers, reflecting the labour demands of the industry. Most survey respondents working in construction agreed their income was higher than when they started with the hub (58%) but nearly one in five disagreed (18%).
- 23 per cent of participants who achieved a sustained job outcome started an apprenticeship.
- The CSF programme has long-term ambitions to support an improved image of the construction industry. Around 4 in 10 survey respondents agreed that the construction industry is a highly desirable sector to work in and that there are training and development opportunities in construction. This increased to nearly 6 in 10 for younger participants. Interestingly, respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to have favourable views on these issues than those from white backgrounds. These survey results suggest that the CSF programme has the potential to contribute to improving the image of the construction industry in the long term.

## 5.1 Increased employment rate in communities

Participants completed interventions to become certified as 'site ready', and some moved into employment. Many participants (82%) were previously unemployed, indicating substantial benefits for individuals and a potential longer-term impact on employment rates in the sector.

A key factor contributing to hubs' ability to increase employment was screening and the provision of information, advice, and guidance to participants. This ensured participants were well-informed about what working in the construction sector entailed and had better knowledge about how to secure employment. Participants particularly valued this component of the intervention.

The interventions gave participants relevant technical skills and tickets for entering the construction industry, combined with improving their work-readiness and employability skills. For example, one hub participant who had been unemployed for 10 years said they were rather shy and introverted but, since completing the hub training course, their confidence had grown, since the course had given them regular exposure to others in a supportive environment. Participants were largely positive about their experience of engagement with the hubs and they felt that it was unlike other employment programmes they had been engaged with before, as candidates have vacancies awaiting them at the end of the programmes.

## 5.2 In-work progression

Across the hubs, there was limited focus on supporting in-work progression. As several hub leads highlighted, their contract for delivering the CSF did not include any targets related to in-work progression; their focus was on achieving 'site readiness' and sustained job outcomes at three months.

Some hubs provided in-work support to participants who found employment after finishing their training. However, this was described as reactive rather than proactive, and was targeted at addressing any issues that arose either for the employer or for the participant during the first few weeks of their employment.

When asked about in-work progression, several hub leads highlighted features of the construction industry that presented barriers to career advancement. They noted the short-term nature of many employment contracts in the industry, coupled with the fact that many entry-level workers find jobs via recruitment agencies and/or are classed as self-employed, which can inhibit, at least in the short-term, any linear progression in terms of pay. One recruiting employer noted that construction is a 'high turnover industry' with staff starting and leaving roles quickly based on project requirements. They were not sure how much progression was realistic given the 'nature of the beast'.

A few hubs noted that they expected participants to be able to gain higher paying roles after acquiring further experience, although some had the view that this would have to be supported through additional training and tickets. In the small number of cases where

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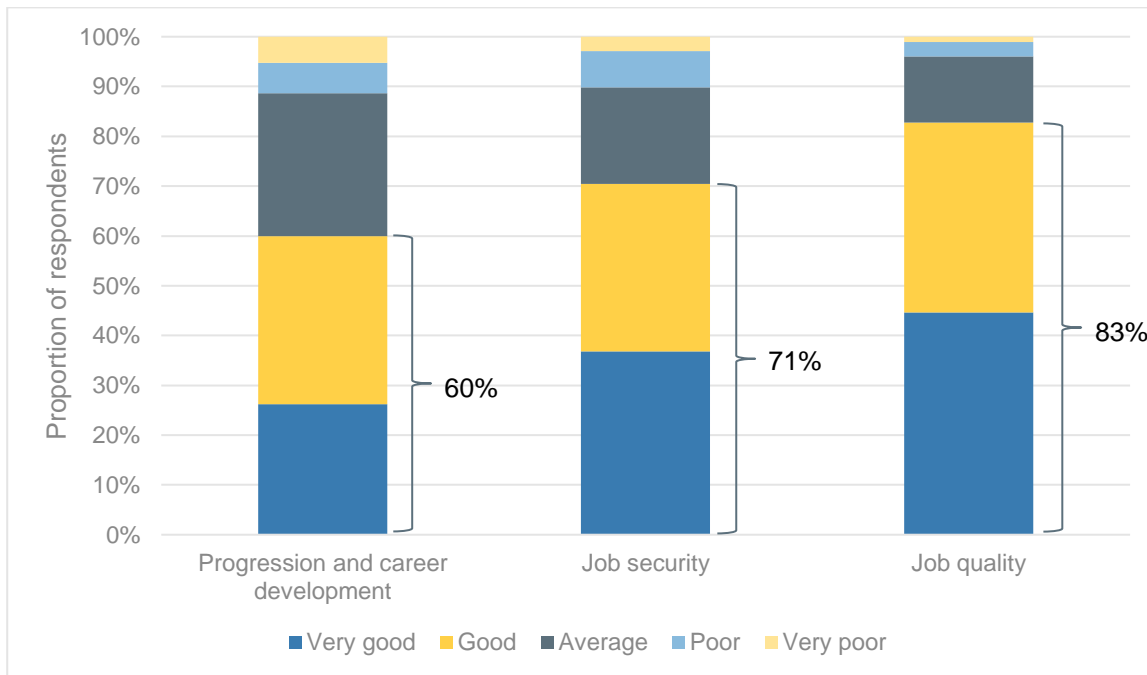
hubs cited examples of CSF participants progressing in-work, this was supported through completing further courses (for example, traffic marshall courses) which enabled participants to move into higher paying roles. Higher level courses, such as NVQs, were another progression route, but supported by other funding streams or were co-funded by the employee and employer concerned.

The individual case studies with CSF participants who had completed their hub training some months previously broadly supported these findings. There was a common view that the main benefit of the CSF hubs was enabling them to obtain their CSCS card to access jobs and get onsite. After entering work none of the participants interviewed described receiving in-work support from their hub. One interviewee was clear that they wanted to take on more supervisory duties and complete the related tickets that would enable them to access these positions, but they did not talk about the hub supporting them with this process.

Figure 5.1 depicts the views of respondents working in construction at the time of the survey, on three areas relating to in-work progression: job quality, job security, and progression and development opportunities.

- Job quality was perceived the most favourably, with 83 per cent of respondents rating it as good or very good, compared with just four per cent who rated it poor or very poor. There were no differences between groups.
- Views concerning job security were also positive, with 70 per cent of working respondents rating this as good or very good.
- Most respondents to the outcomes survey rated opportunities for progression and career development within the construction industry positively, with 60 per cent rating it good or very good. Participants in later survey cohorts viewed opportunities for progression and development less positively than those in earlier cohorts. It is likely this is influenced by the labour market effects of the pandemic: 70 per cent of respondents rated opportunities positively in November 2019, compared with 48 per cent of survey respondents in August 2020. Overall, younger respondents were more likely to feel that there were opportunities for development and progression within the construction industry: one-third of those aged 16-20 (32%) and one-third of those aged 21-30 (33%) considered opportunities for progression and career development in construction very good. This fell to 27 per cent and 21 per cent amongst the 31-40 and 41-50 age groups respectively. Only 9 per cent of those aged 51 or older rated progression and career development opportunities very good.

**Figure 5.1 Participant views on measures of in-work progression and job quality**



*Unweighted data*

*Bases: Progression and career development = 652; Job security = 274; Job quality = 278*

*Source: CSF progression and outcomes survey*

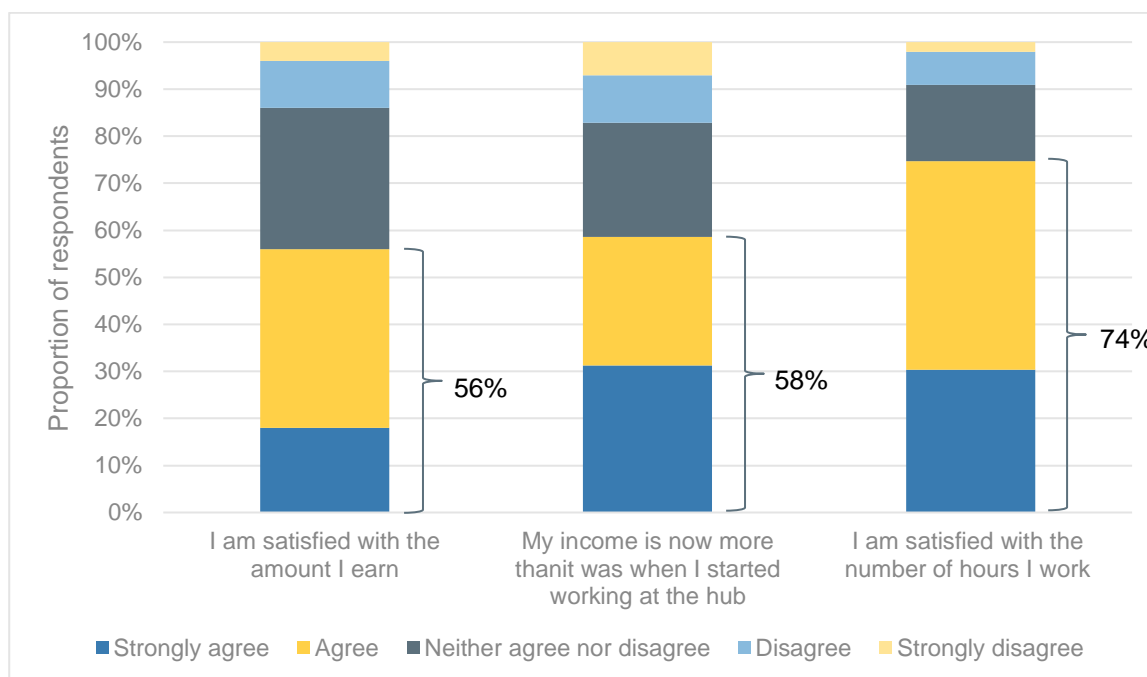
### 5.3 Increased income from work

Hubs wanted to demonstrate the positive levels of income that construction offers in comparison to some entry-level positions in other sectors. Some hubs explicitly committed to recruiting to vacancies that paid the (London) Living Wage.

According to the management information, the types of roles participants entered were varied entry-level positions, including labourers, gatekeepers, traffic marshalls and bricklayers. These positions reflect both the labour demand of the industry and the courses currently offered by the hubs.

The outcomes survey asked those working in the sector about their experience of earnings. The results are depicted in Figure 5.2. Most were generally satisfied with their earnings: 56 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Nearly one in three (30%) neither agreed nor disagreed that they were satisfied with the amount they earned. Most working respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their income was higher than when they started working with the hub (58%). However, 18 per cent of working respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their income was higher than when they started working with the hub.

The majority (75%) of working respondents were satisfied with the number of hours they worked. Of the small number who were not satisfied (N=24), half stated the number of hours worked was too many with the other half stating it was too few.

**Figure 5.2 Respondents' views on income, outcomes survey**

*N = 279 for satisfaction with amount earned; N = 270 my income is now more than it was when I started working with the hub; N = 273 I am satisfied with the number of hours I work*

*Source: CSF progression and outcomes survey, Unweighted data*

There were some examples of participants starting as ground workers but becoming plant operatives with an increased salary to reflect their increase in technical skills and experience. Hubs reported that these were powerful case studies to help recruit new participants. Some hubs observed that the easiest participants to place into work were those who had previous experience and needed certification as opposed to participants who had not worked or younger people without experience.

## 5.4 Apprenticeship starts

Twenty-three per cent of sustained job starts were apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are a good alternative to entry-level roles and offer potential for steady in-work progression, ensuring longevity of employment. Nevertheless, staff in a few hubs reported that encouraging employers to consider participants for apprenticeship programmes had proved challenging. They considered that some employers were not sufficiently knowledgeable about apprenticeships and this made them reluctant to engage. The length and uncertainty of contracts was also cited as a barrier to committing to taking on an apprentice. Conversely, Section 106 and corporate social responsibility clauses in contracts were considered by hub staff to be factors that will enable the achievement of the apprenticeship start outcome in the longer-term.

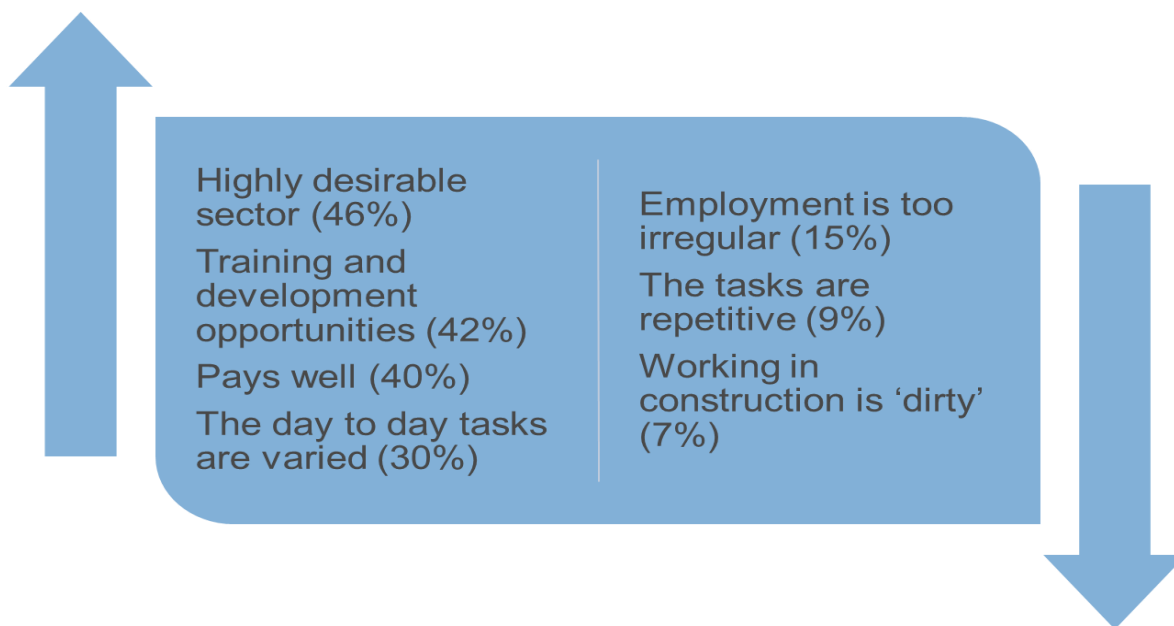
## 5.5 Sector outcomes

In the long term, hub leads anticipated that programme outcomes would lead to further benefits for the sector including a reduction in unfilled vacancies and skills shortages across the construction sector, a more diverse workforce, and an improved image of construction among potential recruits.

A few hubs engaged with young people in schools and colleges to discuss the range of roles available in the construction industry and leads hoped that this work would promote construction careers and challenge images of construction among the future workforce. Respondents to the outcomes survey were asked about their views of the construction sector by indicating agreement with a series of statements. Statements with the highest levels of agreement were, that the construction industry is a highly desirable sector to work in (45%), and there are training and development opportunities within construction (42%). Of the negative statements, the one most agreed with was that employment is too irregular (15%), and that tasks are repetitive (8%). These results are visualised in Figure 5.3. There were some significant differences between levels of agreement between groups:

- Those in the 21-30 age cohort were most likely to say that construction is a highly desirable sector (57%), compared with 45 per cent across all ages. This age group was also most likely to say that the construction sector pays well (60%), compared to 40 per cent on average.
- Half of respondents from ethnic minority groups (51%) were more likely to consider construction a highly desirable sector to work in, compared with respondents with a white background (42%). Again, just over half of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (52%) felt there are training and development opportunities in construction compared with four in ten (39%) of those with a white background.



**Figure 5.3 Views on employment in the construction industry**

*N = 652, data for 49 participants (7%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.  
Source: CSF progression and outcomes survey, Unweighted data*

Looking at the contribution to diversifying the construction workforce, overall women make up 13 per cent of the construction workforce and eight per cent of the hub participants were female, but just one per cent of the manual construction workforce is female. Within the overarching target for engagement with under-represented groups, most hubs did not have a specific female participation target which could have prioritised the engagement and recruitment of women into the sector.

While participants from ethnic minority groups make up 34 per cent of CSF participants, a much larger proportion than in the sector overall (7%), and working in manual construction occupations (5%), there are large differences in the ethnic diversity of hub areas. For example, in one hub area, one in a hundred people working in construction were from ethnic minority backgrounds, whereas around one in four people working in construction in London, Manchester and Birmingham were from ethnic minority backgrounds. There appear to be increases in ethnic minority participation in construction in some hub areas; two notable cases are in Manchester and Luton. In Manchester in 2017, 10 per cent of people working in construction were from ethnic minority backgrounds, and by June 2020, this had risen to 26 per cent. In Luton, the proportion of the construction workforce from ethnic minority backgrounds increased from 6 to 17 per cent during the same period, and the hubs may have contributed to this change.

## 6 Sustainability and future plans

### Key findings

- Only two hubs reported that they were not planning to continue to deliver the CSF onsite training model.
- Many hubs had applied for another round of CSF funding to support ongoing delivery.
- Other funding sources being considered to enable ongoing delivery of elements of the hubs' work were local authority funding from Section 106 monies or to support social value or the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget funding. These funding sources, even when pooled, were typically much smaller than current funding so any sustained delivery will take place at a smaller scale.

Most of the hubs saw a long-term need for their training offer to help address local skills shortages and to support construction and regeneration projects in the area. Only two hubs were not planning to continue to deliver the CSF model in future. They were not planning to continue because the CSF model had not proved sustainable for them, in part due to difficulties securing job outcomes. For the hubs seeking to continue, many had applied for, and were hoping to secure, a second round of CSF funding. Many hubs noted that it was only via the CSF funding stream that they could continue to operate on the same scale.

Other potential funding sources being considered depended on partnerships, relationships with employers, other funding sources used within the lead organisation, and the availability of regional funding. Aside from another round of CSF funding, other funding streams being considered to continue to deliver elements of the hubs' current training offer included:

- Local authority funding where some hubs felt they would be able to secure monies from Section 106 commitments. A few hubs were considering whether Section 106 or other Corporate Social Responsibility clauses could be used to secure employer contributions to the hub in the longer term.
- Council funding to support social value.
- A portion of the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget where the hubs held this funding.

It was common for several of these sources to be considered, with a potential pooling of resources being explored. In general, these alternative funding sources were small compared to the CSF, and most hubs said they would have to scale down their current offer if they became solely reliant on these other streams.

Aside from funding, hubs reported several other factors would determine their ability to sustain operating. For instance, some hubs referenced their strong employer and partner

relationships as a key determinant of their continued success alongside their attachment to ongoing long-term construction projects. Where projects spanned many years, staff felt that this would ensure a demand for labour and the hub services. Similarly, many hubs felt that they had overcome efficiency issues that had affected their work in the early stages. They felt that they would be able to improve efficiency going forward because they were more established and had built their reputation in the local area. This would reduce costs of marketing and engagement in future as referral routes were established.

## 7 Conclusions

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The Construction Skills Fund (CSF) model was innovative due to the combination of wide access to basic construction employability skills and entry qualifications for free, and the fact that it was delivered onsite, alongside the close involvement of employers specifying their needs and linking to job vacancies. The hubs filled a gap in publicly funded training and presented stakeholders with new approaches to training and recruitment of entrants into the construction industry. Collectively they exceeded their participant engagement targets, registering a diverse range of participants and training over 13,000 people to become employment and site ready. The hubs evidenced the achievement of 3,155 job outcomes sustained for 12 weeks, but performance on this measure was affected by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic; participants enrolling in later cohorts were less likely to find sustained employment than those enrolling earlier in delivery. Disentangling the effects of scaling-up the programme with large numbers of participants engaged in the final quarters of delivery, and the effects of a deep economic shock and poor labour market conditions is difficult. However, the labour market change and job losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic mean that ways to support retraining and reskilling have even greater importance now than when the CSF model was launched. Where delivered well, and with the right conditions, the CSF model is an effective means to support retraining and entry-level recruitment into the construction sector.

This chapter synthesises the lessons learned for the programme design and management, the successful features that form a pathway to employment and identifies those whom the programme has been most effective at supporting into work. Lastly it suggests learning for similar interventions, such as those that form part of the National Skills Fund, the £2.5 billion initiative into which the National Retraining Scheme has been integrated.

### 7.1 Lessons learnt

#### 7.1.1 Programme design and management

Several aspects of the programme design supported its success at retraining participants and giving them skills employers required. These included the cornerstones of employer involvement, a training programme responsive to employers' requirements, and onsite delivery which had several benefits for hub staff, participants, and employers, supporting their three-way engagement and communication. The local determination of what constituted being employment and site ready, and the programme's broad eligibility criteria, enabled the hubs to tailor training to the needs of local employers. The programme length (one to two weeks on average) was attractive to both participants and employers because it enabled successful participants to start work relatively quickly. Demonstrable experience of these cornerstones of successful delivery – engaging

employers, responding to their changing requirements, and onsite delivery – should be scored very highly and be integral to the selection process in the commissioning of similar future initiatives.

The time required to mobilise a hub and develop capacity is noteworthy. This involves establishing staffing, building infrastructure (the onsite hub itself), gaining the trust of employers, and providing support and brokerage to move employment and site ready participants into jobs. The lead-in time required to establish a new hub was variable and depended on the strength and scale of existing resources and partnerships as well as issues pertaining to the site. These included factors such as whether a new building was required to house the hub and associated planning consent, and delays or changes to the timing or scale of planned building works. There were risk factors associated with each of these elements which increased the length of time required to establish a hub. Several of the hubs less successful at meeting programme targets underestimated the length of time required to establish their infrastructure prior to implementation and this shortened their delivery period. These initial delays put some hubs behind schedule with meeting their targets, with no realistic prospect of meeting these milestones in the remaining funding period. Understanding these risks and identifying contingencies, such as delivering from other locations on a temporary basis, is important to manage a timely set-up process in future programmes.

When commissioning future programmes, consideration should be given to the scale of targets for providers developing capacity and building new partnerships compared to those for providers that are already well-established and have existing networks. For projects building capacity a gradual increase in the number of participants and proportion supported into work over the contract period would be realistic and would recognise the development process. The short-term nature of the funding (18 months) did not enable all hubs to fully develop and test the model; some needed longer funding and delivery timelines to realise the potential of their model. This is illustrated in the achievement of job outcomes, where existing hubs supported a larger proportion of participants into work than the new hubs. The case studies suggested a link between the extent and maturity of employer involvement in the hub's design and delivery and the attainment of job outcomes. It may have been more realistic for hubs that were developing capacity and capability to have had a lower target for sustained job outcomes conversion that reflected their different stage of development, with existing providers working to a higher conversion rate.

From a policy perspective the programme aimed to support career changers from employment in other industries to enter construction. From an employers' perspective the purpose of the programme was to fill vacancies where there was a skills-shortage. How these two ambitions come together could have been more clearly articulated in the design and commissioning process. For example, while some participants were in work at the time of enrolment, the majority were out of work but had recent work experience in other sectors. Whether the model seeks to retrain unemployed participants in a style akin to the Sector-Based Work Academies overseen by Jobcentre Plus; or uses skills-based models focused on retraining, aligned to the Department for Education's National Skills Fund is important to understand the alignment and priorities of the programme. Supporting

participants to retrain alongside working would have required a different delivery model, because many potential working participants could not attend training during the day as they would have incurred a loss of wages. Lack of eligibility criteria was noted as a strength, but some segmentation and tailoring of the model to participant needs based on their work status could have been helpful.

There is a balance to be struck in programme design between quantity of participants and quality of participant support and outcomes; in this case determined by the number of employment and site ready participants compared to the number of sustainable job outcomes. The programme aimed to support 30 per cent of employment and site ready participants into sustained job outcomes. In some instances, the quantity of participants that hubs needed to engage to meet their agreed employment and site ready targets affected the personalisation of the training and support participants received. Hub staff did not always have the time to get to know participants, their circumstances and the issues that prevented their entry into employment. If the programme's target for employment and site ready participants had been lower overall, arguably this would have left more staff time and resource to develop and maintain employer relationships and to support participants on a one-to-one basis. Evidence on what works in employment programmes consistently points to better results from a more personalised approach with a strong emphasis on job brokerage, suggesting that the same (or potentially even better) job outcomes could have been achieved with this model. Related to this, several hub staff felt they should have had a greater focus on screening participants for job readiness and motivation to work in construction, and should have factored in additional time during the set-up phase for employer engagement to better support achievement of job outcome targets.

The programme had a target for engaging participants from under-represented groups and/or non-traditional entry routes. While the programme met this target overall, there are groups within this where engagement was lower than the industry average, although higher than the proportion in manual roles into which the hubs tended to recruit. Having distinct targets for each under-represented group, such as women, would have enabled a greater focus on these groups and encouraged hubs to undertake specific activities to engage diverse groups and source suitable vacancies. In setting targets of this type, consideration should also be given to the ethnic diversity of an area. Some hubs were able to meet their target for under-represented groups due to the fact that they delivered in an ethnically diverse area.

Hubs in urban areas, with many (large-scale and long-term) construction projects nearby, found it easier to flourish and meet targets, as they had a pool of closely located potential employers and participants, supported by large-scale construction activity. Hubs covering more rural areas, or smaller dispersed construction sites, were more likely to have had to work across several sites with lower volumes of recruitment and to have to consider transport and access to a greater degree. Some hubs in areas where transport infrastructure was poor, suggested that in future they would consider funding their own transport options (ie a minibus) to help participants access training. Although not a focus for the evaluation, there is potential for economies of scale when working with larger sites.

## 7.1.2 A pathway to employment

Figure 7.1 shows how the hubs have created new pathways into employment in the construction sector. There are several aspects the hubs need to work effectively:

### **Good working relationships with a broad range of partner organisations**

These should be partners who understand the programme and refer a diverse range of suitable participants, including participants from groups traditionally under-represented in construction, and people without construction experience. Generally, the hubs built and extended partnerships with existing organisations to generate a significant number of referrals. Many of the partners worked with a diverse range of residents and this joint working helped to ensure that the hubs exceeded the target for the proportion of participants from under-represented groups overall.

### **Effective and robust screening**

This ensures the potential job readiness of participants with one to two weeks training and motivation to work in construction. This was particularly important given overall low levels of unemployment, and reportedly complex barriers to employment, and lack of recent work history, among many of the out of work individuals. In future, in the context of higher unemployment, the screening process will need to continue to ensure a motivation to work in the sector.

### **The provision of information, advice, and guidance (IAG) for participants**

IAG gives participants an understanding of available roles, working conditions and hours, and the ways of working in the sector. In the best cases, potential participants that needed more support prior to entering the programme were referred or signposted to other partners.

### **Onsite delivery**

This helped to facilitate links and effective relationships between employers, hub staff and participants. Where it worked well, participants were able to access taster sessions or work experience on the site, undertake tours, and gain a better understanding of working on a construction site, the job roles available, and the relevance and importance of the skills they were learning in the classroom, for example about health and safety.

### **A flexible training programme**

Training programmes can be tailored to meet the needs of participants (eg may be shorter or longer depending on their previous experience and skills) and tailored to meet the recruitment needs of the employer. For example, to include occupationally specific additional qualifications where there was a suitable vacancy and candidate. Flexibility created better alignment between employer requirements and participants' skills. A one to



two-week programme seemed generally to meet the needs of most participants, but required effective screening.

### **Engagement with recruiting employers in the programme design and delivery**

This helps to ensure that employers trust the calibre of participants and understand the skills they will have developed, gives participants reassurance that the programme can lead to employment, and increases the likelihood of job outcomes. Where employers committed to interviewing participants this was also reported to increase job outcomes. Participants particularly appreciated the direct involvement of employers in the delivery of the programme and valued the insight they could give about the careers available. It convinced participants of the employers' intention to hire suitable candidates and gave the hub credibility. The length and scale of the building programme the hubs were attached to affected how they worked with employers. While most had several employer relationships, some hubs benefited from large builds with significant volumes of recruitment and in other hubs recruitment opportunities were more dispersed.

### **Providing mentoring and advice beyond the completion of the programme**

This can support job search and help participants to find work, and once in work to ensure sustainment or to facilitate changes to other job roles. Several hub leads believed that the programme could have worked better to support in-work progression and commented that given the nature of the training offer and the targets, work was mainly focused on providing basic skills, knowledge and accreditation to find entry-level work in construction. Aspects of practice that may increase in-work progression included communicating to employers that hub staff expect their successful participants to be retained and developed; and hub staff providing ongoing mentoring and support to participants to look for suitable work and training even after they have found their first job. Consideration could also be given to other ways identified in previous research as being effective at supporting in-work progression, such as:

- multi-organisation collaborations to support individuals to progress in the construction sector (eg across the supply chain);
- regular career conversations and the development of line management capability; and
- structured career development pathways mapping different roles, the competencies required in different roles, and the training and development opportunities that facilitate movement between the roles.<sup>23</sup>

### **Seeking to secure quality employment, for example, by supporting recruitment to vacancies at the (London) living wage**

There was local variation in this depending on the employer-hub relationships, volume of building work and recruitment needs, and the extent of reliance on agencies for vacancies. Participants from existing hubs who found work were likely to have higher

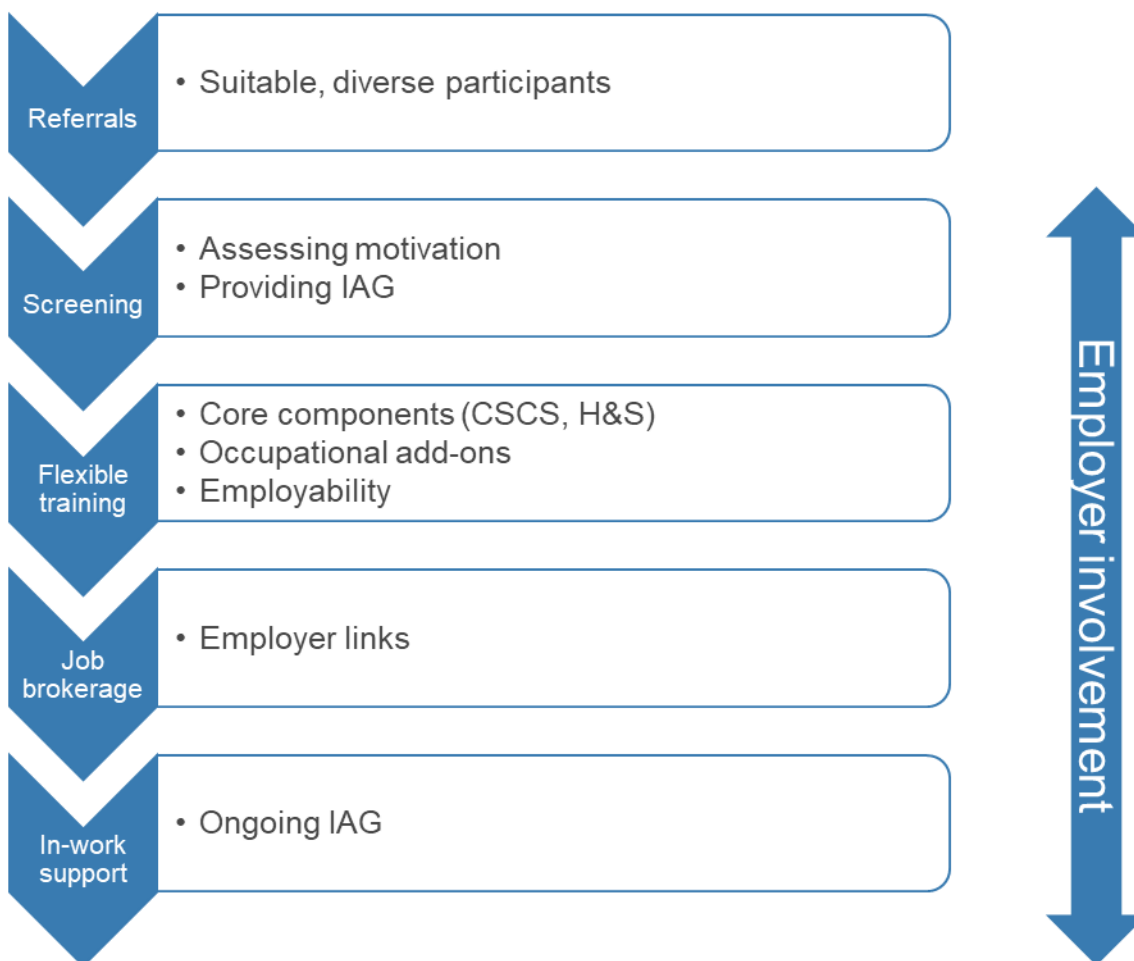
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<sup>23</sup> Eg IES (2019), *Progression in Employment*, IES Report 518, Institute for Employment Studies

wages than participants from new hubs. This may reflect the maturity of those hubs and their relationships with employers with whom they have established trust in their ability to deliver quality candidates, as well as the needs of the long-term and large-scale construction projects that existing hubs tended to be attached to.

The occupations where many participants found work are those where the sector has identified skills shortages, such as general labourers and plant and machine operatives.<sup>24</sup> The CSF model is therefore an effective way for the industry to meet these recruitment demands. Additionally, the hubs have engaged a high proportion of younger participants, which is positive in the context of challenges posed by an ageing workforce, ensuring a skills supply and recruiting new talent into the industry.

**Figure 7.1 A pathway to employment**



Source: IES, 2020

<sup>24</sup> CIOB (2019), *Shortage Occupations in Construction: A cross-industry research report*, Chartered Institute of Building

### 7.1.3 An employment pathway for everyone?

CITB and the construction industry have a focus on attracting people from diverse backgrounds to the construction industry to meet employer skills needs and ensure equality of opportunity. To support this ambition, the hubs had targets to engage with under-represented groups, including people from minority ethnic backgrounds. While the programme had some success with regard to diverse engagement (for example one in three participants (34%) was from an ethnic minority group), there were differential outcomes with regard to sustained employment. Specifically, participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were 10 percentage points less likely than those with a white background to obtain sustained employment, holding all other factors constant. Further, participants from ethnic minority groups were less likely to have a sustained job outcome than participants with identical qualification levels from a white ethnic background, except for those with no or entry level qualifications. There were also significant differences in sustained job outcomes by whether a participant had a disability or long-term health condition, and by age.

It is worth considering whether the recruitment mechanisms used by hubs are open to bias in some respect. Some participants may need more support in the job application process than others – for example, support disclosing health conditions to potential employers or making adaptations – or recruitment practices may threaten inclusivity in some way. For example, employers may not have diversity strategies or value diversity to the same extent as the programme or may place emphasis on assessing the ‘cultural fit’ of a candidate, which typically uses subjective and unstructured approaches. There may be several explanations for the differing job outcomes rates, but a clear message to recruiting employers about diverse recruitment (not just local recruitment to meet Section 106 obligations) would have helped to align the programme’s vision with delivery in practice. Job outcome targets could have also been set by participant type to ensure outcomes were delivered equitably for all groups. The hubs could have checked and where appropriate challenged the planned recruitment processes and encouraged the use of those that are more structured and involve more than one person, and are therefore less open to unconscious bias. Use of unstructured interviews where interviewers do not use the same questions for all candidates or where only one interviewer is present can result in candidates being assessed on different criteria and individual bias entering the recruitment process. The hubs could also have encouraged employers to monitor their own workforce diversity by collecting and analysing data which might also have helped to unify the programme objectives with reasons for employer involvement.

Some interviewees distinguished between the characteristics of participants most suited to benefiting from the CSF. A few hub leads noted that the short courses were valuable in securing job outcomes for those who were not too distant from the labour market. However, it was recognised that people who were long-term unemployed tended to have higher support needs, and generally required a more intensive intervention. Hubs highlighted the importance of initial screening and assessment to ensure that longer-term unemployed people were signposted to appropriate alternative provision early on. It is important to note that the engagement phase of the CSF took place during a time of

relatively high employment, when people who were unemployed tended to be more distant from the labour market and to have higher levels of training and skills needs. With the increase in unemployment rate caused by the pandemic and resulting recession, operating the onsite model in this changed context is likely to result in participants with a different skills profile, and more recent work experience.

### **7.1.4 Partnership working**

Establishing an effective partnership model was central in ensuring that the hubs offered a coordinated response to local labour market demand; engaging with both potential participants and employers. Hubs had mixed success forging working relationships with national organisations with regional branches. A programme of national-level support to broker relationships with relevant organisations that could support participant engagement (such as Jobcentre Plus) or employer engagement (local CITB partnerships) would have been helpful. These relationships differed on a case-by-case basis.

Generally, Section 106 agreements were viewed as a helpful way to start engagement with employers, as the hub offered them a solution to fulfilling their obligations under the agreement. However, there were reported to be mixed levels of commitment among employers, and varying degrees of enforcement from Local Authorities. In the longer term, it would support the work of the hubs if these agreements were enforced. Building strategic relationships with Local Authorities could support the success of the hub model in the long run and in other locations. Where the use of Section 106 agreements works well as a lever for engagement, consideration could be given as to how to strengthen future agreements even further by setting out more ways in which employers can support the hubs. For example, future Section 106 agreements could offer the opportunity to specify contributing to and supporting the hub (eg hosting an onsite facility). These could be extended to also include provision of industry placements for the T-level qualifications, supported with activities in the hub (although colleges are not always involved as partners with the hubs).

## **7.2 Learning for wider skills and employment policy**

The hubs offer a useful model to combine two needs: requirement of employers to fill skills shortage vacancies; and short interventions to enable (unemployed) people to retrain for work in a different sector. Both of these needs are likely to become more acute in the coming months in the context of the UK leaving the European Union which will affect labour supply, and the labour market restructuring resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. The model could continue to be useful for the construction sector, and other industries.

The hubs supported career changers. Career changers who are working and have financial commitments are unlikely to leave their job to retrain. To engage this group, consideration should be given to the timings of the programme. The hubs delivered the programmes during daytimes on Mondays to Fridays; alternative times (eg evenings or weekends) over a longer period would be more effective at reaching this group if they are a future priority. This would enable them to complete the programme alongside working.

The hubs offer many salient learning points about the time taken to build capacity, the risks involved in working with the uncertainty faced by businesses, and the pathway to employment. The model has worked best where it is employer-led and is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing requirements and participant needs. The initial screening and information, advice and guidance, and the support following the training itself to assist achievement of a job outcome, are critical.



## 8 Technical Appendix

### 8.1 Evaluation framework

The evaluation framework details the research themes and specific questions considered in the evaluation, and the sources of evidence for each. The questions denoted with (MI) will primarily be answered by the analysis of management information. The questions shown with (PS) will primarily be captured in the online participant survey. Data has been triangulated against each theme.

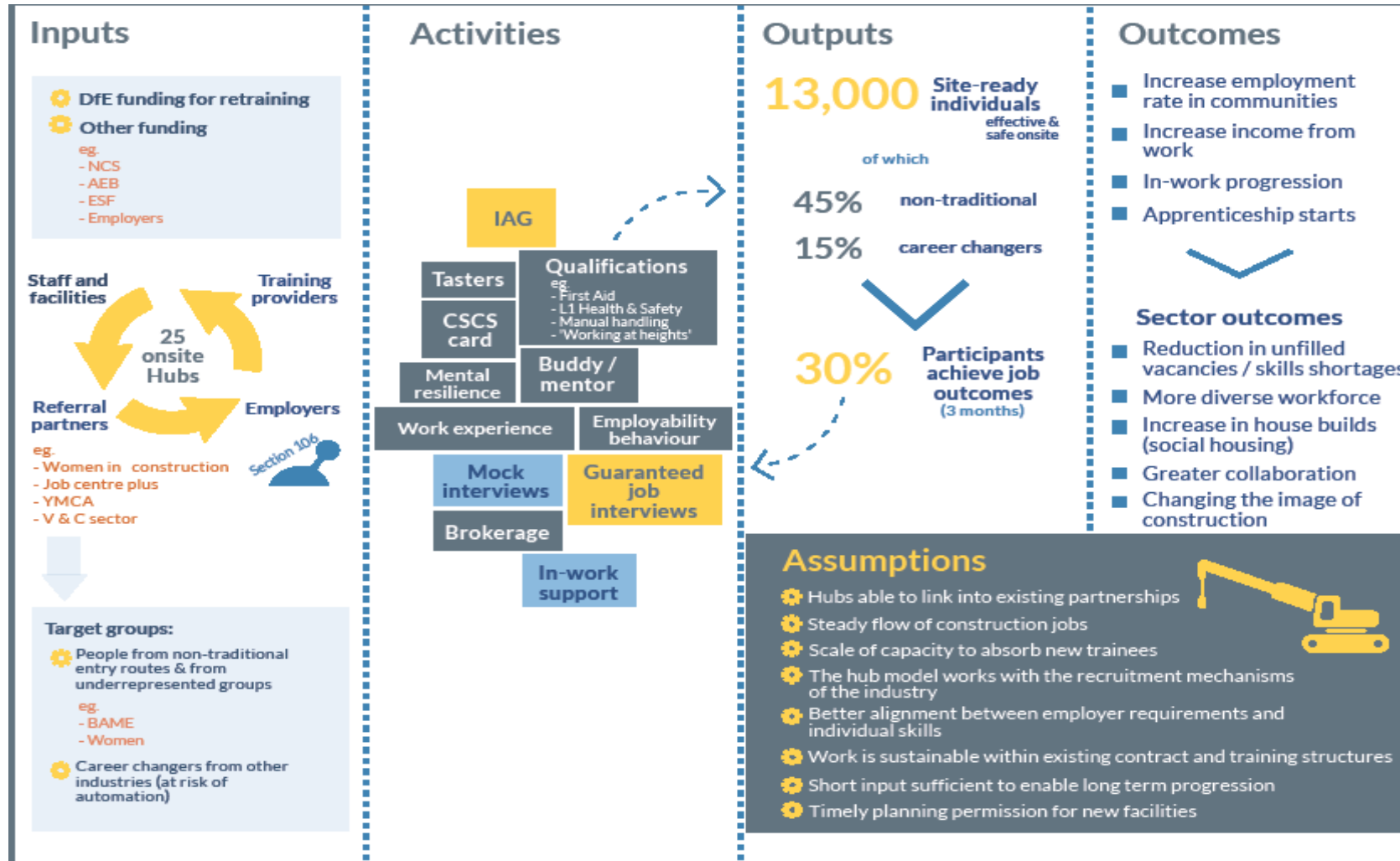
Research theme	Detailed questions	Evidence sources
Project set-up	How did the hubs build on existing partnerships? Referral, jobs brokerage, skills boards etc. What were the planned governance structures? What were the planned delivery mechanisms? What (if anything) varied from the bid as the project progressed? How was the hub designed to complement other funding sources? How important was Section 106 to engaging employers? How/why was this effective? How could it be more effective?	Case-study: lead contractor, partners, employers and learner interviews
Project context	What context is the hub operating in? How has this changed since the programme started? (eg economic context, level of unemployment, demand for housing, Brexit, use of technology in construction methods, use of technology in learning).	Case-study: lead contractor, partners, employers, and learner interviews
Delivery	<p><b>Project management</b></p> How is the project staffed? What are the roles/backgrounds of the staff involved? How much resource has been given to each element (eg outreach, activities, and job brokerage)?	Case-study: lead contractor, partners, employers and learner interviews
	<p><b>Outreach and engagement</b></p> How was the project communicated to employers and (via partners) to participants? What methods were most effective and why?	MI



Research theme	Detailed questions	Evidence sources
	<p>How were you able to break down preconceptions about the construction industry and encourage participation from a broad range of individuals?</p> <p>How effective were existing partnerships at reaching the diverse target groups (non-traditional routes, career changers)? What are the demographic characteristics of the participants (gender, age, qualifications etc.)? (MI)</p> <p>How were participants identified and recruited?</p> <p>What were learners/employers motivations for engagement (PS)? What were their expectations (PS)?</p> <p><b>The intervention</b></p> <p>How were employers involved in determining the intervention? How readily were you able to meet their needs? What timescales were you working to? Did they offer specific vacancies or provide an overview of their future staffing need?</p> <p>Did the hub deliver on one or more sites? Why? Did the hub deliver on (or near) a construction site? What were the benefits and challenges of this?</p> <p>How was training procured? How has the quality of training/delivery been assured? How did you determine the length of the intervention and balance of its components? What made this vary?</p> <p>The number and types of intervention delivered (MI). The duration of programme support (MI).</p> <p>What has been the learner experience of and satisfaction with the intervention? Inc. flexibility, personalisation, employer involvement, level of support, developing skills, support to find work, length (PS).</p> <p>What barriers to delivery have been experienced? How have they been overcome?</p> <p>What have been the key success factors? Why?</p> <p>What creates a successful pathway to employment?</p>	Participant survey
Outputs and outcomes	<p><b>Outputs</b></p> <p>What outputs has the project achieved? (MI) Number of site-ready individuals? (MI) Number from non-traditional construction backgrounds (MI). Number of job outcomes (sustained for three months) (MI).</p> <p>What occupations have participants' secured work in? (MI) What explains the patterns in the types of occupations participants have found work in? What are the reasons why participants have secured non-construction jobs?</p>	<p>Case-study: lead contractor, partners, employers and learner interviews</p> <p>MI</p> <p>Participant survey</p>

Research theme	Detailed questions	Evidence sources
	<p>The weekly pay and working hours of employment (MI). Views of the weekly pay and working hours participants have secured (PS). How would you rate the job quality and security (PS)? How would you rate the opportunities for progression within the sector (PS)? How and why does this vary?</p> <p>Why has/had not the hub achieved its targets? What have been its strengths and what have been the challenges?</p> <p>Have employers had the scale of work and capacity to recruit hub participants?</p> <p>How have you worked with the pre-existing recruitment methods of employers?</p> <p>Has the short-intervention provided by the hubs been sufficient as a step into the industry?</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>What outcomes/impacts has the project achieved? (change in employment rate, increase income from work (PS), apprenticeship starts)</p> <p>Once in employment, how do you try to ensure the employers provide successful participants with further training and development opportunities and in-work progression?</p> <p>To what extent is sustainable progression possible for hub participants within the existing contract structures of the construction industry (eg prevalence of sub-contracting and self-employment)?</p> <p>What effect has the project had on the wider sector? Why? (skills shortages, a more diverse workforce, increase in house building, greater collaboration, changing the image of construction)</p> <p>What activities/training might have occurred without the project?</p>	
Sustainability and wider lessons	<p>What are the main lessons relating to working with career changers?</p> <p>What is the future of the project? Which elements will continue?</p> <p>What learning is there for future delivery? T-levels?</p>	Case-study: lead contractor, partners, employers and learner interviews

## 8.3 Theory of Change for the Construction Skills Fund



## 8.4 Evaluation measures of outputs and outcomes

The table below takes the output and outcomes identified in the ToC and details how these are measured in the evaluation.

**Table 8.1 Outputs and evaluation measures**

Outputs / outcomes	Evaluation measure
# site-ready individuals	Management information
# participants from non-traditional backgrounds	Management information
# career changers (particularly those 'at risk of automation')	Partial from the management information. This draws on participants employed in other sectors, whose jobs may or may not be those at risk of automation.
# of job outcomes (three months)	Management information
Increase in employment rate in communities	Two sources of information can be used to measure employment in construction as a percentage of all employment: Annual Population Survey (APS) and Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES).
Increase in income from work	Question in learner survey (not feasible to assess from secondary sources, or MI)
In-work progression	Case-studies; learner survey
Apprenticeship starts	MI
Reduction in skills shortages / unfilled vacancies	Case-studies: employer views. A quantitative measure is available from the Employer Skills Survey (ESS). The 2017 survey reported in 2018. An updated dataset will not be available before the final CSF evaluation, but could be reviewed afterwards. A measure is available from the CITB Construction Skills and Training in the Construction Industry survey of incidence of difficult to fill vacancies. This last reported in 2018 and is next due in 2020.
More diverse workforce	Diversity of participants that have achieved job outcomes from the CSF MI compared to the demographic characteristics of the construction workforce (gender and ethnicity) (APS).
Increase in house builds	Outside of the timeframe of the evaluation.
Greater collaboration between partners in the sector	Case-studies: plans for future joint working beyond the CSF
Changing the image of construction among the prospective workforce	Case-studies. Measure of attractiveness of the sector from the CIAG survey focuses on young people (14-18 year olds). This would be partial, as most hubs are focusing on individuals of working age.



## 8.5 Qualitative data collection

The primary method of qualitative data collection chosen for the evaluation was longitudinal case-studies. Interviews were undertaken at three time points in order to gather evidence about the progress of the hubs as they developed.

Initial visits were undertaken between December 2018 and January 2019 to 24 of the hubs, and interviews were undertaken with the hub leads and key staff. This initial visit highlighted the diversity of the hubs; they each had a different starting point and varied partnership structures for example. Therefore, each hub was a case-study for the evaluation.

The majority of the second visits to hubs were undertaken between May and June 2019, with three completed in September 2019 due to delays in hub progress. The third and final case-study visits were conducted between January and March 2020.

There were two case-study formats:

- Intensive: 2-3 hub staff and partners, 2-3 participants, and two employers were interviewed (6-8 interviews in total).
- Light-touch: 2-3 hub staff and partners were interviewed.

Interviews were primarily conducted face-to-face, but telephone appointments were offered where these were preferred (eg by employers).

For the second visit, the depth of case-study was chosen to ensure a spread of hubs that planned to primarily serve one construction site, and those that planned to support several construction sites. The other dimension considered was the hubs' planned approach to jobs brokerage and whether they were training for direct employer vacancies or planning to fill estimated employer vacancies in construction. For the third visit hubs that had made significant progress in their delivery since earlier in the programme were selected to be depth case-studies.

In total 255 interviews were completed in waves two and three. Table 8.2 details the achieved number of interviews by respondent type.

**Table 8.2 Number of achieved interviews, by respondent type**

	Number of interviews completed		Total
	Wave 2	Wave 3	
Hub staff	66	50	116
Wider partners	19	15	34
Employers	18	20	38
Participants	34	33	67
Total	137	118	255

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Each of the interviews with hub leads lasted 60-90 minutes and covered the following topics:

- hub aims and ambition;
- partnership working, governance and local context;
- delivery against profile since the initial evaluation visit;
- staffing and resourcing;
- marketing and engagement;
- training and the wider intervention;
- employer involvement;
- job brokerage; and
- strengths and challenges in the approach, including lessons learnt.

Interviews with partners were tailored to their involvement in the hub, lasted around 30 minutes, and where relevant sought feedback on:

- engagement with the hub;
- generating referrals;
- delivering the training;
- delivering information, advice and guidance;
- supporting jobs brokerage; and
- strengths and challenges in the approach, including lessons learnt.

The interviews with employers were designed to be 15 to 30 minutes in length, depending on the extent of their involvement with the hub. They covered:

- their reasons for engaging in the hub;
- involvement in hub activities, including the design and delivery of provision;
- recruitment from the hub; and
- strengths and challenges in the approach, including lessons learnt.

The interviews with participants were undertaken either individually, or in small groups, depending on their availability and preference. These were supplemented by a small number (c.8) interviews with respondents to the experience survey indicating that they would be willing to take part in a telephone interview. The purpose was to gain further insight into what had happened to a small number of participants in the longer-term. The interviews lasted around 30 minutes and covered:

- their employment and learning background;
- motivations for joining the hub;
- support received and views of this;



- changes in circumstances since working with the hub (where relevant); and
- perceived outcomes from working with the hub and reasons.

The data were written up for each case-study into a thematic template to ensure triangulation of viewpoints within each case. The research team held an analysis workshop to discuss emerging themes, points of similarity or difference between cases, and to highlight good examples. The case-study write-ups were then analysed and reported thematically, based on the structure provided by the theory of change.

## 8.6 Analysis of management information

This section of the technical appendix details the steps taken for the management information analysis. The hubs were required by CITB to complete an MI return. Table 8.3 details the data provided.

**Table 8.3 Fields within the management information return**

Sheet	Field	
Trainee starts	Forename	
	Surname	
	Date of Birth	
	Address	
	Postcode	
	Email address	
	Phone number	
	Gender	
	Ethnic group	
	Learning Difficulty or Disability/Health problem	
	Previous level of educational attainment	
	Previous core subject of educational attainment	
	Date attainment of core qualification	
	End date of most recent employment if not currently employed	
	Primary sector of current or most recent employer	
	Current or most recent occupation	
	Consent to participate in evaluation	
	Employment and site ready	CSF start date
		Intervention type
Provider		
Start date		
Completion date		
If not employment ready, date of leaving training programme		
Reasons for leaving programme		
Date site and employment ready		
Trainee considered from non-traditional entry or under-represented group		

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	Trainee from other occupation
Sustained employment	Date employment commenced
	Construction Occupation
	Weekly Salary (GROSS)
	Weekly Working hours
	Type of employment
	Primary construction project
	Employment offered/started but declined/ended - please give reason
	Date of 12 weeks employed

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The analysis in this report uses data audited by CITB. The management information covered all participants in the Construction Skills Fund and was then cleaned and validated using STATA.

Data were received as a singular excel spreadsheet containing data from 23 hubs where audited management information were received. These were imported into Stata and went through a thorough cleaning process. The categories were matched to the 'reference data' sheet which included the values to be used in the respective fields within the data. Should the data not match this coding framework the values were set to missing. Dates were removed and set to missing for impossible values. The analysis of management information is split into three parts based on when the information was collected during the intervention.

1. The first is information collected at enrolment and the time they participated in the programme. This covers background characteristics of the participant, the intervention and whether the individual became employment and site ready.
2. The second is whether the individual started employment.
3. The final analysis is whether the individual had a sustained employment outcome (for 12 weeks) and what were the characteristics of this employment.

Figure 8.1 shows a graphical representation of how the sample size diminishes because of invalid or incomplete information and which base sizes were used within the three analyses. Green shows the employment and site ready sample; gold, the employment starts sample; and grey, the sustained job outcomes sample.

#### The exclusion criteria for the hub delivery analysis

1. Removal of duplicate values within each hub. There were a few participants who were supported by more than one hub given their geographic proximity. These have been removed from the analysis of management information, but some remain in the programme claims data because they received different interventions.
2. Discarding cases where there was no Construction Skills Fund start date.
3. Discarding cases where the individual was recorded as being employment and site ready before they started on the programme. This is because we are unsure whether the individual became employment and site ready due to activities undertaken within the hub.

#### The exclusion criteria for job outcome analysis

In addition to the above:

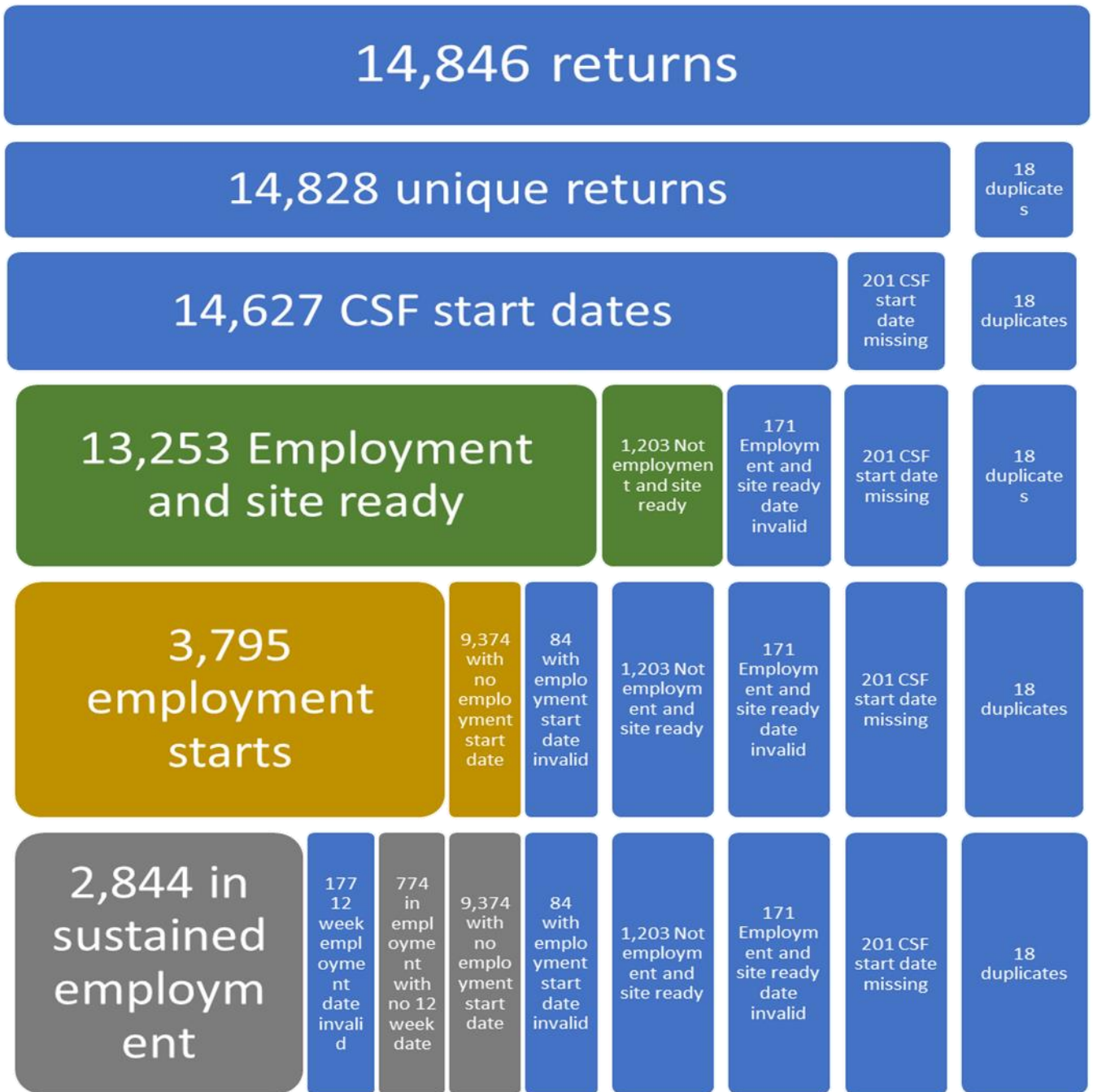
1. Excluding those who are not employment and site ready.
2. Excluding participants who have an employment start date prior to employment and start ready date.

The exclusion criteria for sustained employment outcomes (employed for 12 weeks)

In addition to the above:

1. Excluding those who have a 12 week employment date prior to their date of employment commenced.
2. Setting employment status, salary and working hours equal to missing if not employed at 12 weeks.

Figure 8.1 Sample selection in Management information analysis



Source: IES analysis of Construction Skills Fund Management information, 2020

There were several management information fields which had a large number of missing values at enrolment these are detailed in **Error! Reference source not found.**

**Table 8-4 Variables with non-response at enrolment**

Variable	# of non-response	% of population with non-response	# of insufficient information/invalid responses	% of population with insufficient information/invalid responses
Whether the trainee was considered from a non-traditional background	1,632	11	-	-
Whether the trainee was from another occupation	4,911	34	12	<1
Employment status at enrolment	368	3	46	<1
Ethnic group	360	2	345	2
Age group	-	-	169	1
Disability status	1,134	8	14	<1
Level of education attainment	1,384	10	2,603	18

*NB: Hubs were not required to collect all these fields as part of their MI return*

*Source: IES analysis of Construction Skills Fund Management information, 2020*

**Table 8.4 Likelihood of sustained job outcome (Logistic regression)**

	B	Standard error	P value
<b>Gender (Reference category: Male)</b>			
Female	0.001	0.019	0.95
<b>Employment status at enrolment (Reference category: Employed)</b>			
Unemployed	-0.029	0.016	0.07
In education or training	-0.177***	0.039	0.00
<b>Age group (Reference category: 16-17)</b>			
18-20	-0.002	0.023	0.94
21-24	-0.030	0.024	0.21
25-29	0.000	0.024	1.00
30-34	0.029	0.025	0.24
35-39	-0.030	0.026	0.25
40-44	-0.011	0.028	0.68
45-49	-0.060*	0.028	0.03
50-54	-0.011	0.029	0.70
55-59	-0.046	0.034	0.17
60+	-0.075*	0.037	0.04
<b>Disability status (Reference category: Has a disability or long-term health condition)</b>			

	<b>B</b>	<b>Standard error</b>	<b>P value</b>
Does not have a disability or long-term health condition	0.050**	0.015	0.00
<b>Ethnic background (Reference category: white)</b>			
Ethnic minority	-0.095***	0.011	0.00
<b>Highest level of prior education (Reference category: No qualifications/ Entry qualifications below level one)</b>			
level one	0.060***	0.016	0.00
Full level two	0.067***	0.014	0.00
Full level three	0.069***	0.019	0.00
Level four +	-0.011	0.021	0.58
<b>Trainee had a background in construction (Reference category: Trainee is from another occupation)</b>			
Trainee is from construction	0.070***	0.011	0.00
<b>CSF survey batch (Reference category: Batch 1- October to December 2018)</b>			
Batch 2- January to March 2019	0.025	0.032	0.43
Batch 3- April to June 2019	-0.045	0.031	0.14
Batch 4- July to September 2019	-0.112***	0.029	0.00
Batch 5- October to December 2019	-0.197***	0.028	0.00
Batch 6- January to March 2020	-0.208***	0.028	0.00
<b>Hub was pre-existing to CSF (Reference category: No)</b>			
Yes	0.093***	0.011	0.00
<b>N</b>	<b>5,905</b>		

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Source: IES analysis using CSF management information. Results shown are marginal effects.

## 8.7 Online survey of participants

The evaluation used two online surveys of participants as a cost-effective way of seeking participant views. To maximise the response, and to capture data over time in as consistent a way as possible there are two surveys:

- The experiences survey (undertaken c.2-5 months after registration); and
- The outcomes and progression survey (c 5-8 months post enrolment).

Both surveys were administered online to participants registered with the hubs and providing a valid email address and giving their consent to be contacted via this means for the evaluation in the management information.

The experience survey was issued every three months to participants registering between January 2019 and March 2020 (15 months of delivery). Respondents received two reminders: one a week into fieldwork, and another after two weeks. Each survey batch

was in the field for three weeks. In total there were 1023 full responses the experience survey from respondents enrolling with the hubs, a response rate of 17 per cent.

The outcomes survey was issued every three months to participants registering between January 2019 and March 2020 (15 months of delivery). Respondents received two reminders: one a week into the fieldwork, and another after two weeks. Each batch of the survey was in the field for three weeks. In total there were 701 full responses the experience survey from respondents enrolling with the hubs, a response rate of 11 per cent.





**Table 8.5 Overview of survey sampling process and responses: participant surveys**

Enrolment date	# of participants	# giving consent to be contacted	Surveys sent out	Bouncebacks	Valid sample	# of completes	# of partial completes	Valid # of responses	Response rate (%)
<b>Experience survey</b>									
B2: Jan- March 2019	1,190	874	796	39	757	133	27	145	21
B3: April-June 2019	1,325	1274	1147	167	980	110	27	115	12
B4: July-Sept 2019	2,602	1388	1379	186	1193	229	22	242	20
B5: Oct-Dec 2019	2,251	1,580	1,457	217	1,240	225	12	231	19
B6: Jan-March 2020	3,561	2448	2431	407	2,024	272	27	290	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>11775</b>	<b>3536</b>	<b>3326</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>2852</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>1,023</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Outcomes survey</b>									
B1: Oct-Dec 2018	846	507	457	87	370	35	22	48	13
B2: Jan- March 2019	1,190	874	790	121	669	76	27	92	14
B3: April-June 2019	1,325	1274	1134	172	962	128	16	140	15
B4: July-Sept 2019	2,602	1381	1376	184	1192	121	47	140	12
B5: Oct-Dec 2019	2251	1458	1444	208	1236	128	9	134	11
B6: Jan-March 2020	3561	2448	2417	405	2,043	170	20	147	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>11775</b>	<b>7942</b>	<b>7618</b>	<b>1177</b>	<b>6472</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: IES, 2020



Table 8.7 compares the demographics of survey respondents to those registered with the hubs overall. Female participants were over-represented in the survey (12% and 13% compared to 8% of participants overall). The ethnic make-up of the survey sample was similar to the population of participants overall. However, participants with no qualifications were less likely to take part in the survey than those with higher levels of qualifications, which is likely to result in non-response bias. The survey data presented throughout the report are unweighted. The purpose of the weights would be to re-balance the sample of survey respondents, so it matches the population (all CSF participants) on key characteristics. Despite some slight differences in the proportion of responses by gender and qualification level, the samples have not been weighted due to missing data in the MI. 28 per cent of participants do not have a qualification level recorded and therefore we cannot say with confidence that the available data accurately represent the population. Furthermore, while women were more likely to answer the survey than men, men account for roughly 9 in 10 in both survey populations and in the MI population, so make up the majority of respondents. In addition, there are relatively few significant differences in the survey data by gender and qualifications, meaning men and women and those with lower/higher qualifications had similar survey responses.

**Table 8.6 Comparison of characteristics of survey respondents with the MI data**

Demographic	% of hub participants	% of experience survey respondents	% of outcomes survey respondents
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	92	88	86
Female	8	12	13
Prefer not to say	0	1	1
<b>Age</b>			
16-17	15	11	7
18-20	19	20	20
21-24	12	12	10
25-30	12	11	14
31-40	18	18	20
41-50	13	16	14
51-60	9	11	12
60+	2	3	3
Prefer not to say	-	1	1
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
white	67	66	66
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	19	5	6
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic groups	6	5	6
Asian/Asian British	6	18	17
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	-	2	2
Other ethnic group	3	3	4

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>% of hub participants</b>	<b>% of experience survey respondents</b>	<b>% of outcomes survey respondents</b>
<b>Highest level of educational attainment</b>			
Full Level four or above	9	12	15
Full level three	12	21	22
Full level two	36	28	29
level one	22	11	11
Entry level/ other qualifications below level one	5	7	5
No qualifications	16	6	6
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	-	15	12
<b>Learning difficulty, disability or long-term health condition</b>			
No	83	82	15
Yes	17	12	80
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	-	5	5
<b>Any dependent children or caring responsibilities</b>			
No	-	70	29
Yes	-	28	68
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	-	2	3

Source: IES, 2020

## 9 Additional tables

### 9.1 The profile of hub participants

**Table 9.1 Enrolment, by employment status**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Unemployed	11,557	82
Employed	1,783	13
Full-time education	286	2
Casual work	252	2
Self-employed	164	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,042</b>	<b>100</b>

*NB: Data for 414 participants (3%) was missing, incomplete or invalid*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

**Table 9.2 Enrolment, by gender**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	1,157	8
Male	13,190	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,347</b>	<b>100</b>

*NB: Data for 109 participants (less than 1%) was missing, incomplete or invalid*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

**Table 9.3 Enrolment, by ethnicity**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
White	9,246	67
Mixed	815	6
Asian / Asian British	771	6
Black / Black British	2,554	19
Other	365	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,751</b>	<b>100</b>

*NB: Data for 705 participants (5%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

**Table 9.4 Enrolment, by age band**

<b>Age band</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
16-17	2,105	15
18-24	4,385	31
25-34	3,173	22
35-49	3,110	22
50 or over	1,514	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,287</b>	<b>100</b>

*NB: Data for 169 participants (1%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

**Table 9.5 Enrolment, by learning difficulty/ disability/ health problem status**

<b>Learning difficulty/ disability/ health problem status</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem	2,210	17
Learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem	11,098	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,308</b>	<b>100</b>

*NB: Data for 1,148 participants (8%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

**Table 9.6 Enrolment, by highest level of prior educational attainment**

<b>Highest level of prior educational attainment</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
No qualifications	1,657	16
Entry level	557	5
level one	2,346	22
level two	3,719	36
level three	1,288	12
Level four or above	902	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,469</b>	<b>100</b>

*NB: Data are not shown for 3,987 participants (28%) as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*

## 9.2 Sustained job outcomes: who found work?

**Table 9.7 Job outcome, by gender**

Job outcome	Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%
Sustained job outcomes	2,654	22	189	18
No sustained job outcome	9,177	78	872	82
Total	11,831	100	1,061	100

Base: participants who were employment and site ready

NB Data for 109 participants (1%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020

**Table 9.8 Job outcome, by ethnicity**

Job outcome	White		Ethnic minority	
	N	%	N	%
Sustained job outcomes	2,101	26	635	15
No sustained job outcome	6,108	74	3,505	85
Total	8,209	100	4,140	100

Base: participants who were employment and site ready (N=12,349)

NB Data for 643 participants (5%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020

**Table 9.9 Job outcome, by disability status**

Job outcome	Disability		No disability	
	N	%	N	%
Sustained job outcome	358	19	2,281	23
No sustained job outcome	1,566	81	7,707	77
Total	1,924	100	9,988	100

Base: participants who were employment and site ready and provide ethnicity (N=11,912)

NB Data for 1,067 participants are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020



**Table 9.10 Job outcome, by age**

Job outcome	16-20		21-29		30-39		40-49		50+	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sustained job outcomes	1,026	25	683	23	547	22	316	19	253	18
No sustained job outcome	3,127	75	2,338	77	1,988	78	1,390	81	1,168	82
Total	4,153	100	3,021	100	2,535	100	1,706	100	1,421	100

Base: participants who were employment and site ready and provide age (N=12,836)

NB Data for 156 participants (1%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020

**Table 9.11 Job outcome, by prior level of qualification**

Job outcome	No or entry level		Level one or two		Level three or above	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sustained job outcomes	383	19	1,397	26	398	20
No sustained job outcome	1,620	81	3,972	74	1,631	80
Total	2,003	100	5,369	100	2,029	100

Base: participants who were employment and site ready

NB Data for 3,591 participants (28%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020

**Table 9.12 Job outcome, by whether part of a new or existing hub**

Job outcome	New hub		Existing hub	
	N	%	N	%
Sustained job outcomes	1,505	18	1,339	30
No sustained job outcome	7,091	82	3,057	70
Total	8,596	100	4,396	100

Base: participants who were employment and site ready

Data for 522 participants (4%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid

Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020

**Table 9.13 Job outcome, by prior construction experience**

Job outcome	Trainee new to construction		Trainee has prior experience	
	N	%	N	%
Sustained job outcome	1,050	19	808	27
No sustained job outcome	4,399	81	2,200	73
Total	5,449	100	3,008	100

*Base: participants who were employment and site ready*

*NB Data for 4535 participants (35%) are not shown as their data was missing, incomplete or invalid.*

*Source: CSF management information: October 2018 – September 2020*