

Evaluation of the Construction Skills Fund 2

Final report: March 2022

Kate Alexander, Rosie Gloster, Charlotte Edney, Jonathan Buzzeo, Rakhee Patel, and James Cockett

Institute for Employment Studies

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Institute for Employment Studies
City Gate
185 Dyke Road
Brighton BN3 1TL
UK

Telephone: +44 (0)1273 763400
Email: askIES@employment-studies.co.uk
Website: www.employment-studies.co.uk

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Summary

Introduction

The Construction Skills Fund 2 (CSF2) was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and administered and implemented by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). Funding of £7.5 million was awarded to 14 projects (hubs) to deliver training and job brokerage. Training activities took place between April 2020 and March 2021, with participants' outcomes monitored until September 2021. Hubs were mobile training facilities situated on construction sites which provided training to become construction site ready for people who were either unemployed or looking to change career. The hubs aimed to be employer-led, meeting the skills needs for specific roles and creating entry level pathways into the construction sector through the delivery of information, advice and guidance, training and testing for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, training for in-demand entry level construction skills, and providing job brokerage.

The key performance indicators were to have a minimum of 6,000 employment and site ready (ESR) individuals (by March 2021) of whom half were to obtain a job offer with sustained employment of 12 weeks (by September 2021). The hubs aimed for 45 per cent of participants to be from non-traditional entry routes or under-represented groups,¹ and for 15 per cent of participants to be changing careers from employment in other industries. Hubs submitted bids prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

This evaluation aimed to explore pathways to employment through the hubs, assess the quality of employment outcomes, explore cost effectiveness of the programme, and draw on lessons learned for skills and employment support policy. The report draws on analysis of audited management information covering April 2020 to September 2021, and longitudinal hub case-studies, including interviews with hub staff, partners and participants, and a value for money analysis using information provided by the hubs.

Performance against targets

The CSF2 overachieved its engagement targets. The proportion of participants from non-traditional entry routes and/or groups under-represented in the construction industry was 54 per cent (target 45 %). Forty-six per cent of participants were career changers from another sector (target 15 %).

The programme met the target for the number of ESR participants, training 6,373 participants against a target of 6,000. The programme achieved 2,934 sustained job outcomes of 12 weeks (target 3,000), with 46 per cent of ESR participants finding

¹ Non-traditional entry-routes were people without training or work experience in construction. Under-represented groups were women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and people with a disability.

sustained work. This means that the programme achieved 98 per cent of its target of half of all ESR participants entering sustained employment. This rate of progression of ESR participants into sustained employment differed considerably between hubs ranging from over 60 per cent to below 30 per cent. Of those participants that sustained job outcomes, 50 per cent found work within a week of becoming ESR and 73 per cent of all sustained job outcomes started within a month of an ESR date.

Participants from white backgrounds, with qualifications at or below Level one, and those with a background in construction were significantly more likely than their counterparts to achieve a sustained job outcome. There was no significant difference in the likelihood of achieving a sustained job outcome between genders. After controlling for all other factors: participants from ethnic minority backgrounds were 17 percentage points less likely to find sustained work than those from white backgrounds.

Onsite hub strategy and set-up

The main reason given by hubs for applying for the CSF2 was the success of CSF1, which generated positive results for the hubs, their partners, and participants. Hubs received good feedback from the sector. They were keen to build on this success and the infrastructure in place to meet continued strong demand from employers for the CSF2.

Hubs were required to detail skills needs in the sector locally in skills matrices. These varied depending on local needs but showed a consistent strong demand for entry level roles across the hubs. The pandemic led to changes to these requirements and the number of vacancies available. There was a pause in many developments during the first national lockdown whilst organisations put in place health and safety measures, and recruitment fell sharply. The effects of the pandemic varied between areas. Some hubs were less affected, such as those attached to large builds, whereas others felt their employers became more risk averse. Employers asked the hubs for training around Covid-19 focused health and safety, such as infectious disease control, and started recruiting for new roles such as Covid-19 cleaners.

The onsite hub model relies on partnership working between public, private, and voluntary sector organisations to provide training, generate referrals and source vacancies. Partnership structures were established during the CSF1, but hub staff continued to form new partnerships throughout the CSF2. Most partnership development was with employers. This reflects the hubs aim to be employer-led, the programme's emphasis on achieving job outcomes, and the turbulence in the labour market during the delivery period which affected recruitment and vacancies.

Programme delivery

Hubs used the referral infrastructure built for the CSF1 and continued to work with a variety of partners including Jobcentre Plus, local authorities, further education providers, and community organisations to engage participants. Participants referred by a range of local partners demonstrated a good understanding of the hub and felt well-informed about the offer. Prior to enrolment, hubs undertook screening of participants to gauge eligibility and motivation. Due to the move to remote delivery, essential criteria for participation also

included access to IT and IT skills. Staff felt that remote screening was less effective as it was harder to get to know participants and gauge their motivation.

Hub staff saw an increase in the number of their participants that were 'close to the labour market' due to pandemic-related job losses and shut down industries but found it harder to target specific under-represented groups during the pandemic because they were less able to undertake outreach. Participants in the programme were mostly male; only six per cent were female. Just under a third (31 %) of participants were from an ethnic minority background, well above the industry average of six per cent. Participants were mostly younger, with 50 per cent aged 16-30. Ten per cent of participants reported a disability or health condition. Over half of participants had low or no prior qualifications (17 % no qualifications, 38 % Level one or below).

Hubs adjusted their delivery plans due to social distancing restrictions. Some delivered in-person (for some of the time), others had a blended approach, and others used remote learning to deliver a mix of taught online classes and independent learning. Courses were shorter and content focused on the core elements of health and safety and CSCS. Hub staff and employers felt that remote training adequately prepared participants to work in construction and gave them essential qualifications and knowledge of health and safety. Participants with prior experience in the industry were the most confident in their readiness to find a job following the training. Among participants who were new to the industry, some felt they would need work experience to be able to find a role and/or further training. During remote delivery staff reported greater issues with attendance and more participants left the course without completing. As much of the training was self-directed it took participants longer to complete. This challenge to get participants ESR was compounded by the closure of CSCS testing sites during lockdowns.

Finding sustainable work

To enable the 50 per cent job outcome target, the hubs allocated more staff time and resource to developing and maintaining relationships with employers. Hub staff described having an active role when it came to sourcing vacancies and had regular, direct contact with employers. However, restrictions on the number of people onsite meant staff could not as readily network with contractors face-to-face, a method that had previously been useful for sourcing vacancies.

Hubs took various approaches to jobs brokerage. A few hubs described working with employers to identify vacancies before they started training candidates to fill them. This was an effective approach which enabled hubs to be responsive to employer needs and support a greater degree of job matching between participants and contractors. Most participants would then be signposted to vacancies that the hub became aware of once they had started the training. The hubs did not always have enough vacancies to meet their job outcome targets and sourced additional vacancies via online job websites.

Many participants recalled receiving support from the hub after completing their training, these were most commonly emails about job vacancies. However, views were mixed on the adequacy of the support in assisting their job search. Some participants secured employment as a direct result of the hub support, whereas others felt that the vacancies

sent were not suited to their individual circumstances. Other participants did not receive job support and found employment through their own job search, either via an agency or through personal contacts. Some participants who had not had any further contact had wanted more support from the hub.

Across all the hubs, entry level labouring positions were most common. Most participants who found sustained work (62 %) were in operative roles (eg scaffolder, ground worker, bricklayer, painter and decorator), with 14 per cent in labouring roles and 18 per cent starting an apprenticeship. Staff and employers reported that the sector was recruiting candidates who were 'easy wins', such as those with prior construction experience, given the uncertain economic climate. Several staff felt that career changers were most difficult to support remotely, because this group benefited most from attending the hub in person.

Most of the participants that had secured work (88 %) were in full-time work (35 hours a week or more) with three per cent finding employment on a part-time basis, seven per cent becoming self-employed, and two per cent working on a casual basis. In terms of pay just over half (51 %) of participants in work earned between £300 and £399 a week and just under a third (32 %) earned £400 or more a week.

Participants who had found work in construction since completing their training had varied experiences. While several had a positive experience, others were not satisfied with various aspects of their role including rates of remuneration, length of contract (which could be temporary) and the high level of demand placed on them in the post. A few had chosen to leave construction roles because of this, or because the nature of the activities they were asked to carry out was not what they expected. Some participants had worked in non-construction related roles since completing their training, and several of these participants still wanted to work in the industry but felt that local opportunities were scarce. Participants that had been unable to find employment in construction since completing their training and had remained unemployed or were on furlough from their current role, identified a range of reasons why they had been unable to find the right employment opportunity. These included a shortage of vacancies, lack of construction work experience, and delays in receiving CSCS cards.

Cost effectiveness and value for money

The pandemic affected hub's costs and resourcing. Permitting the training to be delivered online supported hubs to continue to deliver without increasing costs. However, other adaptations sometimes increased costs, including promoting the programme on social media; increased costs for CSCS testing due to pandemic related disruption; provision of additional one-to-one support; and additional employer engagement.

Value for money was assessed by calculating the cost per participant of becoming ESR and by the achievement of a sustained employment outcome. Considering solely DfE funding, the average cost of the programme was £1,158 per ESR outcome and £2,516 per sustained job outcome. There was relatively small variation between hubs in the cost per ESR participant. However, the variation was larger for sustained job outcome costs. In one hub this was just over £5,500 per participant, whilst at the lower end, cost per participant sustained job outcome was under £2,000. When including additional funding

from other sources, the costs per participant outcome were slightly higher, with £1,201 for each participant becoming ESR and £2,609 per sustained employment outcome.

The CSF2 was more cost effective than the CSF1. The cost per ESR participant remained relatively equal between phases 1 and 2, which implies recruitment drives and the ability of hubs to get participants to achieve site readiness were relatively unchanged. However, in the CSF1 the average cost per sustained job outcome was £6,502, compared with £2,516 in the CSF2 (DfE funding only). The fall in costs per outcome was driven by the CSF2 programme doubling the proportion of participants securing sustained job outcomes from 23 to 46 per cent.

There were few suitable comparator programmes beyond the CSF1, but analysis showed that the CSF2 was more expensive than other employment support programmes at achieving job outcomes. However, other programmes were not exclusively providing construction skills training and certification and tended to be national programmes which were likely to have benefited from some economies of scale. Overall, the CSF2 added value by meeting a gap for funded CSCS training, which reduced barriers to entering the construction industry and skills gaps in the sector. It has also added value by engaging some under-represented groups and supporting their entry to the sector.

Sustainability and future plans

All the hubs planned to continue their work in some form beyond March 2021 as staff felt that the need for people to retrain to access employment, and ongoing employer demand for trained job entrants made their work vital in the coming years. The scale of work that hubs could deliver in future would depend on the funding sources secured. Funding streams under consideration to deliver elements of the current offer included Local Authority funding, employers as social value partners, and the Adult Education Budget (AEB).

Continued demand for the training hubs is supported by forecasting conducted by the CITB Construction Skills Network which estimates that the construction industry will need to recruit an extra 217,000 workers over the next five years. Some entry level manual occupations including bricklayers, and labourers are expected to have a large growth rate. As all of these are common occupations entered by the CSF2 participants the CSF can be seen to be addressing these occupational skills shortages.

Conclusions

The CSF2 as a pathway to employment

CSF2 has demonstrated both employer and participant demand for short, skills specific training that enables people to access entry level roles. The CSF2 was successful in creating a pathway to employment in the construction sector. The hubs exceeded the target for the number of ESR participants and came close to reaching the target for 50 per cent of ESR participants entering sustained employment, achieving a higher proportion of sustained employment outcomes than many other employment support programmes.

The model's particular strengths have been in the early stages of the employment pathway; engaging with partners to refer diverse candidates; providing quality and accessible training that is well-received by participants, develops knowledge and instils confidence that they can find work in the sector. The latter stages of the employment pathway would benefit from greater focus, alongside considering how to embed employer involvement consistently. This would help to extend the onsite model from a successful training programme towards an effective pathway to employment for more participants. Having strong employer partnerships and taking a jobs first approach to training and jobs brokerage was a key means of enabling a pathway to employment success, which is also likely to be supported by a strong local labour market.

The hubs have overachieved the proportion of participants changing career, and those from under-represented groups, however the training was most likely to deliver job outcomes for participants who fitted the 'typical' construction candidate for entry level positions. Significantly, while the CSF2 performed well in terms of engaging participants from ethnic minority groups, these participants were less likely to find work in the industry. Additionally, the CSF2 was less effective at creating a pathway to employment for career changers with intermediate or higher level skills than participants seeking entry level roles.

The quality of work outcomes

The CSF2 was successful in supporting participants into good quality work on key measures of job security and income, with most participants earning at least the National Living Wage. The evidence suggests that employers committing vacancies directly to hubs, rather than using recruitment agencies, could improve job security.

The focus of the programme was on job entry, but there was little evidence of in-work progression for CSF2 participants. Fifteen per cent of job starts did not translate to sustained employment outcomes, with some participants who found work in construction leaving before 12 weeks in post, due to experiencing poor quality work. Future interventions could provide more support and guidance for participants about approaches and strategies during early stages of a job to try to mitigate participants becoming disheartened with the industry.

Value for money and cost effectiveness

The CSF2 offered better value for money when compared to the CSF1, particularly in achieving sustained employment outcomes. The fall in average costs per job outcome is partly driven by the CSF2 programme doubling the proportion of participants securing sustained job outcomes, and hubs placing greater emphasis and resource on employer engagement and job brokerage in CSF2. It may also reflect labour market conditions during the delivery period.

The CSF2 created several benefits spanning skills and qualifications, employment, and reduced welfare receipt. It also met a gap for funded CSCS training and tackled the skills gap in the construction sector. Furthermore, the programme was successful at meeting diversity engagement targets.

In order to become more financially sustainable and cost effective, similar programmes in future could aim to generate revenue from employers. In addition, the same outcome for the sector of filling skills shortage vacancies, might have been achieved more cost-effectively by reducing the number of ESR participants and increasing the resource used to support participants into work.

Learning for skills and employment policy

There are several wider lessons for working with employers to create entry routes. The hub model has been most resilient where there have been a large volume of vacancies, and a relatively long-term time horizon, such as found on large development sites. This, combined with an urban context which creates economies of scale for recruitment opportunities, creates conditions for public sector investment in social value and widening access to labour market opportunities. These local conditions may help the transferability of similar models to other contexts.

The CSF2 aimed to be employer-led and respond to demand. Demand-based programmes are affected by changes beyond their control, such as the pandemic, and employers changing their recruitment plans quickly. Providers therefore need to be responsive, for example in their contracting with training providers, and agile in their ways of working. Too great an emphasis on payment by results can make it difficult for providers to be strategic and invest in capacity and capability.

The CSF2 had targets for both volume of outcomes, and diversity of participation. Future programmes could differentiate between the need to meet demand for skills shortages, and to enable a more diverse workforce. Participants from diverse groups often needed more support to enter occupations that lacked diversity. When employers recruit via usual recruitment mechanisms for vacancies (eg networks), diverse candidates can remain 'locked out'. While employers will be able to specify the technical skills and personal attributes they are seeking for vacancies, they may be less aware of how their recruitment and working practices, and industry norms may create challenges to job entry among people from diverse groups.

Providers may also need to support employers to consider how they recruit, and the openness and fairness of their processes. Consideration could be given to alternative career pathways to apprenticeships, to ensure the sector is accessible for older participants. Apprenticeships were viewed as financially unfeasible for many career changers in mid-life.

The success of the CSF2 in the pandemic context provides learning on remote and blended delivery of skills training. Hubs were effectively able to deliver the training remotely and support participants to become employment and site ready. Elements of remote participation and support could be built into the design of future models, and would support accessibility for some groups, but many of the benefits come from the physical and onsite nature of the experience.

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the Construction Skills Fund 2 (CSF2), including its aims, performance indicators and delivery context, as well as setting out the evaluation aims and an overview of the evaluation methodology.

1.1 The Construction Skills Fund 2 (CSF2)

The CSF2 was funded by a grant from the Department for Education (DfE) and administered and implemented by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). Grants funded training for people who were unemployed or looking to change career, to become construction site ready. The hubs aimed to be employer-led, meeting the skills needs for specific roles and creating entry level pathways into the construction sector. This was achieved through the delivery of information, advice and guidance, training and testing for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, training for in-demand entry level construction skills, and providing job brokerage.

Funding of £7.5 million was awarded to 14 projects that had delivered the Construction Skills Fund. The CSF2 was delivered over 12 months between April 2020 and March 2021, with hubs able to monitor participants' progress and outcomes until September 2021. The key performance indicators for the programme were:

- forty-five per cent of participants to be from non-traditional entry routes (defined as participants without previous training or work experience in construction), or from under-represented groups (defined as women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, or individuals with a disability);
- fifteen per cent of participants to be changing careers from employment in other industries, particularly those at risk of automation in future;
- a minimum of 6,000 employment and site ready (ESR) individuals (by March 2021); and
- fifty per cent of ESR participants obtaining a job offer with sustained employment of at least three months (by September 2021).

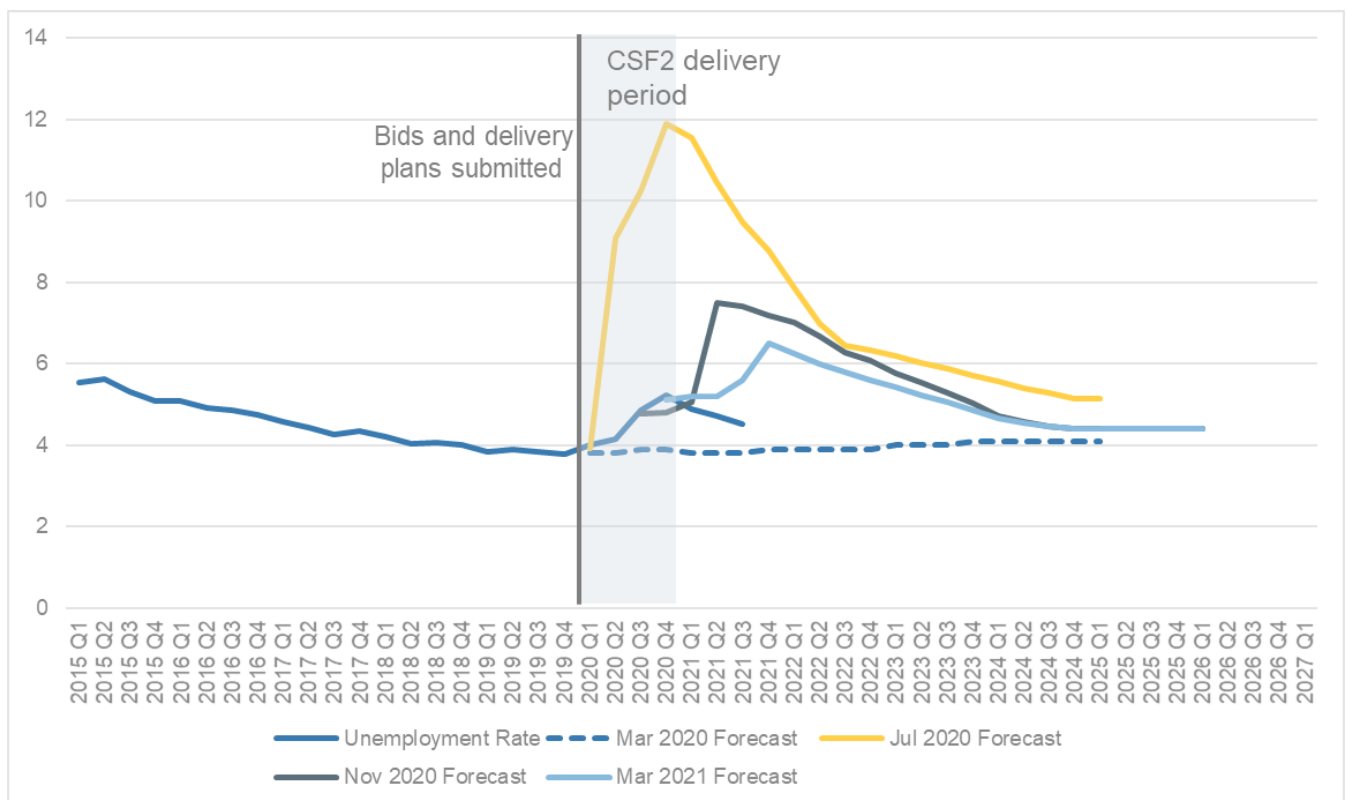
1.2 The context for the CSF2

The CSF2 was delivered in a specific context which is important to understand to assess its effectiveness, challenges and enablers to successful delivery, and the transferability of learning from this evaluation.

The Covid-19 pandemic

The hubs submitted their delivery plans and bids prior to the outbreak of the pandemic (March 2020) when the unemployment rate was low (Figure 1.1). At the start of the pandemic, unemployment rose and the number of people looking for work increased. There were people with skills relevant to construction losing work in sectors such as transport, and sectors offering entry level routes to the labour market were closed, such as hospitality and retail. However, the labour market picked up more quickly than forecast, and the unemployment rate has since been revised downwards significantly (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Unemployment rate forecasts and outturn

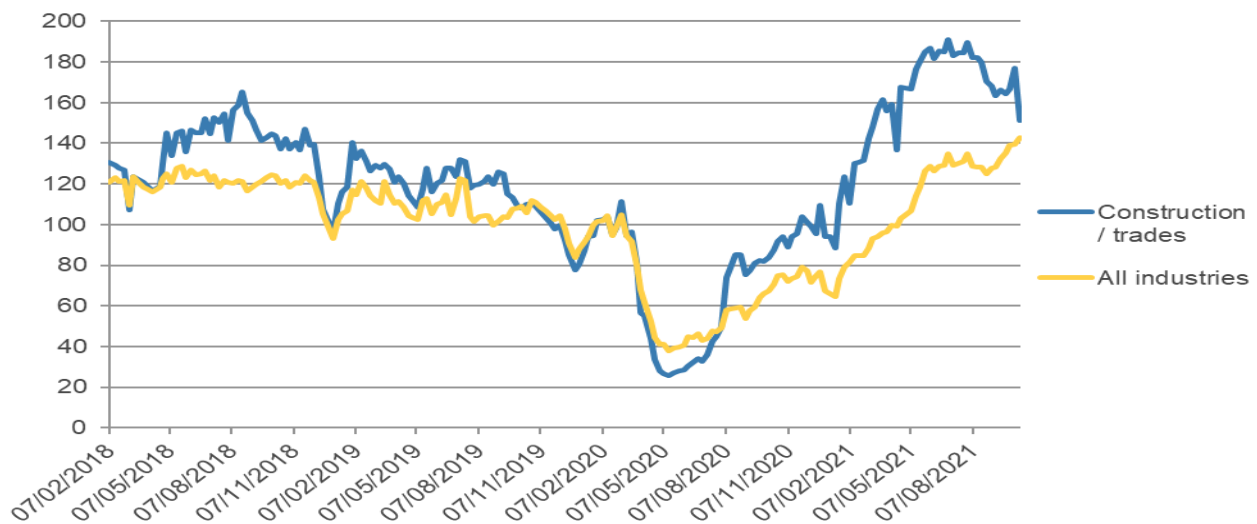


Source: Office for Budget Responsibility and Labour Force Survey

The first national lockdown ran from the start of the programme until June 2020, although the construction sector was identified as a key sector for the economy and work was permitted to continue (once safety measures had been established). A second national lockdown was in place from November 2020 and social distancing restrictions remained for the remainder of the delivery period. The pandemic meant hiring in construction was volatile. There was a large increase in vacancies in construction and trades. Indexed on vacancy levels in February 2020 (index=100), vacancies fell sharply because of the first lockdown and were at their lowest in construction and trades in mid-May 2020. An

increase in vacancies followed. Construction and trades had an index of 191 at the beginning of July 2021, meaning vacancies were 91 per cent higher than the level in February 2020, or 646 per cent higher than in May 2020 (Figure 1.2). While vacancy levels recovered in the later months of the implementation of CSF2, employment in specific construction occupations changed. For example, between January-December 2019, to June 2020-July 2021 there were 23,000 fewer people working in elementary construction occupations, a fall of 18% (Annual Population Survey). This is a key occupation into which CSF2 candidates are trained and recruited.

Figure 1.2 Adzuna weekly job vacancy levels: construction and trades, all industries (UK)



Source: ONS Online Job Advert Estimates February 2018 – October 2021

Other factors affecting demand for construction skills

Demand for construction skills will be affected by schemes and strategies, such as local take-up of Green Home Grants and the government infrastructure plan, including the development of High Speed 2. The Grenfell enquiry created demand for sprinkler fitters on house builds, and a greater demand for bricklayers as house builders moved away from using cladding. Just prior to the programme, the UK left the European Union (EU) which removed the right to work in the UK from all EU citizens.

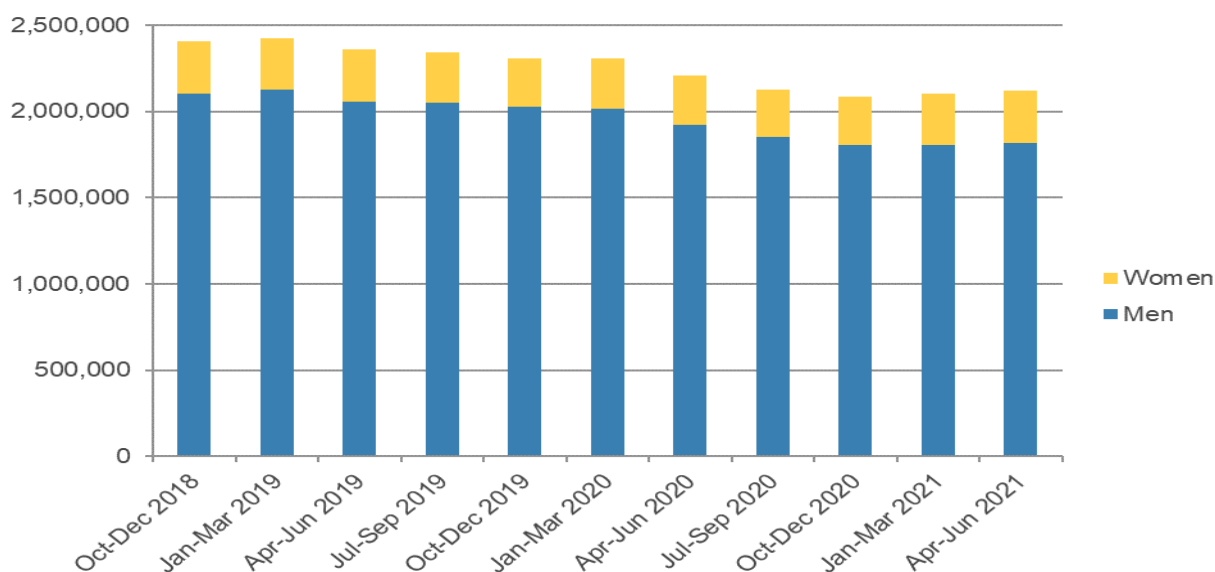
Diversity in the construction sector

The CSF2 has a focus on under-represented groups. The construction industry has grappled with recruitment difficulties and workforce diversity for several decades and increasing the attractiveness of the Construction sector is one of CITB's key priorities set out in the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, and the Business Plan 2019–2021.

Workforce diversity has been changing but is explained by fewer men working in the sector. In the latest period of Labour Force Survey data (April to June 2021) the proportion of women in employment in construction in the UK was 14 per cent. In October to December 2018 there were 2.1 million men working in construction, but that fell by

285,000 by June 2021, indicating that the male workforce has been more likely to leave the sector (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Employment in construction, by gender (not seasonally adjusted) (UK)



Source: Labour Force Survey October 2018 – September 2021

1.3 Evaluation aims

The evaluation of the CSF2 aimed to:

- explore pathways to employment: the diversity of participants, sector engagement, the participant experience, and pathways to occupations;
- assess the quality of work outcomes: the duration of employment; sustainment after training; the likelihood of work outcomes for different groups; the occupations where work is secured and progression routes; and the hub models leading to positive outcomes;
- calculate value for money and explore cost effectiveness: report sector and employer views on added value and the complementarity of the fund with other initiatives and calculate specific measures (eg the cost per ESR participant); and
- contribute to skills and employment support policy development: by drawing out lessons learned, identifying innovative practice, and exploring sustainability and scalability for industry.

1.4 Overview of methodology

The report presents analysis of management information submitted by the hubs covering the period from April 2020 to September 2021 and CITB audited claims data with the report noting where each is discussed. The management information covered the demographic characteristics of participants, prior education attainment, details of the

intervention, and outcomes data. Outcomes data included whether the participant was employment and site ready following the training, and whether they had achieved a job outcome during that period. This was used to identify overall and individual hub performance against targets for engagement, numbers of ESR participants and sustained employment outcomes (see Technical Appendix 9.1 for full details).

This is presented alongside qualitative data. The evaluation used longitudinal hub case-studies to document progress over time. Interviews were undertaken at two time points: November 2020 with hub leads, and February 2021 with hub leads (14 interviews at each point), as well as staff, wider partners (42 interviews), and employers (27 interviews). The qualitative case study research was designed to draw out deep insights. As responses were not representative, we have not provided a quantification of the number of interviewees that held a particular view for example. However, where necessary for understanding, an indication of scale is provided, using statements such as 'some' and 'many'.

Thirty interviews were undertaken with participants who enrolled before November 2020 and were sampled from the programme management information. A diverse sample was achieved and included respondents from all hubs and a mix of demographic groups (see Technical Appendix 9.2). Additionally, nine interviews were undertaken with wider stakeholders from local and national government to explore how the CSF2 hub model links into other initiatives.

Finally, a value for money analysis was conducted to evaluate the cost of implementing the programme and to assess the extent to which the CSF2 offers value for money. The analysis used information received from hubs on the amount of CSF2 funding they received to calculate the average cost per participant, average cost per ESR individual and average cost per sustained job outcome. The benefits of the programme were then assessed and finally the CSF2 was compared with other similar programmes designed to encourage participants into work.

2. Performance against targets

This chapter presents the results from an analysis of management information covering the period from April 2020 to September 2021.

Key findings

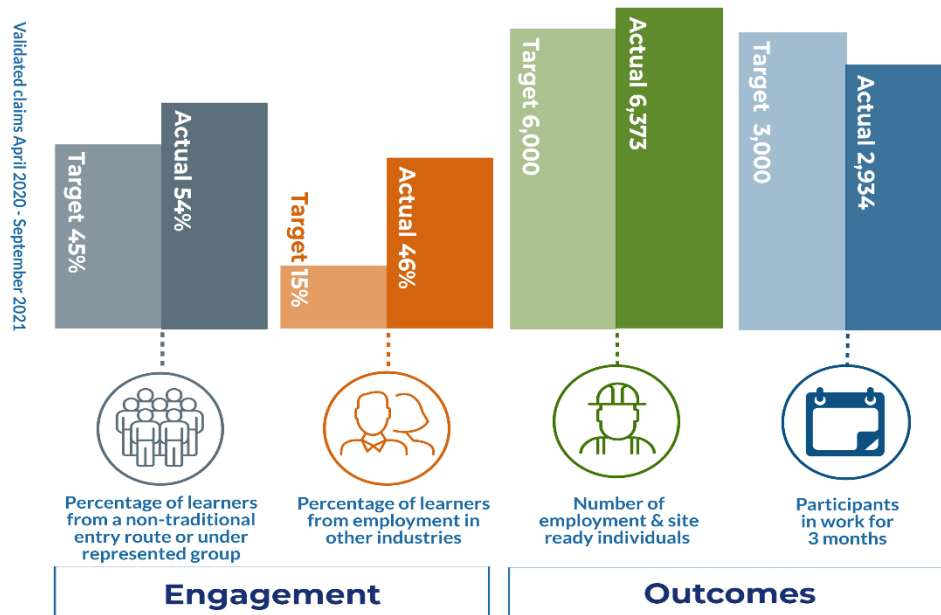
- The programme exceeded the target for the number of participants who were employment and site ready (ESR) (6,373 compared to target of 6,000).
- The programme aimed to get 50 per cent of ESR participants into sustained work. The programme achieved 98 per cent of this target with an average of 46 per cent of ESR participants securing a sustained job outcome. This differed considerably between hubs ranging from over 60 per cent to below 30 per cent.
- Logistic regression shows that certain participant characteristics were associated with a greater likelihood of being in sustained work. Being from a white ethnic background, having no qualifications or level one qualifications, and having previously worked in construction were all predictors of achieving a sustained job outcome. There were no significant differences between genders.
- The median number of days between becoming ESR and finding work was 7 days, suggesting that most participants started work very quickly after the programme.
- Almost 90 per cent of participants who found work were working full-time. The most common job role that participants became employed in was as an operative (eg scaffolder, groundworker, bricklayer, painter and decorator) and 14 per cent moved into a labourer role. A considerable proportion (18 %) went on to become an apprentice or trainee. Very few participants moved into management, supervisory or support roles.

2.1 Engagement

The programme had targets for diverse engagement, with targets of 45 per cent of participants to be from non-traditional entry routes (defined as participants without previous training or work experience in construction), or from under-represented groups (defined as women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, or individuals with a disability), and 15 per cent of participants to be career changers. Overall, the programme aimed to train a minimum of 6,000 Employment and Site Ready (ESR) individuals by March 2021, 50 per cent of whom then secured sustained (minimum 12 weeks) employment.

The programme exceeded its targets for diversity (Figure 2.1). Fifty-four per cent of participants were from a non-traditional entry route or an under-represented group. Of this 54 per cent, just under half were from non-traditional entry routes, one-quarter were in an under-represented group and one-third were both in an under-represented group and from a non-traditional entry route.

Figure 2.1 Engagement and outcome targets for the CSF2



Source: CITB audited claims data

2.2 Outcomes

The target for the number of ESR individuals was met. The CSF2 aimed to support 6,000 individuals to become construction site ready. There were 6,447 individuals who started on the programme, of which 6,373 were deemed to be employment and site ready at the end of their training (Figure 2.1).²

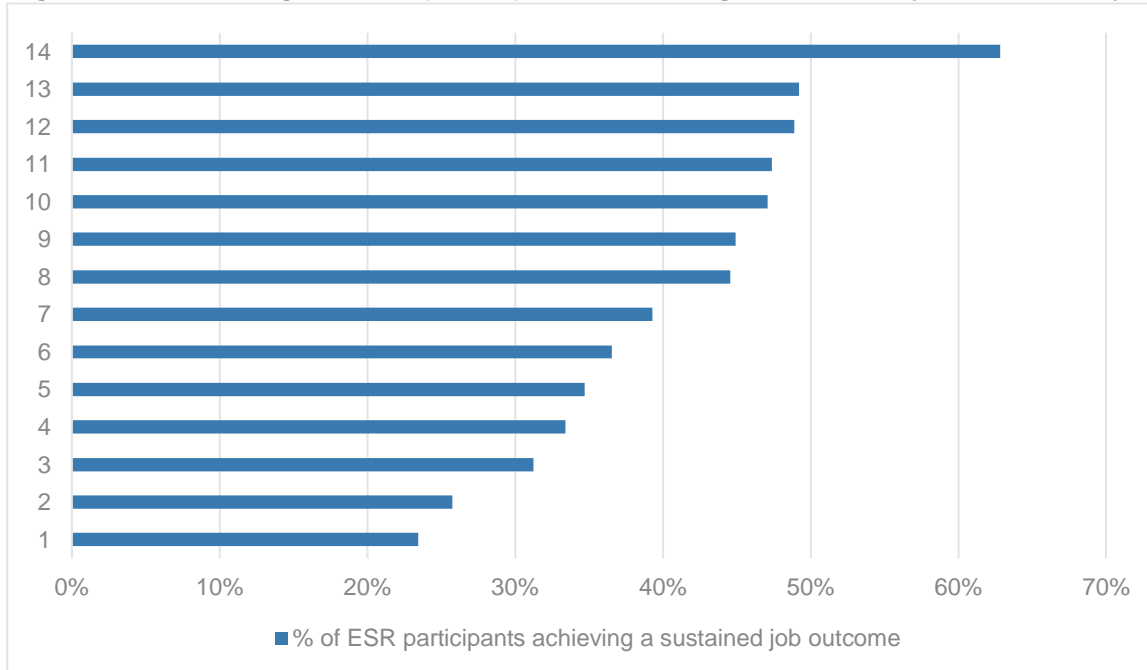
The programme aimed to achieve 3,000 sustained job outcomes by September 2021. The management shows that 3,353 participants had a valid employment start date, but 2,934 participants were still in employment 12 weeks later (98 % of the target). This means 12 per cent of participants who started employment did not reach the 12 week employment mark, or the hubs were not able to evidence it.

Overall, 46 per cent of ESR individuals achieved a sustained job outcome, however, this varied considerably by hub (Figure 2.2). The most successful hub had over 60 per cent of ESR participants securing sustained work, six hubs achieved between 45 and 50 per cent

² 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.

of ESR participants into secure work, and another achieved slightly below 25 per cent.³ This cannot be solely attributed to the performance of the hub itself as it may also be a function of local labour market conditions.

Figure 2.2 Percentage of ESR participants achieving a sustained job outcome by hub

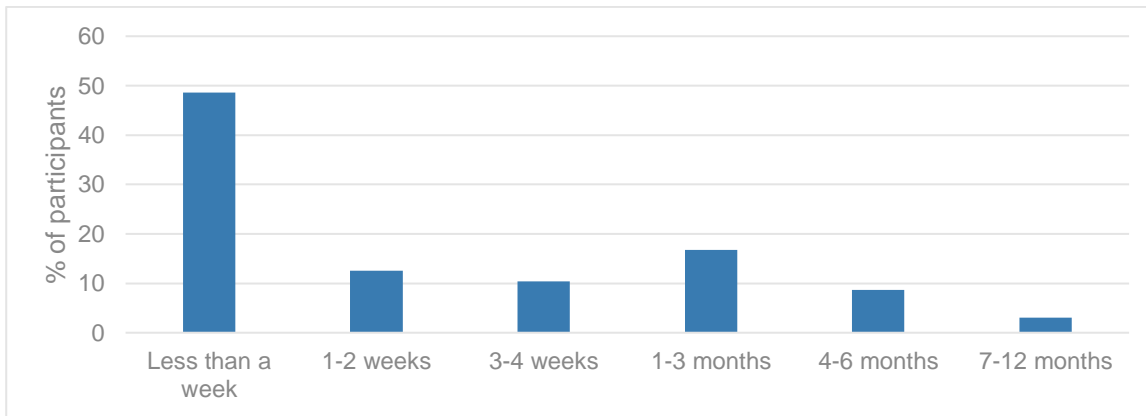


Source: IES analysis of CSF2 Management Information (MI)

For participants who secured sustained work the average number of days between their ESR date and employment start date was 33 days. The median number of days was only seven days suggesting that most participants started work very quickly after the programme. Figure 2.3 shows that almost 50 per cent of participants commenced employment within a week. Overall, 73 per cent of all job outcomes which went on to be sustained for at least 12 weeks were achieved within a month of the employment and site ready date.

³ The analysis sample consists of employment and site ready individuals and therefore is unaffected by the different ways in which hubs may have collected data on registration/enrolment.

Figure 2.3 Length of time between ESR date and employment start date for participants with sustained job outcome



Source: IES analysis of CSF2 Management Information (MI)

Figure 2.4 shows that the number of participants steadily increased between April and July 2020 and the most participants started in March 2021. The black line shows the percentage of ESR individuals who achieved a sustained job outcome from each cohort. This varies over time but averages at around 45 per cent of participants achieving a sustained outcome. The labour market effects of the pandemic may have affected participants' chances of finding sustained job outcomes. The number of sustained job outcomes increased during the period between the first and second national lockdowns (June 2020 to October 2020), and declined at the start of the second national lockdown (November 2020). This reflects analysis of weekly job vacancies, which showed that vacancies in construction fell sharply in the first lockdown before recovering at the beginning of July (see section 1.2).

Figure 2.4 ESR participants and sustained employment by CSF start date



Source: IES analysis of CSF2 Management Information (MI)

Who found sustained work?

The management information shows that the demographic characteristics of participants who found work differed from those who did not:

- A larger proportion of male participants reported having a sustained job outcome (45 %) compared to the proportion of females achieving a sustained job outcome (35 %).
- Participants of white ethnicity were more likely to achieve a sustained job outcome (49 %) than participants from an ethnic minority group (33 %).
- If the participant reported having a disability or health condition, they were less likely to be engaged in sustained work (32 % compared with 46 % for participants without a disability or health condition).
- Whether the respondent was in sustained work did not differ greatly across age categories. The proportions of each age category achieving a sustained job ranged from 41 per cent for workers aged 16–20, to 47 per cent for 30–39, and 40–49 year olds.
- Participants with fewer educational qualifications were more likely to have a sustained job outcome than those with higher education levels (59 % for those with no qualifications or level one qualifications versus 36 % for those with level three or above).
- Having prior experience in construction was more likely to lead to a sustained job outcome; 56 per cent of participants with prior construction experience secured a sustained job compared with 43 per cent of participants with no prior experience.
- Approximately 10 per cent of hub participants were ex-offenders (N=525) and of these only 28 per cent had a sustained job outcome.

Analysing sustained employment outcomes achieved by hubs that operated prior to CSF1, and those that were established at this point, highlights that the pre-existing hubs were more likely than hubs set-up as part of CSF1 to achieve sustained employment outcomes (50 % of participants compared to 38 %).

A logistic regression was conducted to analyse the factors that were associated with greater (or lower) likelihood of achieving a sustained job outcome after controlling for other factors. The methodology and table of results can be found in the Technical Appendix (9.4). The key findings are summarised below:

- Neither age nor gender predicted whether the participant achieved a sustained job outcome. While the descriptive analysis above had described a larger proportion of males achieving a sustained job outcome, this does not hold up in the regression analysis when controlling for participants demographic and local labour market characteristics.
- However, participants from ethnic minority backgrounds are 17 percentage points less likely than white participants to achieve a sustained job outcome.

- Having a disability or health condition is associated with being nine percentage points less likely to achieve a sustained job outcome than those without a disability or health condition.
- Education is also predictive of employment, participants with no formal qualifications or qualifications at a lower level are associated with a greater likelihood of achieving a sustained job outcome. Higher levels of education decreased the likelihood of having a sustained job outcome compared to the reference category of having no educational qualifications. This indicates that the programme was much more successful in targeting lower-educated individuals into work. The effect sizes are large – holding an entry level qualification (versus having no qualifications) is associated with an individual being 18 percentage points less likely to be in a sustained job. This effect size is similar across all levels of education when compared with the reference category of no educational qualifications. This finding is at odds with the result found in CSF1 where higher-educated participants were more likely to have a 12 week sustained job outcome.
- Having worked previously in construction is associated with a nine percentage point increase in the likelihood that the participant secures a sustained job outcome.
- Being an ex-offender is an important predictor of not achieving sustained employment; ex-offenders are 16 percentage points less likely to have a sustained job outcome.
- The number of interventions completed does not have any effect on the likelihood of securing a sustained job.
- Achieving a sustained job outcome is correlated with the state of the local labour market. Higher unemployment and economic inactivity rates reduced the likelihood of achieving a sustained job outcome. The regression estimates indicate that a one per cent increase in the unemployment rate is associated with being nine percentage points less likely to achieve a sustained job outcome. Similarly, a one per cent increase in the economic inactivity rate reduces the likelihood of a sustained job outcome by a slightly larger 13 percentage points.⁴

Quality of job outcomes

This section considers the sample of participants who found work (N=3,353) and reports a range of descriptive statistics about their employment status, working hours, salary and type of job/project participants were working on.

Employment status

The majority of participants who secured work were employed on a full-time basis, although seven per cent went on to become self-employed and very few were working on

⁴ Economic inactivity is defined as percentage of working age people (16-64) not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks. Both inactivity and unemployment rates are sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

a causal basis. While only three per cent were employed part-time overall, for the sample of females this stood at 10 per cent compared with three per cent for males (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Employment status of participants securing work

| | N | % |
|--|-------|-----|
| Employed - Full-time | 2,786 | 88 |
| Employed - Part-time | 96 | 3 |
| Casual work (eg zero hours, freelance) | 66 | 2 |
| Self-employed | 221 | 7 |
| Total | 3,169 | 100 |

Base: Participants who were Employment and Site Ready and are in employment (N=3,353)

Note: Data for 184 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Working hours

Almost all participants in sustained work (94 %) were working more than 35 hours per week. Looking separately at men and women, 17 per cent of women worked less than 35 hours per week compared with just five per cent for males (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Working hours per week

| | N | % |
|--------------------|-------|-----|
| Less than 16 hours | 5 | 0.2 |
| 16–25 hours | 81 | 3 |
| 25–35 hours | 87 | 3 |
| 35 hours or above | 2,964 | 94 |
| Total | 3137 | 100 |

Base: Participants who were Employment and Site Ready and are in employment (N=3,353)

Note: data for 216 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Salary

Fifty-one per cent of participants that commenced employment were earning between £300 and £399 per week and 16 per cent were earning less than £300. Only around 10 per cent of participants earned over £500 per week (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Gross weekly salary

| | N | % |
|----------------|-------|-----|
| Less than £300 | 480 | 16 |
| £300–399 | 1,514 | 51 |
| £400–499 | 627 | 21 |
| £500–599 | 147 | 5 |
| £600–699 | 95 | 3 |
| £700 or more | 82 | 3 |
| Total | 2945 | 100 |

Base: Participants who were Employment and Site Ready and are in employment (N=3,353)

Note: Data for 408 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Job role

The majority of ESR participants in a job (62 %) became operatives (eg scaffolder, groundworker, bricklayer, painter and decorator) and 14 per cent moved into a labourer role. Very few participants moved into management, supervisory or support roles. A considerable proportion (18 %) went on to become an apprentice or trainee, and over half of apprenticeships/trainees fell into the lowest pay band (earning less than £300 per week gross). Apprenticeship and traineeships were mainly taken up by younger participants; 90 per cent of participants in one of these roles were under 30 years old (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Job role

| | N | % |
|------------------------|------|-----|
| Apprentice/Trainee | 597 | 18 |
| Craft role | 62 | 2 |
| Labourer | 466 | 14 |
| Management/Supervisory | 59 | 2 |
| Operative | 2071 | 62 |
| Support role | 23 | 1 |
| Technical/Professional | 56 | 2 |
| Total | 3334 | 100 |

Base: Participants who were Employment and Site Ready and are in employment (N=3,353)

Note: Data for 19 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Construction project work

The main type of construction project being worked on was housing, making up 62 per cent of the total work (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Type of construction project

| | N | % |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Both housing and infrastructure | 20 | 1 |
| Housing | 1941 | 62 |
| Infrastructure | 1167 | 37 |
| Total | 3128 | 100 |

Base: Participants who were Employment and Site Ready and are in employment (N=3,353)

Note: Data for 225 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF2 Management Information

3. Onsite hub strategy and set-up

This chapter provides results from qualitative case study research exploring set-up and delivery of the CSF2 by 14 hubs. This chapter explores the development of the hubs' strategies, and set-up, including how the CSF2 complemented other funding, the skills needs they intended to meet and how these were affected by the pandemic. It draws on data gathered through interviews with hub staff, partners, employers, and participants.

Key findings

- Hubs received good feedback from the sector about the CSF and were keen to build on this success and the infrastructure in place to continue to meet the demand from employers. Some hubs primarily used CSF funding, while others had other funding sources. The CSF2 complemented and added value to existing funding streams.
- Hubs were required to detail skills needs in the sector locally and set out a range of skill requirements. The pandemic led to changes to these requirements and vacancies. Employers asked the hubs for training around Covid-19 focused health and safety, such as infectious disease control, and started recruiting for new roles such as Covid-19 cleaners.
- There was a pause in many developments during the first national lockdown whilst organisations put in place health and safety measures, and recruitment fell sharply. The effects of the pandemic varied between areas. Some hubs were less affected, such as those attached to large builds, whereas others felt employers became risk averse.

3.1 Reasons for applying to the CSF2

Hub leads explained that the success of the CSF1 was the main reason they applied to the CSF2. Success was defined as meeting or exceeding targets in the CSF1 or receiving good feedback from the construction sector. During the CSF1 the successful hubs had built relationships with partners and employers and generated positive employment outcomes for participants. Hub leads felt the CSF1 made a difference to the lives of people in their community by getting them into work. Hubs were therefore keen to build on this success as well as the infrastructure they had developed. Hubs had the facilities and partnerships in place to continue delivering a successful project and felt that not continuing the work via the CSF2 would be a missed opportunity.

When writing the bids, hub leads anticipated strong demand for the CSF2 from their employer partners, and opportunities to work with new employers in the area. The construction industry is a major employer in many local areas, and hub leads identified on-going construction projects that would partner with the hub to meet their skills needs. The UK's exit from the European Union was also identified as creating vacancies and skills gaps in the industry. Due to this demand, hub leads felt that the CSF2 would benefit both local employers and those seeking work in the industry.

Beyond benefits to participants, partners and employers, providers also applied for the CSF2 to help them to fulfil their organisational goals. Some providers were committed to supporting people into work, especially those from disadvantaged groups, and saw the CSF2 as a means of achieving social value. Local authority partners saw the CSF2 as a means of meeting their employment and skills goals and generating economic growth.

The CSF1 funding enabled providers to expand their construction skills training offer, provide shorter, more modular training courses and fund CSCS cards. As this mode of delivery proved successful, providers were keen to continue delivering, and saw the CSF2 as the best means of funding this work compared to alternatives such as the Adult Education Budget or government initiatives such as sector-based work academies, due to its flexibility.

3.2 The funding model

Each hub had its own approach and vision; this reflected the variation in organisational structures of the hubs, and the other funding they held and were able to draw on to support delivery. Some hubs used primarily CSF funding, while others had several funding sources. Some local authority hubs supplemented CSF2 funding with Section 106 monies. In London, the Mayor's Construction Academy also supported four of the CSF2 hubs.

Where other funding streams were available, they were commonly used to develop a progression pathway for participants. For example, one hub used AEB funding for participants who required extra preparation and support before they were ready for CSF2 training. This included ESOL and IT skills training. Another hub used the European Social Fund to provide in-work support and progression opportunities for participants that found work (eg through employer subsidies for apprenticeships). One hub had several sources of funding and aimed to be a 'one-stop shop' for construction businesses, covering business advice and support, and training and development of the workforce. It was able to link the work from other funding streams to the CSF2 to help meet a wide range of employers' skills needs.

As well as the direct funding available, hubs emphasised the indirect contributions of partners which were critical for the successful running of the hubs. Examples included time to refer participants and in-kind offers of venues and spaces.

Stakeholders commented that the CSF complemented and added value to existing funding streams. The wide eligibility criteria were seen as a strength. Stakeholders noted that they enabled individuals who were not eligible for other publicly funded training to access training to upskill. In London, it was considered there was a good fit with the Mayor's Construction Academy funding, which focused on coordination across the sector rather than delivery of training and job outcomes. There were no concerns among stakeholders, hubs, or partners that the CSF funding overlapped with other funding streams or created duplication.

Stakeholders considered that the hubs helped to address market failure, where the potential workforce, employers and other partners were unable to meet the costs of

training and brokerage. They were meeting a need for short, job-specific training to support job entry and retraining.

3.3 Skills needs and the impact of the pandemic

When applying for the CSF2, hubs were required to detail skills needs in the sector locally by completing a skills matrix. Hubs based their skills plans around the vacancies of their employer partners, typically between 10–20 employers. These were ascertained using surveys, employer forecasts and through meetings between hub staff and employers. Hubs that did not involve employers directly in the development of these documents based their skills matrix on S106 skills and employment plans, the CSF1 skills plans, or they were led by stakeholders.

The skills matrices set out a wide range of skill requirements which varied depending on local needs and then had increased health and safety requirements during the pandemic. There was strong demand for workers to start entry level roles, with scope for further training and progression onsite. This demand came in part from the need to backfill positions generated by in-work progression, as well as an understanding from employers that the training programme was most suited to delivering basic construction skills. Employers also started to ask the hubs to provide new forms of training around Covid-19 focused health and safety, such as infectious disease control, and started recruiting for roles such as Covid-19 cleaners. The Grenfell enquiry also created demand for sprinkler fitters on house builds, and a greater demand for bricklayers as house builders moved away from using cladding. Hubs in port cities saw an increased demand for traffic marshals due to traffic increases related to the UK's exit from the EU.

Entry level roles varied, ranging from general labouring to scaffolders, demolitions labourers, apprentices, and basic trades. Roles depended on employer needs, with house builds requiring bricklaying, groundwork, joiners, scaffolders, labourers and painters and decorators, while infrastructure projects required plant operators to operate machinery. CSCS cards and Health and Safety level one tended to be essential requirements for entry level roles, with employers also looking for basic employability skills. Some roles required additional tickets, including asbestos awareness, manual handling, bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry, first aid, working at heights and traffic management. While there was also some demand for more skilled roles including skilled trades and management positions, hubs were not always able to deliver the required training through the CSF2.

The skills matrix was intended to be a living document and hub leads described updating their skills matrices to reflect changing requirements. Hubs working with many small and medium enterprises saw skills needs change quite frequently and had to be particularly agile. For example, one hub said employers were often not able to give them advance notice of skills needs:

'We all know construction employers; they win a contract, and they want a job. They don't plan...in construction they are more reactive they only look for a job when they need it.'

Skills requirements also changed as long-term projects progressed. For example, hubs working with house builders initially supplied ground workers and general labourers, and then moved on to providing scaffolding and working at height tickets.

While hubs had anticipated using the skills matrices flexibly, the pandemic led to changes to both skills requirements and the number of vacancies (see section 1.2). In the early part of the CSF2 contract most companies did not know what their recruitment needs would be. Some hub staff explained that employers used the furlough scheme, and some made redundancies. The uncertainty and effect of the pandemic on skills requirements varied between areas. Some hubs seemed less affected by the impact of the pandemic on the industry, such as those attached to large scale builds. They reported that major construction works continued throughout the pandemic and their skills demand, mainly for labourers and other entry level roles, remained fairly consistent. Some employers felt that the Help to Buy scheme and Stamp Duty relief also helped to maintain confidence among house builders and buyers. However, other hubs felt the impact of the pandemic more keenly.

Throughout the year, social distancing restrictions limited the number of workers allowed onsite and reduced the number of vacancies available to some hubs. Hub staff reported that some employers had become more risk-averse in hiring and wanted a flexible work force in case of the introduction of further restrictions or shutdowns. In this uncertain climate, employers were less open to hiring people with no or limited site experience, again reducing the number of vacancies available to hubs. As they were looking for flexibility, some employers were also less likely to hire workers directly, instead preferring to work with agencies, and more likely to offer short term contracts. This changed the nature of the roles offered to hubs and made it harder to secure sustainable outcomes. The uncertainty meant that in some cases the anticipated scale of vacancies did not materialise, and hubs had to look for new employer partners.

3.4 Partnership working

Partnership structures were established during the CSF1, but hub staff continued to form new partnerships throughout the CSF2. The onsite hub model relies on partnership working between public, private, and voluntary sector organisations, with hub staff at the centre. The hubs each have their own balance and blend of partners, reflecting the organisations locally and their communities.

Most partnership development was with employers. This reflects that fact that hubs are employer-led, as well as the programme's emphasis on achieving job outcomes and the turbulence in the labour market during the delivery period which affected recruitment and vacancies. While the hubs built on established employer links from the CSF1 and from the CSF2 bidding process, they worked to continually develop new relationships, in part due to the changes to recruitment plans in the industry. Some hub staff discussed engaging with lead contractors initially, and then gaining introductions to their supply chains. Other ways of forming partnerships were via attending local S106 meetings, working with councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships, direct networking such as via phone calls or emails, and regional CITB partnership structures. A few hubs focused on working with recruitment agencies because local employers used these organisations to recruit. What

hubs found to be effective differed by region and the approaches of individual staff members. In general, hub staff had found there were fewer networking opportunities to identify potential vacancies in remote ways of working.

Furthermore, some stakeholders noted the growing number of employment and skills initiatives requiring engagement from employers, such as apprenticeships, T-levels, and Kickstart. They felt that the landscape was crowded, and it could be difficult for employers to understand the differences between programmes and to understand which was most appropriate for them.

To generate referrals, hub staff engaged with a range of partners. Generally, staff felt that they had a sufficient volume of potential participants. However, a few hubs continued to broaden their referral partners to reach under-represented groups, or to engage specific demographics in the community. Referral partners were clear about the skills and attributes required for suitable candidates and felt trusted by the hubs to lead referral processes and conversations with potential participants. In one location a community referral partner had worked with a hub to establish a CSCS assessment centre at their premises to support residents in overcoming travel barriers to gaining accreditation. The organisation considered that it was important for the hub to meet residents in their own community.

The hubs used established partnerships with training providers. Some sought additional capacity through specialist online training providers to accommodate remote or blended delivery during the pandemic.

4. Programme delivery

This chapter explores programme delivery. It starts by describing hub approaches to promotion, screening, and enrolment drawing on qualitative research. Analysis of management information showing the demographic profile of hub participants is presented, alongside information on training delivery. Finally, it explores participants' views of knowledge gained and their perceived readiness to find work.

Key findings

- Participants were referred by a range of local partners, demonstrated a good understanding of the hub and felt well-informed about the offer. It was difficult to target specific under-represented groups during the pandemic because staff were not able to undertake outreach.
- Hub staff saw an increase in the number of participants that were 'close to the labour market' due to pandemic-related job losses and shut down industries.
- Staff felt that remote screening was less effective as it was harder to get to know participants and gauge their motivation. When training was delivered remotely, essential criteria for participation included access to IT and IT skills.
- Participants in the programme were almost entirely male; only six per cent were female. A third (31 %) of participants were from an ethnic minority background. Participants were mostly young, with 50 per cent aged 16–30. Ten per cent of participants reported a disability or health condition. A large proportion of participants had few prior qualifications (17 % no qualifications, 38 % at Level one or below).
- The most common intervention delivered was CSCS training and testing and health and safety which made up around 40 per cent of interventions delivered. Employability based training was the second intervention most often completed, followed by occupational specific training.
- All hubs adjusted their delivery plans due to social distancing restrictions. Some delivered in-person (for some of the time), others had a blended approach, and others used remote learning to deliver a mix of taught online classes and independent learning. Courses were short and content focused on the core elements of health and safety and CSCS. Hubs could not deliver practical skills training for much of the funding period.
- Hub staff and employers felt that remote training adequately prepared participants to work in construction. It gave them essential qualifications and knowledge of health and safety.
- Remote delivery impacted the ease with which hubs could meet outcome targets. Hub staff faced issues with non-attendance and more participants left the course without completing than planned. As much of the training was self-directed it took participants longer to complete. This was compounded by the closure of CSCS testing sites during lockdowns.
- Participants with prior experience in the industry were the most confident in their readiness to find a job following the training. Among participants who were new to the industry some felt they would need work experience to be able to find a role and/or further training.

4.1 Promoting the hub

Hubs used the referral infrastructure built for the CSF and continued to work with a variety of partners including Jobcentre Plus, local authorities, further education providers, and community organisations.

Participants interviewed who were referred by Jobcentre Plus said they were informed that the hub offered free CSCS training, funded CSCS tests and job brokerage. Some of these participants had not previously considered construction. This group were given information and advice on working in the industry, were told that construction offered good employment prospects and were given advice on career pathways. The hub was sold to them as a quick and easy way to gain qualifications and to find work. Participants interviewed who heard about the hub from other organisations tended to be from under-represented or disadvantaged groups, and had been referred by probation services, or community organisations focused on providing employability support. As with participants referred via Jobcentre Plus, this group were told that the training would provide essential construction qualifications and could lead to a job brokered by the hub.

As a result of social distancing restrictions, hub staff were limited in how they could promote the hub through face-to-face networking, especially in areas with higher-tier Covid-19 restrictions throughout delivery. Some community organisations were also disrupted by the pandemic, and stopped referring participants while they focused on providing crisis support to clients, especially during the initial lockdown in Spring 2020. Hubs whose referral partners faced major disruption due to the pandemic fell behind on their target for starts during the initial delivery phase.

Hub staff said it was more difficult to target specific under-represented groups in the context of the pandemic because they were not able to undertake outreach activity. Hubs in urban areas with large ethnic minority communities tended to perform well at reaching this group and did not have specific marketing strategies. Hubs in other areas struggled to reach participants from ethnic minority groups as they were unable to promote the hub in local communities, such as in places of worship or community groups.

Overall, the hubs found it difficult to engage female participants, especially during lockdowns when schools were closed. Some tried to attract female participants using targeted marketing with images of women working in construction, and case study videos of successful women in the industry but reflected increasing gender diversity was a long-standing challenge in the industry. Responding and adapting to the pandemic had been a greater focus.

Hubs also promoted via social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. This was a successful approach with hubs reporting that their online adverts received a large volume of click throughs and led to increased web traffic and referrals. Participants interviewed who were looking to change career after losing work during the pandemic, tended to have found out about the hub through proactive online searches. Those working in industries aligned to construction, such as architecture, found out about the hub when looking for local CSCS training. Others saw the hub advertised when looking for work on

job sites and social media. All groups liked that the course was free, which made it a risk-free way to improve their job prospects during the pandemic.

The hubs generated referrals through word of mouth, from individuals who were supported in the past recommending it to their friends and family. Hub staff felt word of mouth referrals were a testament to their success and showed they had become embedded in local communities. Some participants interviewed heard about the hub through referrals from friends or people in the local community who had attended the hub and found work. Participants said that the people who recommended the hub were in secure work in the industry and earned a good wage, which was a factor in them deciding to enrol. They felt that the hub had a good reputation in their local area for supporting people into quality employment.

Hub staff said they saw an increase in their number of participants that were 'close to the labour market' due to pandemic-related job losses and shut down industries, which also increased the number of career changers. This included labourers and tradespeople looking to move from domestic roles to onsite work, and people making a career change from retail, hospitality, arts, entertainment, and other shut-down sectors.

Staff identified three main messages that were successful at promoting the hub to participants:

- Free training and funded CSCS cards. This was especially important in disadvantaged communities where the cost of training was a major barrier to local people entering the industry, including those who have construction experience but not a valid CSCS card.
- No previous experience or qualifications required. This enabled anyone with an interest in construction to apply.
- The training was likely to lead to a job, with support for finding employment provided by hub staff. Where hubs were working with a large employer with guaranteed vacancies this also included a guaranteed interview. This messaging around employment was particularly important in the context of the pandemic. Promotional material focusing on sending the message that jobs were available in construction helped overcome the perception that employers were not recruiting due to the pandemic.

The hubs operated locally, but some wider stakeholders felt that the programme would have benefited from stronger national communication about the hubs' ways of working to support industry aims to engage employers.

4.2 Screening and enrolling participants

Participants interviewed said they enrolled with the hub to find work in the construction industry, and they liked the model of a short training course that provided essential construction qualifications, and job brokerage support. Beyond this, participants' reasons for attending the hub differed somewhat depending on their background and personal circumstances.

One group of participants were hoping to change career after losing work due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These participants came from a range of occupations in hospitality,

leisure, and manufacturing, to skilled roles in engineering, design architecture and IT. Participants identified construction as a growth industry with secure job prospects which presented work opportunities in their local areas. Participants who had been made redundant were keen to re-enter employment as quickly as possible and saw the hub as a means of achieving this. For example, one participant lost his job in theatre production in March 2020, when asked about his motivation for attending the hub he told us that he saw it as a rapid route into employment in an industry that was less affected by the pandemic.

'I need a job and I need to earn money. It's not part of my life to be unemployed.'

Participants who had been furloughed or had lost hours due the pandemic worried about the future of their industry and identified construction as a more secure sector. Some who had lost work in engineering, design and architecture had transferable skills and in some cases site-experience. They hoped to use the training to enter the industry, with aspirations to work their way up to management or skilled roles in line with their skills and experience. Those looking to move from hospitality, retail and leisure saw construction as a more secure industry with better pay and hoped to gain entry level work.

Long term unemployed participants also saw construction as a growth sector with good employment opportunities. They tended to prefer manual work, liked the idea of working outside and wanted to begin an apprenticeship or find entry level work. Some of these participants were not pursuing employment in construction specifically but hoped that getting a CSCS card would improve their job prospects more generally and were open to working in the industry.

Participants who attended the hub shortly after leaving school or college identified the construction industry as more secure than other entry level jobs available in retail and hospitality. Some younger participants had recently graduated from university with qualifications in relevant industries such as engineering and architecture. They hoped to use construction qualifications gained at the hub as a route to professional work in their field.

Participants with prior experience in construction had varied careers in a range of occupations including manufacturing, warehouse work and retail. They were looking to re-enter the industry because they felt it offered better pay and conditions than other industries they had worked in, or because it was seen to have more family-friendly working hours than sectors such as retail and hospitality. They attended the hub primarily to get their CSCS card. Migrants who had worked in construction in other countries also needed to gain this qualification to access work in the UK. Some participants had informal construction experience, such as working with family members, and wanted to attend the hub to formalise and strengthen existing knowledge of health and safety.

The screening process was impacted by the pandemic. It moved from a face-face process to being implemented over the phone, email or through online forms. Typically, participants would submit a form expressing interest in the training, and then attend a one-to-one virtual meeting with staff to discuss their career goals and support needs. Their basic criteria for joining the hub such as IT skills, and access to identification needed to take CSCS tests was also assessed. At this stage hub staff introduced

participants to the construction industry and roles available locally, with the process aiming to set expectations around what they could expect from the hub, and what was required to participate. Staff felt that remote screening was less effective than in-person approaches as it was harder to get to know participants and gauge their motivation. This was evidenced by higher levels of enrolled participants not attending the hub or leaving the course early. Some hubs and referral partners were only able to deliver screening focused on essential criteria such as access to ID and a bank account.

As training was largely delivered remotely essential criteria for participation also included access to IT and IT skills. This was a barrier for people without IT equipment and skills. Lack of IT skills was reported to more likely be a barrier for older participants. Some younger participants or those from disadvantaged backgrounds relied on their smartphone and 4G for internet access, which were not suitable to access the remote training. Some hubs working with local charities, were able to provide participants with laptops and dongles to overcome this issue, and providers who also offer IT training were able to provide this to participants to enable them to access the hub. The pandemic limited the ability for hubs without this provision to signpost people to IT training as many providers closed during the pandemic.

4.3 Profile of hub participants

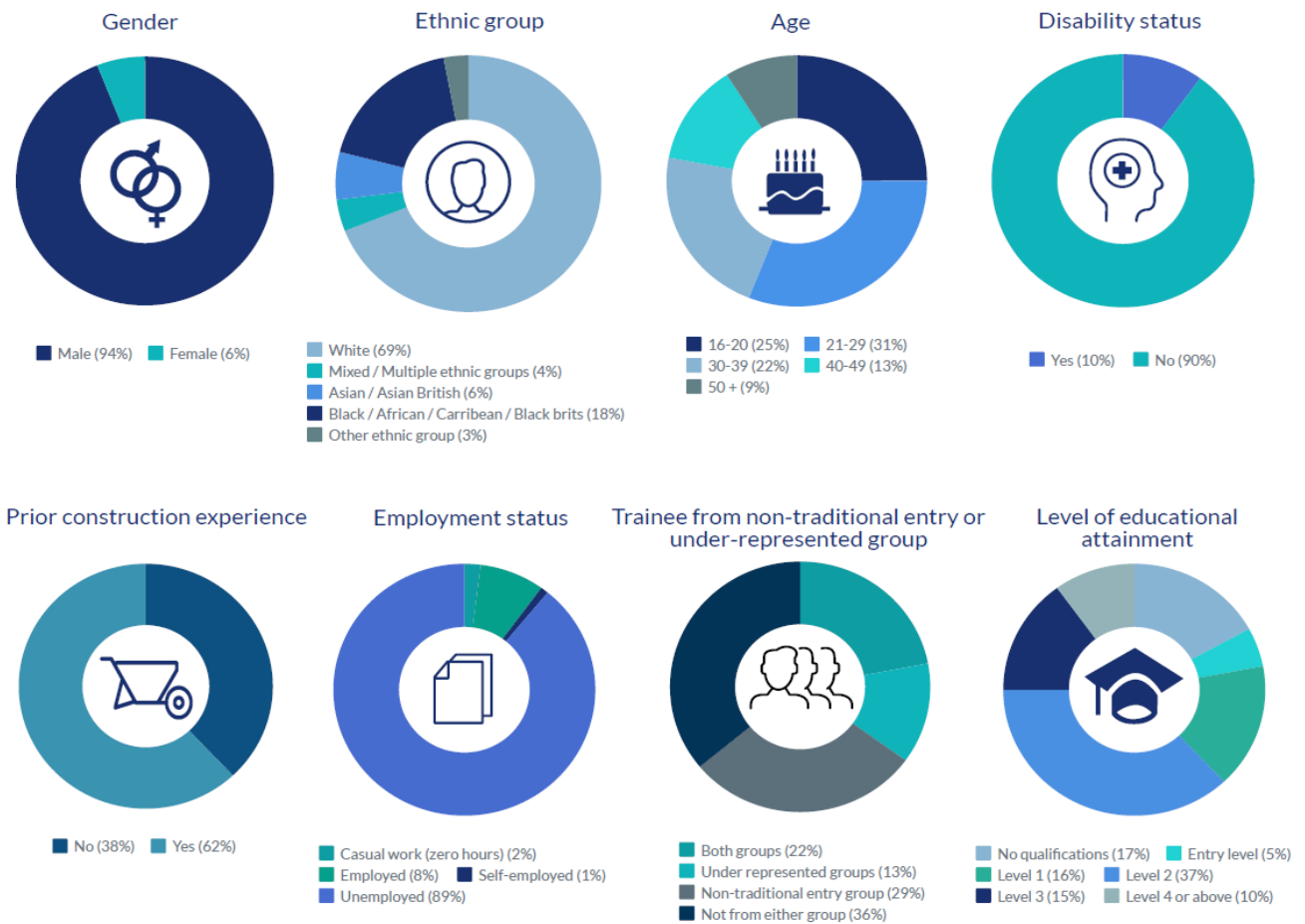
Figure 4.1 gives an overview of demographics of participants in the CSF2 programme. Management Information provided by the CSF2 hubs was used to analyse the profile of hub participants. The management information sample consists of 7,240 individuals who registered with the hub, which is larger than the sample size of participants who started the training (6,447). Hubs took different approaches to collecting enrolment data and therefore all registered individuals have been included in this analysis to identify the types of people hubs attracted. For some demographics there are missing values where the answer given was invalid or there was no response.

The demographic characteristics of programme participants are generally similar to those participating in the first Construction Skills Fund. Small differences arise in that there are fewer participants with a disability or health condition, slightly fewer women, and more unemployed people upon enrolment for this phase.

The proportion of women working in construction is low, hence there was a particular focus among some hubs to increase labour force participation in construction among women. From July 2020 to June 2021, the proportion of women working in construction in England was two per cent, and 14 per cent of the construction workforce were female. Reflecting qualitative interviews which suggested that hubs found it difficult to engage female participants (see Section 4.1) in the programme were almost entirely male. Only six per cent (411) of participants were female. In the previous intervention (CSF1) eight per cent of hub participations were female, indicating that the CSF2 was slightly less successful at recruiting women. However, with the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, women were significantly more likely to leave the labour market to take on childcare, which could have influenced the lower female participation rates. The gender split did vary

by hub, though the highest proportion of female participants achieved by any hub was 12 per cent.

Figure 4.1 Demographics of the CSF2 participants



Source: IES analysis of CSF2 Management Information

The programme also aimed to improve participation from people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Overall, 31 per cent of participants came from this background, though some hubs did better at attracting diverse groups. However, this mainly reflected the location of the hubs, where hubs situated in more diverse areas of the country had more ethnically diverse participants. This proportion of participants from ethnic minority backgrounds was the same during CSF1. The industry percentage of people with an ethnic minority background working in construction is unchanged at six per cent, therefore 31 per cent in the CSF2 programme remains considerably higher than the industry average.

Participants in the programme were predominately younger individuals – over 50 per cent of participants were aged between 16 and 30. The over 50s made up just nine per cent of the sample. These figures are similar to the age demographic in CSF1, where the sample was skewed towards younger individuals and 11 per cent of participants were over 50.

Only 10 per cent of participants reported a disability or health condition. This is lower than the 17 per cent recorded in the CSF1. One potential reason for this could be the pandemic which dissuaded people with health concerns from applying for the programme if the programme (or subsequent work) put them at greater risk. Additionally, many people with health conditions had advice to shield during this time.

A large proportion of participants had low education levels, with 17 per cent of participants having no qualifications, and 38 per cent having educational qualifications at level one or below. However, 10 per cent of participants did have qualifications at level four or above. This education profile of participants was similar to the CSF1.

Very few participants were in employment when they enrolled in the programme; 89 per cent were unemployed. This was made up of 47 per cent of participants being long-term unemployed and 42 per cent short-term unemployed.⁵ The remaining 11 per cent were engaged in casual work (2 %), employment (8 %) or self-employment (1 %). Looking at the employment history of participants shows that most participants who were new to construction previously worked in retail, hospitality, and leisure occupations. Many participants also had jobs in agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and transport (29 %). (Table 4.1)

Table 4.1 Previous occupation for ESR participants new to construction

| | N | % |
|---|------|-----|
| Administration and support services | 240 | 7 |
| Agriculture, energy, manufacturing, transport | 1007 | 29 |
| Business and Professional Services | 296 | 8 |
| Education, health and social work | 181 | 5 |
| Retail, hospitality, leisure, creative, and other | 1777 | 51 |
| Total | 3501 | 100 |

Base: All participants not previously employed in a construction industry (N=3693)

Note: Data for 192 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Source: CSF2 Management Information

4.4 The training

This section provides information on the delivery of the CSF2 training. It presents management information showing the number and type of interventions delivered, before exploring hub and participant experiences of training delivery based on qualitative research. Finally, it outlines participants' views on the skills and knowledge gained from the training and their perceived readiness to find work as a result of the programme.

⁵ Long-term unemployed is defined as being unemployed for a period of 6 months or more.

Interventions delivered

The programme interventions were designed to be short, focused training that built on the capacity of individuals and to provide them with the skills to effectively apply for and enter the construction industry. Each hub could tailor their offering to the skills demand in the local labour market, working closely with employers to understand their skills and recruitment needs. A key intervention was training and testing for a CSCS card.

There were 6,766 participants who undertook an intervention. Nearly one in five (17 %) of participants completed one intervention, and over half of participants had either two or three interventions (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Participants total number of interventions completed

| | N | % |
|-----------|-------|-----|
| 1 | 1,153 | 17 |
| 2 | 1,801 | 27 |
| 3 | 1,692 | 25 |
| 4 | 547 | 8 |
| 5 or more | 1,573 | 23 |
| Total | 6,766 | 100 |

Base: All participants with valid CSF start date and valid ESR date (N=7187)

Note: Data shows 421 participants did not manage to complete an intervention (i.e. no completion date)

Source: CSF2 Management Information

The most common intervention that was delivered was the CSCS training and testing and health and safety (Table 4.3). Employability based training was the second most frequently completed intervention. For individuals who only undertook one intervention, the most frequent intervention was the CSCS training and testing with a large proportion of these participants undertaking the Health and Safety level one training.

Table 4.3 Interventions delivered ⁶

| | N | % of all training |
|---|--------------|--------------------------|
| CSCS training and testing (incl. Health and Safety evel 1/2 & ECS card) | 6947 | 33 |
| Employability (construction-focused) | 3519 | 17 |
| Occupation specific training | 2924 | 14 |
| Environmental awareness (incl. asbestos awareness & COSHH) | 2462 | 12 |
| Manual handling | 1551 | 7 |
| Mental health awareness | 1283 | 6 |
| Work experience (incl. taster sessions) | 1179 | 6 |
| Covid-19 working | 1021 | 5 |
| Information, advice and guidance | 197 | 1 |
| First aid at work | 67 | 0 |
| Apprenticeship | 37 | 0 |
| Mentoring | 18 | 0 |
| Traineeship | 14 | 0 |
| Other | 10 | 0 |
| Total | 21229 | 100 |

Base: all interventions recorded per participants with a valid CSF start date. A maximum of 8 interventions were recorded per participants

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Experiences of training delivery

Interviews with hub staff and participants explored experiences of the CSF2 training delivery with a particular focus on the impact of the pandemic on the training provided. All hubs had to adjust delivery plans due to social distancing restrictions. Some were able to deliver in-person (for some of the delivery period), some used a blended approach, and others remote learning. The implications for training content and participant experience are outlined below.

Face-to-face

Where restrictions allowed, hubs delivered training in-person, most commonly over the summer. In-person teaching was often shorter than planned due to the need to limit class size to comply with social distancing regulations. In-person training typically lasted a week, although the length of courses ranged from three days to three weeks. Participants

⁶ CSCS training is defined as training to get CSCS card, health and safety training and ECS card. Occupational specific training involves anything that is specific to a certain occupation eg bricklaying, plastering, groundwork, painting and decorating. Employability refers to any kind of interview preparation, CV and job search support, and meet the employer events. Information, advice and guidance is anything that involved construction-related information and includes drug awareness and Toolbox Talks. Work experience includes taster sessions or site visit. Environmental awareness includes asbestos awareness and all other forms of health and safety in the workplace including drug awareness and risk assessments.

felt that in-person delivery worked well as it allowed them to complete the course quickly. Those with no construction experience said they benefitted from peer learning and received support from others in the class with construction experience. Participants also appreciated the opportunity to get out of the house and meet new people during the pandemic. In-person delivery was most suitable for participants who were unemployed or furloughed and did not have caring responsibilities. Those with part-time jobs had to take time off work to attend the hub. Some participants felt anxious about travelling to the hub, especially in urban areas and on public transport, but felt safe in the classroom setting due to adherence to Covid-19 guidelines, and the positive attitude of training staff. In general, participants who attended the training in-person spoke highly of teaching staff, who were described as knowledgeable, friendly, encouraging, and helpful.

In-person participants described undertaking Health and Safety level one and CSCS test preparation. Some also received training in additional tickets such as asbestos awareness. Most participants interviewed did not receive practical skills training or site visits. Work experience and site visits stopped for the most part as building sites had restrictions on the number of people onsite and only essential workers were permitted access. Some hub staff explained that aspects of the onsite element (eg a site tour) became challenging to deliver in this changed context and were no longer supported by the industry given the emphasis on limiting the number of people on site. Hubs who ran live sites were able to start trialling socially distanced site visits in 2021. Those with previous construction experience did not mind the lack of a site tour because they already had experience of working on site, but those new to the industry would have liked the opportunity to gain site experience. Participants who were able to visit a site appreciated the opportunity. It helped them to understand how the health and safety knowledge taught in class was applied on site.

Blended delivery

Some hubs delivered a blended approach, combining face-to-face taught sessions with independent remote learning. Areas with the tightest Covid-19 restrictions could not offer in-person teaching for most of the delivery period. During lockdowns, some hubs that mainly delivered remotely worked with training providers to deliver limited in-person training for participants who could not access the training virtually. Virtual teaching was delivered through a range of software such as Google Classrooms, Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Participants were also provided with resources for independent learning including the CSCS app and resources produced by training providers.

Many of the participants interviewed received their construction skills training through blended delivery. Blended approaches differed across the hubs and included:

- initial face-to-face sessions introducing construction and the hub, followed by taught virtual classes and independent learning;
- in-person CSCS training followed by Health and Safety level one delivered remotely;
- remote delivery of CSCS and Health and Safety level one training, with additional practical tickets (including traffic marshalling) delivered in-person; and

- online teaching with opportunities to visit the hub in person for additional support.

Some hubs felt that remote delivery would not sufficiently prepare those without construction experience for working in the industry, so limited their online offer to those with previous experience. Adapting to remote delivery and gaining permission from DfE to deliver remotely caused delays to starting the programme in some cases.

Online provision

Remote training was delivered through a mix of taught online classes and independent learning. Hubs that tried to transfer the face-to-face programme design online found that this did not work as participants struggled with engagement. They changed the programme to deliver taught online elements in shorter chunks and prepared or purchased resources for self-directed learning. Independent learning took the form of e-learning modules, worksheets and the CSCS app. Some hubs purchased the app for participants, while others with high levels of participants not completing felt this was too risky and used the free version which has less practice questions to work through.

The content of the training was affected by remote delivery. Hubs focused on delivering the core elements of health and safety and CSCS training. Additional tickets and higher level qualifications were harder to deliver, and hubs could not deliver practical skills training for much of the funding period. Hubs offering additional tickets remotely tended to provide this through e-learning modules, typically purchasing a large catalogue and tailoring each cohort to employer/participant demand. Hubs offered introduction to construction modules to give participants a good understanding of the realities of working in construction, and career paths available. Some also offered employability skills training including CV writing, job search training and interview preparation, and this was delivered through one-to-one support where it was not offered as part of the training.

A small number of hubs delivered virtual site tours. While these did not fully replicate the experience of being onsite, they gave participants an idea of what working in the industry would be like, and it was easier for participants to ask questions than on a noisy site.

Hub staff felt that remote training still adequately prepared participants to work in the construction industry. It gave them essential qualifications and good knowledge of health and safety. This was echoed by employers who said they were looking to recruit participants with essential qualifications and a good work ethic, and felt remote training fulfilled this requirement. In general, participants had also enjoyed learning remotely where it was well-organised with clear goals and timelines to keep participants motivated, and where teaching staff introduced interactive elements to keep participants engaged.

As with in-person delivery, participants said that training staff were knowledgeable, engaging and went above and beyond to provide additional support where needed. For example, one participant who was trained through taught Zoom classes said that the teaching was of a high standard, he enjoyed the course and gained new skills and qualifications:

'In all, the experience has been wonderful.'

Remote delivery affected attendance and engagement. Hub staff found that they faced greater issues with attendance and more participants leaving early than when they delivered the training in person. As much of the training was self-directed it took participants longer to complete than face-to-face, and participants had to be self-motivated to complete. The exception to this was those with construction experience who often had a good understanding of health and safety regulations and were able to complete the course more quickly through remote learning. These participants tended to find the training quite basic. However, it gave them a chance to consolidate prior knowledge, and the hub helped them into employment by funding CSCS cards and delivering jobs brokerage. Participants also tended to be attracted to working in construction because they preferred practical work and study. Practical components were lacking when training was delivered remotely, and this made it harder for some participants to engage.

This issue was compounded by the closure of CSCS testing sites during lockdowns which led to long gaps for some participants between finishing the course and sitting their CSCS tests. In this time participants could become disengaged or find work in other sectors, so despite completing the course they did not become ESR. Hubs in the areas worst affected by the pandemic were able to secure workarounds for this with the CSF project team, such as evidencing site readiness via a letter from employers stating they would hire a participant if they had a vacancy.

Ongoing remote support was delivered through Zoom, phone calls, emails, and virtual drop-in sessions. Participants' support needs included support with careers advice and guidance, and broader pastoral care including support for mental health. Career guidance included, discussing suitable roles and career paths in construction, and considering participants' goals, skills, needs and financial situation. Participants were not always aware of the breadth of roles available in the industry and staff could help them to identify career pathways they had not considered. Staff also delivered employability skills training such as support for CV writing, job searches and interview preparation.

Hub staff said they found it harder to support participants remotely. It was more difficult for staff to gauge participants' needs than when face-to-face, and staff were more reliant on participants referring themselves for support, for example by email. While staff offered proactive support, such as through check-in phone calls, participants did not always engage. This led to greater numbers of participants failing assessments than anticipated as it was hard for hub staff to see where additional support was needed. Staff were also less able to get to know their participants and form relationships when delivering remote support. This made jobs brokerage harder as hub staff lacked an understanding of participants' skills, needs and personal qualities.

'It's not so personal when you're online.'

Hub staff member

'We don't know them as well as we used to.'

Hub staff member

Some participants who were over thirty reflected this, especially those looking to start an apprenticeship. They felt that they received less support than school leavers who were easier to place in entry level roles or apprenticeships.

Knowledge gained and readiness to find work

Participants interviewed were asked to describe what skills they gained from the training, and how prepared they felt to find work in the construction industry as a result.

Most often participants cited the knowledge they acquired from the Health and Safety level one training. This included knowledge of common protocols, and rules and regulations in place across construction sites in the UK. It also covered details of common hazards found onsite and associated signage, as well as personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements. Other knowledge gains participants cited stemmed from where they had taken part in an extended programme. They included developing an awareness of good practice around manual handling; the different types of build that take place onsite; asbestos awareness; groundwork; and the basics of bricklaying.

Several participants interviewed had prior work experience in the construction industry and so had some pre-existing knowledge of what it was like to work onsite. Despite this, some commented that the training refreshed their knowledge of the rules and regulations governing work in the industry. Similarly, those with prior work experience in other settings that involved the operation of heavy machinery (such as engineering) stated that while they were familiar with some of the course content already, the training was useful in applying their existing knowledge of health & safety to a construction setting.

Participants with prior experience in the industry were the most confident in their perceived readiness to find a job in construction following the training. In these cases, participants felt they would be able to easily access entry level posts when they had their CSCS card. A few participants said they already had jobs lined up prior to starting the course subject to gaining a CSCS card, which they had been offered either via recruitment agencies or personal contacts. Among participants who were new to the industry some had lower levels of confidence about their future chances of finding work in the industry. Some felt that they may require further work experience to be able to find a role onsite, even at an entry level, and/or further training where they wanted to access more skilled positions. Other participants had failed their CSCS card test first time or were waiting for their card to arrive after a few months and during this time their confidence that they would find work in the sector decreased. However, a few participants without prior work experience in construction were confident about finding employment. In these cases, they felt assured they would find a suitable opportunity because of advice and support of the job brokerage team at their training hub.

5. Participant work outcomes

This chapter draws on qualitative interviews with hub staff and participants to explore participant experiences and work outcomes following the training. It begins by detailing the provision of job brokerage support, and the types of vacancies available, including participant experiences of support. It then covers participants' employment experience since the training, either in the construction sector, other sectors, or their experience of being out of work.

Key findings

- Hub staff described having an active role in sourcing vacancies and had regular, direct contact with employers. Restrictions on the number of people onsite limited the ability of staff to informally network with contractors, a method that had been useful for sourcing vacancies.
- Participants tended to start the training and then be signposted to vacancies the hub was aware of at that time. However, a few hubs described working with employers to identify vacancies before they started training candidates to fill them.
- The hubs did not always have enough vacancies to meet job outcome targets. They sourced additional vacancies via online job websites. Staff and employers reported that the sector was increasingly recruiting candidates who were 'easy wins', such as those with prior construction experience. Several staff felt that career changers were most difficult to support remotely, because this group benefited most from attending the hub in person.
- Across all the hubs, entry level labouring positions were most common. Hubs and employers noted they offered participants access to apprenticeship vacancies in a range of trades including electric, bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry and joinery, and plastering.
- Many participants recalled receiving support from the hub after completing their training; most commonly emails about job vacancies. However, views were mixed on the adequacy of the support in assisting their search for employment in the construction industry. Some participants secured employment as a direct result of the hub support, whereas others felt that the vacancies sent were not suited to their individual circumstances.
- Some participants said they did not receive job support and found employment through their own job search, either via an agency or through personal contacts. Some participants who had not had any further contact had wanted more support from the hub.
- Some participants had found employment in construction since completing their training and had varied experiences. While several had a positive experience in the industry, others were not satisfied with various aspects of their role including rates of remuneration, length of contract' and the level of demand placed on them in the post. A few had chosen to leave construction roles because the nature of the activities they were asked to carry out was not what they expected.
- Some participants had worked in non-construction related roles since completing their training. Most of these participants still wanted to work in the industry but felt that local opportunities were scarce.

- Several participants had been unable to find employment in construction since completing their training and had remained unemployed or were on furlough from their current role. They identified a range of reasons why they had been unable to find the right employment opportunity including a shortage of vacancies, lack of construction work experience, and delays in receiving their CSCS cards.

5.1 Hub experience of providing support for finding sustainable work in construction

Hub staff were asked to describe their experience of providing support to participants to help them find work in the construction industry on completion of training. This covered job brokerage activity, the type of vacancies they were able to source, and the assistance available to participants when they entered employment, to help sustain job outcomes as well as support in work progression.

Job brokerage

To support the 50 per cent job outcome target, the CSF2 hubs allocated more staff time and resource to developing and maintaining relationships with employers. The hub staff described having an active role when it came to sourcing vacancies for participants. All described an approach where they had regular, direct contact with local employers. This was formalised where hub staff were working with employers as part of Section 106 agreements and could be more informal and ad hoc where they were not. Examples of more formal contact included weekly or bi-weekly meetings between hub staff responsible for employer engagement, and the lead contractors or the preferred agencies of contractors that signed the Section 106 agreement. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss current vacancies and possible vacancies in the pipeline. They also provided a chance to present and discuss the CVs of participants that may be suitable for these roles and/or had expressed an interest in specific positions. Restrictions placed on the number of people onsite also removed the ability of hub staff to informally network with contractors and the supply chain; a method they had previously found useful for sourcing vacancies and communicating with employers.

The increased emphasis and resource of employer relationships and generating vacancies was effective to some degree. A few hubs described working with employers to identify vacancies before they started training candidates to fill them. The hubs that took this approach felt it enabled them to be more responsive to employer needs and support a greater degree of job matching between participants and contractors, by identifying potential candidates for vacancies early on. One hub that followed this process noted that many of the employers they worked with accepted their recommendations of suitable candidates for advertised vacancies and did not require an interview due to the success of this approach and level of trust established between both parties. However, the changes to the external context and climate of uncertainty made job vacancies reactive in some cases, where participants would start the training and would then be signposted to vacancies the hub was aware of at that time.

A few hubs also noted that they hosted virtual 'meet the contractor' events to give participants a chance to meet prospective employers. According to hub staff, as well as allowing participants to highlight their suitability for the role, these meetings provided both participants and contractors with an opportunity to see how well they got on with one another. Participants may then have been invited for an interview for the positions they had expressed an interest in. Hub staff stressed that as part of CSF1, where it was possible to facilitate these meetings face-to-face, some participants could be hired on the spot by contractors if they got on well. In a remote environment, however, this was rare as the quality of the interaction between participant and employer was more limited. One hub had managed to maintain regular face-to-face contact between participants and employers under social distancing restrictions, and this was because of the nature and ownerships of the site. They described facilitating work trials for participants on their own training site with employers in attendance. This was viewed as an effective stand-in for a job interview, and allowed participants to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and work ethic first-hand.

Many hubs had established relationships with local employers and business networks that brought to their attention advertised or upcoming vacancies. However, this did not always provide enough positions for hubs to meet their job outcome targets. Some hubs used a more informal approach to sourcing vacancies for participants, including searching for local construction vacancies via online job websites to identify positions participants could apply for, and contacting the contractor concerned to inform them about their training offer and the support they could provide in helping find a suitable candidate. Some hubs had managed to encourage 'repeat business' as well as word of mouth referrals from contractors through this exercise, where employers had a positive experience with the participants they hired.

Staff and employers reported that the sector had fallen back on recruiting candidates who were 'easy wins', such as those with prior construction experience and career entrants. Several staff felt that career changers were more difficult to support in a remote context, because this group benefited most from attending the hub in person and seeing a construction site.

Some hub staff also described working with participants through information, advice, and guidance (IAG) sessions and getting to know their skills, needs and interests. Staff could then match them to appropriate vacancies and try and ensure the best experience for employer and employee. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, a few hubs noted that this process was more challenging. It depended on participants' willingness to use public transport to travel to and from work despite the perceived risk of infection. The level of risk and type of working environment they were prepared to be exposed to was affected by, among other factors, whether they had someone at home in a high-risk group.

Hub staff as well as employers described the type of vacancies that were typically available to participants once they complete their training. Across all the hubs, entry level labouring positions were by far the most common, although a few hubs also had access to other entry level positions through their networks such as groundwork and scaffolding. Staff at several hubs noted that these positions tended to be short-term, temporary

contracts, especially where the vacancy came through a recruitment agency. Some staff added that these positions could be poorly paid, which could be off-putting to participants considering their financial commitments and how labour intensive the roles were. For this reason, a few hub staff noted it was younger participants (under the age of 25) who were most often put forward and accepted these positions.

A few hubs noted that on some occasions they had been able to access more skilled vacancies, such as traffic marshal operatives. As this role required bespoke training, and was an additional expense for the hub, staff noted that they only put participants forward for this additional training if they believed a participant was a strong candidate for the post. Some hubs even noted that they had been able to source some site management positions, although these had proved very difficult to fill. For example, staff from one hub stated that employers could be very selective about who they hired for these roles and requested a certain level of construction experience from candidates (ie at least 5 years). The hub felt this disadvantaged some of the participants they were working with who were of a good calibre and had transferable skills from other industries which could be applied to these positions.

Many hubs and employers also highlighted their ability to offer participants access to apprenticeship vacancies in a range of different trades including electric, bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry, and joinery and plastering. While several hubs were working with local further education colleges to train and put forward candidates for these vacancies (ie students who were nearing the completion of relevant qualifications), a few hubs were attempting to change the perceptions of older participants towards these training opportunities and improve access. One hub running a framework of contractors for registered social landlords, and therefore with strong employer engagement, noted that they sourced apprenticeship vacancies that offered the National Living Wage rate as opposed to National Minimum wage rate. This aimed to ensure that participants would not be deterred from these work opportunities due to low rates of remuneration.

In-work support and progression

In contrast to the training hubs' level of job brokerage activity, the in-work support provided by hub staff appeared to be relatively light-touch. Several hubs noted that they sought to contact participants after they found employment, to check whether the role was sustained for 12 weeks. Hub staff commented that even this limited contact was challenging to achieve. Barriers cited included participants not answering their phones when they start work, changing their mobile number, or being reluctant to share details of their employment with hub staff. On the latter point, hub staff speculated that participants might have been concerned about the motivation for asking for this information and were worried that it could affect their benefit status. Where this had occurred, some hubs noted that they had changed their approach and took steps to set participants' expectations about what contact they would receive from the hub once they found employment, as well as the hub's motivations for asking for this information (ie to establish whether the training is effective).

Anticipating some of these issues, which were present during the CSF1, a few hubs with strong employer networks noted that they sought evidence of employment and

sustainment from participants' employers directly instead, which was easier to obtain due to the level of pre-existing contact between both parties. For example, one hub operated a framework for construction employers undertaking work for registered social landlords, and as part of that required the employers to take on and train participants from target groups. Another hub with strong backing from the local council, had developed employer networks over several years.

Some hubs stated that aside from monitoring participant sustainment in work, other occasions where they might contact participants included to provide mediation between an employer and employee in cases where there had been an issue onsite or a dispute. Examples included participants not turning up to work, participants not being paid, issues with broken equipment, and instances of racial discrimination. In these cases, hub staff said they would speak to both parties and seek to establish what happened and how the issue could be resolved (if at all). On rare occasions, hub staff spoke of trying to find participants alternative sources of employment if there had been a complete relationship breakdown that was not their fault.

While several hubs stepped in to mediate in these instances, some staff observed that in entry level roles a lack of retention in these posts was inevitable. Participants did not have a sufficient incentive to remain in post when they encountered problems or in cases where they were unhappy with their working conditions. However, one hub appeared to take a more proactive approach to identifying and addressing these issues early on, so participants did not leave their role. They noted that they now spoke to participants most days during their first week in a new post to check how they were getting on, help them make changes to address any issues they encountered and encourage them to stay in the position.

Due to the limited nature of the in-work support provided by many training hubs, supporting participant progression when entering work was also not a central focus of their activity. Some hub staff commented that they were not incentivised as part of their CSF contract to provide this type of support, and as such many did not have the financial or staff resources to assist participant development in their roles. However, where hubs delivered other construction related training courses in-house, staff noted that they would signpost participants to this provision if they expressed an interest in upskilling, learning a trade or increasing their earnings. Hubs would also sometimes liaise with the participant's employer about part funding this provision, if they had an identified need for these skills onsite. Where employers did not have a more skilled role for participants to move into, a few staff involved in job brokerage stated that they would encourage participants to start saving money from their monthly wages to fund future training courses. This would enable them to obtain further tickets and certifications and increase their earnings.

5.2 Participant experience of support after training

In line with the feedback provided by hub staff, many participants recalled receiving support from the hub after completing their training. However, views were mixed on the adequacy of this support in helping their search for employment in the construction

industry. A few participants meanwhile did not recall receiving any support after completing their training. Each of these experiences are set out in turn.

Received support – did not identify improvements

The support participants recalled receiving after completing their training largely centred on jobs brokerage. In almost all cases, this involved hub staff emailing local job vacancies to participants. In some instances, where participants expressed an interest in the advertised vacancies, hub staff reportedly passed on participants' CVs and contact details to the employer concerned. In others, participants were sent details of vacancies and encouraged to apply without any mediation from the hub. Several participants also noted that they registered with recruitment agencies after completing their training to increase their chances of finding employment.

Some participants successfully secured employment as a direct result of this support. As outlined above, these were most often general labouring positions, which were secured within a few weeks of completing the training. A few participants, however, noted that despite this support they had so far been unsuccessful in finding employment. In these cases, participants were either looking for apprenticeship positions, which had a competitive application process, or were women trying to break into the industry for the first time. To overcome these barriers to employment, one participant noted that her hub had arranged a work placement for her to help her gain relevant experience. However, this placement was cancelled due to the second national lockdown in November 2020 and had not been rearranged.

A few participants also recalled the hub arranging virtual or face-to-face meetings between employers and their cohort when they were nearing the completion of their training. In one instance, where the participant was able to meet the employer in person, this led to a direct offer of employment.

While not all participants who received the type of support outlined above were successful in finding work within the industry, none from this group identified any improvements that could be made to the job brokerage provided by the hubs. Where participants had encountered barriers to finding employment in construction, the hubs concerned had either taken steps to try and address these or were continuing to send through relevant vacancies that they might apply for.

Received support – identified improvements

A few participants recalled receiving support from the hub after completing their training but were not satisfied with the nature of the assistance they received. Some participants in this group noted that they were sent a limited number of vacancies by the hub after completing the training, which were not suited to their individual circumstances. One participant for example commented that the vacancies they were signposted to were not accessible by public transport, which they were reliant upon. Another stated that some of the vacancies they were sent which they felt they had a reasonable chance of securing were only available to residents living within a specific London borough, which ruled them out from applying.

Other participants in this group felt the support they received could be improved in other ways. For example, one participant noted that the hub had arranged two days of work experience for them on a construction site when they completed the training. While this experience was useful in gaining an insight into what it was like to work on a construction site, the participant commented that they were shadowing office-based administrative roles for much of the time. They stated that they would have preferred to have gained some hands on 'practical' experience of physical labouring roles, which were more closely related to the type of employment they were seeking in the industry.

Other examples included participants wanting the hub to provide further assistance with their job search. One participant noted that while hub staff facilitated a group session on this topic, they felt it was cut short as staff also needed to spend time during the session advising some participants on their CSCS test resits. This participant also stated that it would have been useful to have further information on the difference between types of general labouring positions, as in their experience this varied between sites.

Another participant who had successfully found employment following their training was keen to progress in their role and find out about further training options in their area. They made an enquiry to the hub about what provision and funding was available, but after several weeks had not received a response.

Did not receive any support

Another group of participants interviewed stated that they did not receive any support from the hub once they had completed their training. Some participants who this applied to commented that they had found employment through their own job search following the training, either via an agency or through their own personal contacts. Consequently they did not require assistance from the hub after they obtained their CSCS card. Many of these participants had prior work experience in construction. A few noted that hub staff had kept in touch to find out how their current role was going, but that was the extent of contact.

Other participants however who had not had any further contact had wanted more support from the hub. A few noted that they were aware that their details had been passed on to the job brokerage team but were not subsequently approached. Others had been due to attend a group session on finding employment in construction, which was cancelled and never rearranged. In all cases, participants were particularly disappointed by an absence of any job brokerage. They noted that when they enrolled on the course this had been a key advertised component of the support offer, which was reinforced as part of the induction process. Based on these experiences, a few had become cynical about the motivations of hub staff and felt that they had been encouraged to enrol on the course under false pretences; so the provider could draw down government funding to deliver the training. All of these participants continued to search for employment in the industry through their own efforts, but none had been successful at the time of the research. As such, they felt they could have benefitted from this additional support.

5.3 Participant employment experiences since training

Participants were asked to describe their employment experiences since leaving the hub. This covered detail of their job search, whether they had found employment in construction, as well as their subsequent experience of work in the industry.

Experience of working in construction

Some participants included in the sample had found employment in construction since completing their training. Participants however had varied experiences related to their rates of pay, opportunities to progress and working conditions, and relationships with colleagues on site.

Generally satisfied with role

Several participants had a positive experience in the industry and were still in the role they obtained after leaving the hub. In all cases, these participants had prior experience of working within construction. A few had secured skilled roles, such as positions in an architectural design firm or as a traffic marshal (see Box 1). They found these jobs either through their own personal networks or via their own online job search. In some instances, these roles had been obtained due to participants' prior work experience and qualifications.

Box 1: Example of participant securing construction work and satisfied with role

One participant in his early thirties, from a white ethnic background, lived with his partner and two stepchildren. He left school aged 16 with GCSEs and went on to study a BTEC in engineering. Following this, he worked in retail and hospitality before finding work in the construction sector. He worked in construction for ten years, undertaking several different roles, including landscape gardening, groundwork, an electrician's mate, and labouring. For some periods he had held a CSCS card. When his last job finished, he had to claim Universal Credit. He had always been in work but reflected he had become fed-up with being the '*bottom of the pile*' and was looking for a role that would offer more opportunities. Whilst he was claiming Universal Credit a family member mentioned a funded opportunity to train for a Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS) card through the hub, which is required to be a traffic marshal. He enrolled enthusiastically.

The practical elements of the training course were delivered face-to-face, socially distanced at the hub, and included practice for traffic marshalling. Other support was delivered remotely. He reflected that the hub was managed well, the staff were friendly and helpful. He undertook the CPCS theory test over the phone, and while he passed, he had to wait eight weeks for his card.

He said that the CPCS course allowed him to gain skills and certification in a realistic setting and gain an additional ticket which enhanced his job prospects and enabled him to apply to more highly paid construction roles. On completing the course, the hub emailed him job vacancies. However, he found a traffic marshal role proactively that was advertised online via *Totaljobs*. He successfully gained the role but was unable to start until he received the CPCS card which delayed his job start date by two months.

The job had been a very positive experience and he was very satisfied with the improved working conditions and remuneration. He was earning three times what he had been in previous construction roles (eg labouring) and had found it less physical than he anticipated and experienced in other roles. He was pleased the role therefore presented a low risk to his health. He planned to continue to work in construction because of the working environment. He commented that when working with the right people morale is good, and felt that the sector presented job security, a good wage, and the opportunity to work outdoors.

Other participants that were generally satisfied with the construction role they had found were working in general labouring positions or in one case as an electrician's mate. These were all temporary opportunities lasting 2–3 months, and some participants noted they were hired by an agency. However, some had had these contracts extended or were told that they may be extended in future. In general, this group were happy with their working hours and conditions, which were sociable and gave them time to see their family. Due to the nature of their contract though, a few noted that they did not have any opportunities to progress or increase their hourly pay in their current role, which was lower than they would like. These participants had plans to engage in further training so they could apply for more skilled positions and increase their earnings (eg as a carpenter or electrician), which some stated they would need to self-fund.

Not satisfied with role

Some participants who found employment in construction after completing their training noted that they were not fully satisfied with various aspects of the role they had secured. Several were still working in these posts, while a few had either left their position or had been unable to find any further work in the industry since their contract came to an end. The positions participants found included general labouring roles as well as more skilled posts such as demolition and quantity surveying. A few participants had found these posts through the support and advocacy of their training hub, who put them in touch with local employers. However, many again noted that they secured these positions through their own online job search or after registering with a recruitment agency.

Among those who were still working in the posts they had obtained, while some enjoyed certain elements of their role such as working outdoors and learning from other trades people onsite, participants were generally unsatisfied with their rates of remuneration, length of contract (which was often temporary) and the high level of demand placed on them in the post. These factors in combination led some participants to feel undervalued in their role, and that they were not getting the remuneration their work deserved. Again, they described their ambition to undertake further training (which some said they would need to self-fund) and access a more skilled, long-term position. Participants felt this would afford them more job security and satisfaction. The types of role they wanted to progress to included bricklaying and machine operative positions.

As noted, a few participants had chosen to leave the construction roles they had secured since completing their training. In these cases, participants explained that they had left as the nature of the activities they were asked to carry out was not what they expected. For example, one participant stated that after obtaining their CSCS card they approached a

local construction site close to their home to enquire about possible vacancies. The manager they spoke to offered them a general labouring position. They expected this to include direct involvement in some of the build projects onsite. However, when they turned up to work on their first day, they quickly realised they were expected to undertake cleaning duties. This is not what they wanted from the post, and so at the end of the shift they told their supervisor that they would not be returning.

Box 2: Example of participant dissatisfied with work in construction

A participant in his early thirties, from a white ethnic background, was unemployed when he heard about the hub at Jobcentre Plus. He was also recommended to the hub by friends, and noted the hub had a good reputation locally. He had recently worked in retail and manufacturing roles but was looking to make a career change: *'I went there to reinvent myself'*. He had some prior experience in the construction industry from a bricklaying apprenticeship after leaving school, but he did not complete it because he was made redundant part way through.

He attended the training in person and was involved in practical tasks, including groundwork. However, he reflected that the practical tasks did not match his work interests nor develop his skills. The course also covered CSCS training and Health and Safety level one, and he sat and passed the CSCS test. He was unable to visit the live site because staff explained that it was not safe at the time. There was no employer involvement in the programme, which he found disappointing because he had been told, and expected, that the training would lead to work, and he was hoping to secure an apprenticeship.

Part way through the course he was offered work on a nearby construction site. One morning a site manager approached the hub offering work and he was encouraged to take it by hub staff. He was employed by an agency on a zero-hour basis but given regular hours. The opportunity was sold as a foot in the door and the site manager said that he would put him forward for other trades, including brickwork, in time. He enjoyed the job for the first two weeks, although felt other staff were rude to him and gave him tasks that no one else wanted to do.

His role suddenly changed when senior management attended the site and he was told by the site manager that he would now work as a Covid-19 cleaner. He found this very disappointing as he had wanted to move into a more skilled role. When he spoke to the site manager, he felt they were dismissive, and due to this experience, he left the role after six weeks. He felt that he had been offered the role under false pretences and he was not given opportunities to progress. He said he might consider working in construction again but felt demotivated by his experience. The agency that he was working for had been in touch with another job offer but he turned it down for this reason.

He felt that more support for participants aged over 19 to enter apprenticeships was needed. He was told that the hub could help him find an apprenticeship and that he could work his way up from an entry level role, but this was not borne out. He reflected that the hub was better able to help school leavers who seemed to be more easily placed into apprenticeships: *'I felt they didn't take us [older participants] seriously.'*

Experience of working in other sectors

Some participants had worked in other non-construction related roles since completing their training. Most of these participants still wanted to work in the industry but felt that local opportunities were scarce. A few had secured short-term roles in construction since

completing their training but had been unable to find any similar positions since. This group were generally looking for apprenticeship positions, for instance, in painting and decorating, carpentry and electrical. One participant however noted that she was specifically looking for an entry level role on a small building site. She felt that large sites could be an intimidating environment for a woman and had heard that the working conditions could be stressful. This participant also had limits on what roles they could accept due to their reliance on public transport.

The roles participants had managed to secure in other sectors were taken out of necessity and were a short-term stop gap until they could find a better opportunity. They included warehouse and hospitality positions. A few had accepted part-time positions, despite wanting to work more hours. All complained of low rates of pay and did not have any opportunities to progress in their current post.

One participant who was currently working as a delivery driver had decided not to look for any further work in construction after having a poor experience in the role they secured since leaving the hub (described in the previous section). At the beginning of the pandemic this participant had been laid off from their chosen career as an aircraft engineer. They were therefore looking to re-enter this industry when travel restrictions began to lift, which they hoped would happen later in the year.

Experience of unemployment/furlough

Several participants stated that they had been unable to find employment in construction since completing their training and had remained unemployed or were on furlough from their current role. They identified a range of reasons why they had been unable to find the right employment opportunity.

A few participants that were applying for labouring positions as well as apprenticeships felt that the pandemic had reduced the number of vacancies available in construction, while simultaneously increasing the level of competition for these roles. Some speculated that a lack of construction-related work experience and qualifications were also barriers to finding work in the industry. However, they did not always receive feedback on their job applications so could not be certain.

Other participants in this group were career changers who had lost their previous employment because of the pandemic. They were new to construction and had been unable to find roles that were equivalent to their previous careers in terms of pay and level of seniority (ie management roles). While they recognised that they needed to gain a more detailed insight into the industry and its ways of working before they could access these types of roles, they also felt unable to meet the physical demands of entry level labouring positions due to their age (participants were between the age of 35–55). These participants saw further relevant training as a possible route into more senior positions but were unable to identify any options they could afford while in receipt of benefits. One participant noted that their hub had arranged for them to shadow a site manager and gain some relevant experience, but this was cancelled in January 2021 due to national lockdown restrictions (see Box 3).

Box 3: Case study: participant seeking to change career to a management role

One participant in their early 50s was out of work when they heard about the hub. They did not have prior experience of construction work and found the course online while looking up CSCS training. Her professional background was in set design with relevant skills to construction (eg computer assisted design) and she had worked closely with site managers on construction sites in this role in the past. As the events sector shut during the pandemic, she was seeking a career change and thought her skills would transfer to construction, particularly to management roles.

She attended the training in person and recalled learning a lot from other participants who had previous experience in construction. The course covered CSCS training and Health and Safety level one. She felt she received excellent employability support, with hub staff helping her to tailor her CV towards construction roles. They visited a live construction site looking at relevant health and safety measures. They had talks from two local construction employers, both were looking to employ learners from the course but were looking for entry level labourers, whereas she felt she was a better fit for a management role.

She completed the course and gained a CSCS card. While a lot of the knowledge was familiar to her from previous experience, it helped her to solidify this and apply it to a construction setting. The hub arranged a work experience placement shadowing a project manager, but the second lockdown was announced the day before she was due to start, and the placement cancelled. The hub continued to send her vacancies, but usually for labouring positions which she had applied for without success.

She remained keen to work in construction given her transferable skills and felt the construction industry was more viable during the pandemic. She had considered pursuing further training in project management and Site Management Safety Training to increase her employability but had not found an affordable option. Overall, she felt that career changers and people with higher level skills could have been better supported by the hub. However, she stressed that the hub staff did the best they could including adapting her CV and securing work experience, and they had a good understanding of her aims, skills, and support needs.

The sample also included several participants who were furloughed from their current role, for instance, in the catering and transport sector. As these participants were uncertain about whether they would be able to return to this post after the furlough scheme ended, they had taken up the hub's training offer with the hope that they could retrain and pursue a career in construction instead. This group had been applying for entry level roles in the industry but had not received responses to any applications. They felt that there was strong competition for these vacancies, and that they were losing out to candidates with more relevant work experience, skills, and qualifications. One participant also noted that she was only applying for long-term positions. She was currently employed on a permanent contract and explained that she would have a lot of anxiety about accepting a short-term contract of a few weeks or months as it would pose a risk to her financial security. The participants who shared these experiences commented that they required further training and work experience to be able to effectively compete for some of the more attractive entry level positions they had seen advertised.

Box 4: Case study: participant trying to change career to an entry level role

One participant in her 50s, who has a health condition, had a background in the catering sector but had worked in the construction industry for a few years on commercial kitchen development. Due to the pandemic, she found herself on furlough and because of her health condition had been advised to shield. She wanted to return to the construction sector because her caring responsibilities had changed, and she felt the pay and conditions were good. She also felt that the sector offered interesting work: *'no two days are the same.'* She was told about the hub by a friend, and she decided to enrol because she felt a CSCS card would help her to find a role in the sector.

She took part in an online induction where she heard about the support offer and understood that the hub would help participants find job opportunities afterwards and match their skills and interests with potential vacancies. During the session, everyone had a chance to introduce themselves and the facilitator outlined roles that might be suitable. During the training itself the participant learned about health and safety, asbestos awareness, mental health awareness and mindfulness training. She found the trainers to be knowledgeable and they delivered the training in an inclusive, enjoyable way. She passed her CSCS card test at the end of the week.

The participant left the course feeling confident in her ability to find work in the construction sector, in part because she had worked in it already. She felt that the main barrier to her finding construction work was that her background and qualifications were largely in catering. On completing the course, she had expected more support from the hub staff. She said she was invited to a follow-up online session, but this was cancelled and not rearranged. Overall, she felt there was a lack of support to find work, and that the opportunity had been 'mis-sold'. She had applied to many construction roles, but not heard back and felt that there was a lot of competition and felt that roles must be going to people with more experience, construction skills and more specialist qualifications.

Other isolated reasons provided by participants as to why they had not found employment in construction since leaving the hub included:

- delays in receiving their CSCS cards;
- living in a rural location and being unable to access the vacancies they were offered as they did not have their own means of transport;
- applying for government grants and seeking further training so they could set-up their own business; and
- the development of a chronic health condition, which prevented the participant from working currently.

6. Cost effectiveness and value for money

This chapter explores the costs of delivering the CSF2. It starts by drawing on interviews with hub staff to explore the impact of the pandemic on the cost of delivering the programme, before presenting results of a value for money analysis.

Key findings

- The pandemic affected costs and resourcing. Permitting the training to be delivered online supported hubs to continue to deliver the programme without increasing costs. However, it was more time-intensive to provide one-to-one support to participants.
- The CSF2 spending totalled £7.4 million from the Department for Education (DfE). Using only this funding source, the average cost of the programme was £1,158 for each participant becoming Employment and Site Ready (ESR) and £2,516 per sustained job outcome.
- There was relatively small variation between hubs in the cost per ESR participant. However, the variation is considerably larger for the sustained job outcome. In one hub this was just over £5,500 per participant, whilst at the lower end, costs per participant with a sustained job outcome were under £2,000.
- When including additional funding from other sources, the costs per participant outcome were slightly higher, with £1,201 for each participant becoming ESR and £2,609 per sustained employment outcome.
- The CSF2 was more cost effective than the CSF1. The cost per ESR participant remained relatively equal between phases one and two, which implies recruitment drives and the ability of hubs to get participants to achieve site readiness were relatively unchanged. However, there was a large difference in the cost per sustained job outcome. In the CSF1 the average cost per sustained job outcome was £6,502, compared with £2,516 in the CSF2 (DfE funding only). The fall in average costs per outcome was partly driven by the CSF2 programme doubling the proportion of participants securing sustained job outcomes from 23 to 46 per cent.
- There were few suitable comparator programmes beyond the CSF1, but analysis indicated that the CSF2 was more expensive than other employment support programmes at achieving job outcomes. However, other programmes were not exclusively providing construction skills training, and tended to be national government programmes which were likely to have benefited from some economies of scale.
- The CSF2 has added value as it met a gap for funded CSCS training, which has reduced barriers to entering the construction industry and skills gaps in the sector. It has also added value by engaging some under-represented groups. The programme has been successful in meeting diversity engagement targets.

6.1 Changes in costs due to the pandemic

Interviews with hub staff explored whether and how the pandemic had affected the cost of delivering the CSF2. Permitting some of the training to be delivered online supported hubs to continue to deliver the programme, without increasing costs. Delivering all training in-person with reduced class sizes would not have been cost effective (or indeed possible for some hubs). Hubs reported adaptations to delivery that were necessary due to the pandemic, sometimes increased costs. The main areas in which increased costs were experienced were:

- social media: where events such as open days and large-scale recruitment days had been part of the hubs' promotion strategy, there was a shift to increase expenditure on other types of marketing, including social media which could involve paid adverts;
- CSCS tests: due to social distancing, test centres were required to test in smaller groups, meaning the cost per participant increased. In another instance, a hub had sourced an inexpensive CSCS test centre, which subsequently closed during lockdown. The hub had to use an alternative private test centre that charged much higher fees until their preferred centre re-opened;
- provision of one-to-one support: the one-to-one screening, information and advice took longer to deliver remotely than face-to-face, which increased the staff time required; and
- employer engagement: one hub experienced a disruption in employer partnerships. They attributed this to the effects of the pandemic on the business. Consequently, the hub had to allocate more staff time than planned to employer engagement activities to generate new leads and partnerships.

Generally, hubs recognised that increased costs were offset by cost reductions in delivering training online compared to face-to-face. This meant changes could be accommodated within the overall budget available. The need to carefully manage expenditure to balance costs and income was a common theme. For example, hubs would only pay for additional training if there was guaranteed employment for individuals.

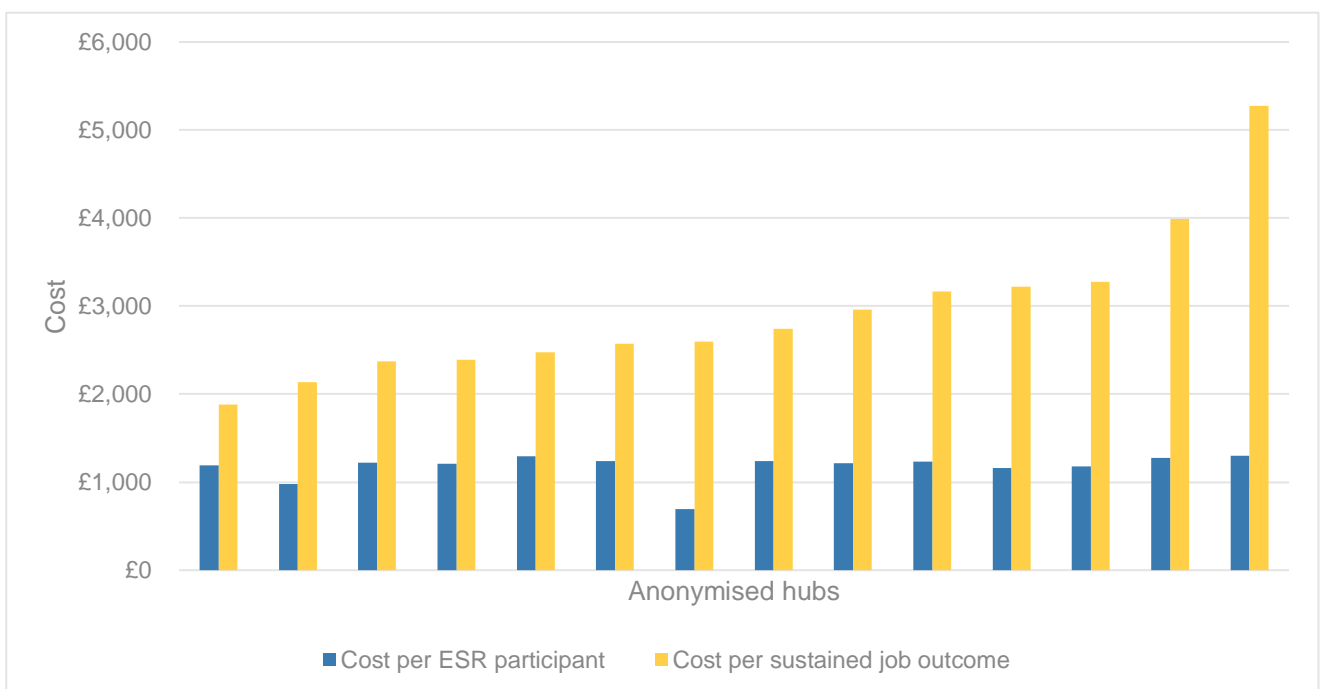
Elements of the contract were paid based on achieved outcomes. Some hubs that did not meet target numbers for ESR or sustained job outcomes in the early months of the contract, reduced their overall budget and profile to account for this. These hubs faced significant disruption to their delivery, including key referral partners ceasing delivery due to the pandemic, assessment centres closing, and reduced demand from employers. Hubs that saw their budget reduced, had to reduce staffing to cut costs, this included training staff and employer engagement staff. Where possible staff members were redeployed elsewhere in the providers' organisation. Hubs that had capacity to increase the number of participants they worked with, increased their share of the programme delivery overall.

6.2 Value for money

This section presents analysis and discussion of whether the programme offers value for money. Firstly, using information received from hubs on the amount of CSF2 funding they received, we calculate the average cost per participant, average cost per Employment and Site Ready (ESR) individual and average cost per sustained job outcome. Each hub provided additional information on whether they were receiving funding from other sources and, if so, the amounts received. For all the hubs, the main source of funding came from the CSF2 programme, however, we discuss how the value for money changes when considering other sources of funding. Secondly, we explore the benefits of the programme. These are difficult to monetize but we discuss the potential wider benefit of the programme. Finally, we assess the CSF2 programme compared with other similar programmes designed to support people into work to put the costs in a wider context.

The total funding available from the Department for Education (DfE) was £7.5 million of which £7.4 million was spent. There were 6,373 ESR participants, meaning the cost per ESR participant was £1,158. Of the 2,934 participants who entered a sustained job, the cost was £2,516 per participant. Figure 6.1 shows that there was relatively small variation between hubs in the cost per ESR participants. However, the variation was considerably larger between hubs for the sustained job outcome as it reflected the ability of the hub to support participants into sustained work. In one hub this was over £5,500 per participant, whilst at the lower end, costs per participant with a sustained job outcome was just under £2,000 (Figure 6.1). The average cost per sustained job outcome across all hubs was £2,932.

Figure 6.1 Cost of programme per ESR participant and sustained job outcome by hub



Source: IES analysis of costs data, 2022

To consider how other funding sources impact costs per outcome, additional data on the amount and type of other funding was provided by hubs. This was estimated to be an additional £273,000, a further four per cent of programme funding. Employers were the most common source of additional funding, either through providing talks and onsite visits, or materials and space on their sites to the hub. The largest amount of additional funding one individual hub received was an estimated 23 per cent of their total DfE funding. There was also missing data; some hubs did not provide estimates of items difficult to monetise, such as use of employers training facilities. Regardless of this, the inclusion of additional funding sources increased the cost per outcome estimates. Including these costs, the average cost per ESR participant increased slightly from £1,158 to £1,201, and the average cost per sustained job outcome from £2,516 to £2,609. Including the additional funding in the cost calculation did not reduce the variation between hubs in terms of the cost per ESR individual and the cost per sustained job outcome.

The potential benefits that the programme has created span skills, employment, reduced welfare receipt, health and wellbeing, and productivity. However, because the intervention did not include a control group, or other impact evaluation, it was not possible to assess counterfactual outcomes and evaluate whether participants would have achieved a sustained job in the absence of the programme.

Comparing the cost of the outcomes achieved through CSF2 with other employment programmes to assess value for money, it should be noted that the CSF2 programme allows hubs flexibility over the training they provide, to ensure they meet employer and participant needs and can tailor the offered interventions to the local construction industry. This makes it difficult to assign a cost per training intervention and challenging to find a suitable comparator programme. In making such comparisons, we must be mindful that we are not comparing like for like and any inferences should be treated with caution. The onset of the pandemic presents another challenge for our benchmarking as most comparison programmes identified happened prior to the pandemic.

Nevertheless, Table 6.1 documents programmes identified as potential comparisons. Only one of these programmes is construction focused (CSF1), while the remainder are programmes relating to feasible alternatives that hub participants might have. These are large-scale government programmes which include Work Experience, the Work Programme, and sector-based work academies.

In relation to the CSF1, the CSF2 offered better value for money, however, this might be expected given the set-up costs associated with the development phase of the programme. In the CSF1, the cost per ESR participant was slightly more expensive, £1,375 compared to £1,158 in the CSF2. This implies recruitment drives and the ability of hubs to get participants to achieve site readiness were relatively unchanged. However, there is a large difference in the cost per sustained job outcome in the CSF2. In the CSF1 the cost per sustained job outcome was £6,502, compared with £2,516 in the CSF2 (DfE funding only). The fall in average costs per outcome is partly driven by the CSF2 programme doubling the proportion of participants securing sustained job outcomes from 23 to 46 per cent.

Further analysis was undertaken to limit the comparison to only include hubs from the CSF1 that secured funding in the CSF2. We find that the average cost of outcomes in CSF1 falls when we exclude hubs that did not continue into the CSF2, suggesting that the cost-effective hubs were more likely to be contracted for the CSF2. However, even when excluding these hubs, the cost per sustained job outcome was £5,861 (it was £6,502 when including all hubs) which is considerably higher than in the CSF2 (£2,516). This indicates that the hubs in the CSF2 were more effective at getting participants into sustained employment. Government programmes offer other paths into construction that the CSF2 participants could have taken, however, when evaluating these programmes outcomes are often measured in days in employment or days off benefit. This is the case for all three of the programmes identified – the sector-based work academies (SBWA), Work Programme (WP) and The Work Experience Programme (WEP). Because the evaluations of each programme use comparator groups it is not possible to compare the outcomes with those of the CSF2. However, we can compare the cost per participant, for which the CSF2 is the most expensive of the three programmes.

Overall, the CSF2 offered better value for money than its predecessor CSF1 but compared to large scale government programmes appears relatively expensive. However, this analysis comes with a number of caveats. Firstly, national government programmes can often benefit from economies of scale where small scale local interventions cannot. Secondly, the comparator government programmes reach beyond the construction industry and there may be industry-specific constraints on the effectiveness of a programme which require an industry context. Thirdly, and most importantly, the costs that are estimated are often presented as the cost per participant, but not per successful outcome. This is not possible to obtain, especially when different impact evaluation methods are used.

Though this value for money analysis offers some insights, it is important to consider the wider picture. The CITB Construction Skills Network outlook report (see section 7.2) shows how employment in the industry needs to increase to meet demand. Specific training in which the participant obtains a CSCS card is not typically offered through other funding sources, meaning the CSF2 programme filled a gap in existing training offerings. Despite the relatively high costs of the programme, it may be necessary to reduce barriers to entering employment in the construction industry. It is also worth mentioning that the programme was successful at meeting diversity engagement targets, which was an explicit aim. Though we cannot assign a monetary value to this, policymakers should consider the value they themselves would place on increasing diversity and participation in the construction industry.

Table 6.1 Comparison programmes

| Programme | Description | Outputs to measure | Outcome | Cost |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Construction industry programmes | | | | |
| CSF2 | Programme we are evaluating. CSF training hubs provide free training and guidance for school leavers, long-term unemployed, and career changers as an entry route into the construction industry. Training was short-term interventions that were designed to meet local employer needs and fill skills gaps. | Employment and site ready (ESR); sustained job outcomes (12 week employment) | 6,373 Employment and site ready individuals; 2,934 sustained job outcomes (46 % of ESR participants) | £1,158 per ESR participant; £2,516 per sustained job outcome |
| CSF1 | The programme functioned as described above as CSF1 was the predecessor to CSF2 with 24 hubs delivering the programme. Hubs from CSF1 were invited to submit bids for the CSF2 funding with 14 hubs going on to take part in the CSF2. | Employment and site ready (ESR); sustained job outcomes (12 week employment) | 13,433 Employment and site ready individuals; 3,155 sustained job outcomes (23 % of ESR participants) | £1,375 per ESR participant £5,861 per sustained job outcome |
| Large-scale government programmes | | | | |
| Sector-based work academies | Introduced in 2011 to help unemployed benefit claimants gain relevant skills and experience to work in a specific sector. Three elements to the programme: pre-employment training (PET), work experience placements and a guaranteed job interview. The programme can last up to 6 weeks. | Employment outcomes, benefit receipt outcomes. The impact evaluation uses a matched comparison group and focuses on a sub-group of 19–24-year-old JSA claimants. | Increase in employment by 50 days, 29 fewer days spent on benefits. Measured over 18 months. | Estimated average cost pp £665 (approx. equivalent in 2021 prices is £831) |
| Work Programme | Operated between 2011 and 2017. Ongoing support to a wide variety of people out of work. Providers could design their own services based on individual needs. Performance-based pay, where providers are paid when an individual reaches 6 months' work. | Employment outcomes | Participants spend on average 45 more days in employment (ATET estimates) | £1,417 per participant over 3 years |
| Work Experience | Introduced in 2011 designed to help young people on JSA by providing them with a work experience placement that | Employment outcomes, benefit receipt outcomes. | Participants spend on average 10 days less on benefit | Average cost of setting up and administering |

lasts between 2 and 8 weeks. Participation is voluntary and young people continue to receive benefits.

The impact evaluation uses a matched comparison group (focused on 19–24-year-old JSA claimants).

and 47 days longer in employment, based on the 2012 cohort

each work experience placement £325

7. Sustainability and future plans

This final chapter looks at the future plans and sustainability of the CSF2 onsite training hubs. It begins by outlining plans for the hubs based on interviews with hub staff and then discusses projected skills needs in the construction sector over the next four years.

Key findings

- All the hubs planned to continue their work in some form beyond March 2021. Several staff voiced frustrations that the delivery period was not extended to take account of the time lost due to the pandemic.
- Staff believed that the need for people to retrain to access employment, and ongoing employer demand for trained job entrants made their work vital in the coming years.
- The scale of work that hubs could deliver in future would depend on the funding sources secured. Funding streams under consideration to deliver elements of the current offer included: local authority funding, employers as social value partners, and the Adult Education Budget.
- Forecasting conducted by the Construction Skills Network estimates that the industry will need to recruit an extra 217,000 workers over the next five years, or over 43,000 per year.
- Some entry level manual occupations including bricklayers, plant operatives and labourers are expected to have a large growth rate over the next five years. As all of these are common occupations entered by the CSF2 participants the CSF can be seen to be addressing these occupational skills shortages.

7.1 Sustainability and future plans

Interviews with hub staff explored future plans for the hubs and the sustainability of their construction skills training offer. All the hubs planned to continue their work in some form beyond March 2021. Some were situated on large development sites with many years to complete, and contractors on these sites often had social value commitments to local people. Several staff voiced frustrations that the funding period had not been extended to take account of the time lost during the early months due to the pandemic. Staff believed that the labour market context, the need for people to retrain to access employment, and ongoing employer demand for trained and suitable job entrants made their work vital in the coming years.

The way in which each hub planned to operate, and the scale of work they could deliver in future would depend on the funding sources they could secure. For example, one hub felt they would need to reduce the number of CSCS cards provided, and another said they would move the training delivery in-house.

Other potential funding sources under consideration depended on partnerships, relationships with employers, other funding sources used within the lead organisation and the availability of regional funding. Other funding streams under consideration 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;
- large employers as social value partners;
- the Adult Education Budget to deliver training for unemployed people;
- european Social Funding, depending on local eligibility, including one bid to transfer the model into other sectors of the economy;
- regional funding, for example from the Greater London Authority; and
- National Lottery Funding.

Aside from funding, hubs reported several other factors that would determine their ability to sustain. For instance, some hubs referenced their strong employer and partner relationships as a key determinant to their continued success alongside their attachment to on-going 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 affected their work in the early stages. They felt they now had improved efficiency because they were more established, were known in the local area and had set up their wider infrastructure. This reduced some costs of engagement with residents for example.

7.2 Future demand for construction workers

Sustainability of the training hubs will also be informed by skills needs in the construction industry. The CITB [Construction Skills Network outlook report](#) highlights the growing demand for construction workers over the next five years. Based on estimates of expected output, the construction industry will need to recruit an extra 217,000 workers over that time, or over 43,000 per year. More specifically this report highlights occupations with a positive annual recruitment requirement (ARR). The ARR is a gross requirement that considers workforce flows into and out of construction, due to such factors as movements between industries, migration, sickness, and retirement. The ARR values show where extra recruitment is needed to meet forecasted demand; it is over and above existing flows that are occurring. There are many manual occupations, which CSF training prepares participants for, which have an ARR of over 1,000. There are: labourers nec⁷ (2,700); bricklayers (1,450), building envelope specialists (1,250); and plumbing and HVAC trades (1,250). The CSF was addressing these occupational skills shortages.

⁷ Nec- Not elsewhere classified.

In percentage terms, some entry level manual construction occupations are expected to have large growth rates over five years. The number of bricklayers is projected to increase by 10 per cent, the number of plant operatives is anticipated to increase by nine per cent and the number of labourers (nec) is estimated to increase by seven per cent. All of these occupations feature in the most common occupations for CSF2 participants.

8. Conclusions

This chapter synthesises the lessons learned for creating a pathway to employment in the construction industry. It assesses the quality of employment outcomes achieved by CSF2 participants and the value for money of the fund, and details lessons learned for skills and employment policy. It also explores challenges that the hubs faced in delivering the CSF2 within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

8.1 Challenges in the context of the pandemic

Operating in the context of the pandemic was very challenging for hubs and affected many aspects of their delivery, as well as employer confidence and recruitment. Since April 2020, the ever-changing nature of the social distancing and lockdown restrictions implemented to combat the pandemic, made it difficult for the hubs to plan. Several staff reflected that the start of the contract coincided with the first national lockdown. Most hubs lost the first few months of delivery because they needed to adapt to remote working, alter how the training was delivered, and respond to changes in job vacancies. Over time the construction sector established new ways of working and put in place health and safety protocols to mitigate the risk of Covid-19, leading to work onsite continuing and the volume of vacancies returning. This took time however, and the pace of change varied between employers and sites.

The time required to adapt the model and the slower pace of working remotely with some participant cohorts led to re-profiling of the ESR targets, with ESR outputs being condensed into the final months of the contract.

The social distancing requirements needed hubs to adapt delivery. The balance of remote versus in-person learning varied between hubs and over the year. Initially, hubs changed procedures, and established online compliance and audit processes. Some hub staff discussed that aspects of the onsite element (eg a site tour) became challenging to deliver in the changed context and were not supported by employers in some instances. Agreeing changes and flexibilities to the contracted requirement also took time.

While remote courses overcame barriers to attendance for participants (for example reducing travel barriers), it excluded others without IT skills or access to technology. In some cases, courses which contained a practical element, such as working with large machinery, could not be delivered in a remote or socially distanced format, and were discontinued during this period.

Furthermore, many employers were not willing to offer work placements or work experience due to limited numbers of staff onsite and wanting to ensure people onsite were fully productive. Restrictions placed on the number of people onsite also removed the ability of hub staff to informally network with contractors; a method in the past they had found useful for sourcing vacancies and for informal communication.

Hub staff found it more difficult to determine participants' motivation, attitudes, and suitability remotely and could not gain insights through non-verbal cues and body language. Staff felt that not meeting in person during the training also meant participants could not get to know one another, and people that had worked in the sector before could not network and share experiences with other participants.

The hubs had strengthened their planned approach to job brokerage in CSF2, and increased resourcing for this element. The pandemic affected hiring confidence among employers and created a climate of uncertainty about the future. While some recruitment continued, there was reported to be a reluctance to recruit apprenticeships, in part because employers needed to maintain social distancing onsite and wanted staff on site to be 'fully productive'. Instability was reflected by some participants who secured positions and agreed start dates, only to have them postponed when restrictions changed.

Staff and employers reported that the sector had fallen back on recruiting candidates who were 'easy wins', such as those with prior construction experience and career entrants. Several staff felt that career changers were more difficult to support in a remote context, because this group benefited most from attending the hub in person and seeing a construction site.

8.2 The CSF2 as a pathway to work

The CSF2 model aimed to create a pathway to employment in entry level roles in the construction sector. The model's strengths have been in the early stages of the employment pathway; engaging with partners to refer diverse candidates; and providing quality and accessible training that is well-received by participants, develops knowledge, and instils confidence that they can find work in the sector.

The hubs were well-regarded by employers and wider partners. The offer of a short course, which included a CSCS card, and was free for participants was valued. Having no eligibility criteria, for example related to age, employment status or prior qualification level was important to ensure inclusivity. Several staff and partners noted the open nature of the support provided by the CSF set it apart from other skills and employment funding sources which tended to have eligibility criteria (eg ESF, AEB).

The inclusive eligibility helped to create diversity in participants and this was attractive to some employers, such as those seeking a mixed age workforce or wanting to employ career changers. More generally, it sent a clear message to referral partners about the inclusive approach: if an individual were motivated to work in construction, the hubs could offer support. The hubs benefited from established referral routes and combined with rising unemployment and continued growth of word-of-mouth referrals, had interest from enough potential participants to meet participation targets.

The courses provided the opportunity for participants to develop the technical and employability skills required for entry level construction vacancies, and the short duration gave relatively quick access to work for successful participants. The fund had a target of half (50 %) of participants sustaining work for three months, and hubs reported a lot of interest in working in construction. This made the selection and screening processes

critical to build employer trust and secure quality candidates. Staff and partners noted that the rising level of unemployment and demand from people to retrain made the model very relevant.

The programme targets had two dimensions:

- volume (6,000 ESR participants, 3,000 sustained job outcomes); and
- diversity (15 % career changers, 45 % from under-represented groups).

The hubs exceeded the target for the number of ESR participants, reflecting successful models of engagement and training despite the pandemic context. The target of 50 per cent of ESR participants entering sustained employment was nearly met; 46 per cent of ESR participants entered sustained employment. The 50 per cent target was ambitious. Other employment programmes, such as the Work Programme, and the CSF1 have supported around one-quarter of participants into work. The CSF2 was also delivered within an unpredictable labour market and throughout periods of national lockdown. Comparative analysis (see section 6.2) shows that CSF2 produced proportionately more sustained employment outcomes than similar programmes, indicating that the CSF2 was successful in creating a pathway to employment in the construction sector.

There was considerable variation in the percentage of ESR participants who entered sustained employment between the hubs, which gives an indication of in which contexts and delivery methods the model worked best as an employment pathway. Significantly, one of the 14 hubs, which exceeded the 50 per cent target for sustained employment outcomes, contributed one-quarter of all sustained employment to the CSF2 programme. This hub therefore made a major contribution to the final number of sustained job outcomes achieved by the programme as a whole. The hub successfully achieved its sustained employment outcomes by working closely with employer partners delivering large multi-year construction projects. This enabled them to secure vacancies prior to delivering training courses, alongside developing and maintaining good working relationships with recruiting employers across other neighbouring sites. This indicates that a jobs first approach to training and job brokerage and having strong employer partnerships are key means for creating a pathway to employment.

Success is also likely to be supported by a strong local labour market, and high employment rates. Analysis of management information indicated a correlation between a high level of unemployment in an area, and fewer sustained job outcomes. While further analysis is needed to explore the reasons for this, it is possible that hubs based in areas with more unemployment had less significant economic development, and fewer job opportunities, making it more difficult for hubs to achieve sustained job outcomes. This finding may have implications for the government's Levelling Up agenda which aims to tackle unemployment and inequality by investing in deprived areas and indicates that the model may work best in buoyant labour market conditions.

Who did the employment pathway work well for?

The hubs overachieved the proportion of participants changing career, and from under-represented groups. Although this reflects the strength of partnership working, the training programme was most likely to deliver outcomes for participants who fitted the 'typical'

construction candidate for entry level positions. Female participants, participants from ethnic minority backgrounds and participants with disabilities had lower employment outcomes than male, white and non-disabled participants. Having prior construction experience also made it more likely that participants would enter work. Qualitative research suggested that this was in part because having networks in the industry, being willing and able to take physical roles and requiring no adaptations to working patterns or conditions were key enablers to entering sustained employment.

Some participants found it more difficult to access work than others, in part because they needed more support from the hubs, and because they did not have existing networks of friends or family working in the sector to signpost or provide opportunities. The CSF2 was less effective at creating a pathway to employment for career changers with intermediate or higher level skills and participants from ethnic minority backgrounds. Very few participants moved into management, supervisory or support roles. Some career changers with high levels of qualifications looking to enter skilled roles felt that the programme was unsuitable to their needs. In addition, logistic regression of management information found that having more qualifications was linked with less likelihood of a sustained employment outcome through the hub. Some hubs that sourced site management positions, found them difficult to fill, in some cases due to employer requirements for significant construction sector experience. This suggests that the programme design may be best suited to helping individuals without qualifications find entry level roles; and be less well suited to supporting people looking to enter intermediate or highly skilled roles in the industry. This could have been more clearly communicated to participants.

Significantly, while the CSF2 performed well in terms of engaging participants from minority ethnic groups, these participants were less likely to find work in the industry. This may be because informal recruitment methods are frequently used to fill entry level roles. 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. Recruitment practices may not be inclusive 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 recruitment 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. They could have 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 only one interviewer is present, can result in candidates being assessed on different criteria and individual bias entering the recruitment process. The hubs could have also encouraged employers to

monitor their own workforce diversity by collecting and analysing data. This might have helped to unify the programme objectives with reasons for employer involvement.

Beyond this, there are several ways in which the barriers to entering the sector could be reduced. Most of the suggestions outlined below are premised on having strong and trusted relationships with employers:

- A focus on adult apprenticeships and pay: many career changers wanted to work in a role that would develop their construction skills and lead to a role in a skilled trade, such as apprenticeship, rather than a labouring role. However, many felt unable to meet their existing financial commitments earning the apprenticeship pay rate. One hub negotiated with employers for adult apprentices to be paid the National Living Wage from the outset of their apprenticeship (rather than one year in). This made the opportunities more financially viable for career changers. Explaining the benefits to employers of an older apprentice, someone who has transferable skills and attributes, might help to expand this practice, and enable more career changers to access adult apprenticeships. More information, advice, and guidance to career changers about career routes and progression within apprenticeships might also be important to encourage participants to consider the potential longer-term pay offs against the short-term incentives. This could include discussion of longer-term earning potential and security.
- Supporting participants to build sector networks through work experience placements and encouraging networking opportunities between participants. Several participants had worked in the sector and had contacts. Establishing a 'buddy' scheme between participants new to the sector and those who are more established might help career changers and people without existing networks to develop those.
- Greater screening and personalisation of the programme to identify participants who might need more in-depth support to find work and overcome some of the barriers to entry in the sector. For example, female candidates who might want work experience prior to applying, or support to access opportunities on smaller sites.
- Some employers may wish to consider ring-fencing vacancies for candidates from under-represented groups (including participants from ethnic minorities and female candidates) to encourage greater diversity in the sector and overcome biases in the recruitment processes typically used in the sector.
- Supporting participants to access additional training opportunities, such as for tickets aligned to specific in-demand occupations, or higher level training opportunities.

Exceeding the target for engagement with diverse groups and career changers may have made it more difficult for the hubs to achieve their sustained job outcomes target. Working with employers to proactively support and enable job entry for diverse candidates is required in parallel to seeking vacancies, and some hubs have not done this. To increase employee diversity, and create entry routes for new groups requires resource, targeted effort, and a willingness from all parties (including employers) to overcome barriers and find new ways to support and enable people to enter roles. This was likely to have been more difficult in the pandemic context where uncertainty made employers risk adverse. Additionally, participants without prior construction experience were identified as those

most likely to benefit from face-to-face delivery and onsite experience to access vacancies.

8.3 The quality of work outcomes

The CSF2 aimed to support participants into sustained employment in the construction industry with a view to participants remaining and progressing in the sector following the training. Management information suggests that the programme was successful in supporting participants into good quality work on some key measures. The majority of participants were employed full-time, with few working on a casual basis, indicating that most participants entered secure employment. Most participants earned at least the National Living Wage⁸, with 82 per cent earning £300 a week or more and one third earning £400 a week or more.

The evaluation suggests that securing good quality employment outcomes for participants was related to hubs having strong links with large employer partners. Some hubs, including the hub which secured one-quarter of the overall sustained employment outcomes achieved by the CSF2, were able to leverage their supply of labour to employers to ensure that job outcomes were of good quality. This included specifying that vacancies must be paid at the London Living Wage. On the other hand, qualitative data suggested that some participants who were employed through recruitment agencies were working on a temporary basis, which affected their job security, pay and progression. This suggests that employers committing vacancies directly to hubs, rather than using recruitment agencies, could be a means of improving job security for participants. Further research on how different routes into employment in the sector affect job quality would also be useful.

The focus of the programme was on job entry, but there was little evidence of in-work progression for CSF2 participants. Once in work, support from the hubs was limited, beyond monitoring job outcomes. This may explain why 12 per cent of job starts did not translate to sustained employment outcomes, indicating that a proportion of people either left the sector (or remained in work but stopped their contact with the hubs). Qualitative interviews with participants who found work in construction but were unsatisfied with it, suggests that for some participants, low pay, poor working conditions, and few opportunities to gain skills and progress in the construction sector led to them leaving work before 12 weeks in post. In some cases this put them off working in the industry altogether.

There were several ways hubs sought to improve the quality and longevity of work outcomes for participants. In one case hub staff set participant expectations about the contact they would receive from the hub and why, at the end of the training. This proved an effective way to improve monitoring and evidencing outcomes, as well as signalling

⁸ Based on the average UK working week of 35.8 hours those aged 23 and above earn £319 at the NLW and those aged 19-20 £235 per week. While CSF2 participants may have longer working hours (with most participants working 35 hours or more a week) the context of the average NLW allows us to compare the earnings of CSF2 participants and suggests that most were paid a decent wage.

that ongoing contact and support was available should it be needed. Another hub was proactive in identifying and addressing any early issues upon starting work. Staff contacted participants starting work most days during their first week to see how they were getting on and provide support with any teething issues. Although resource intensive, this hub felt it made a significant contribution to sustainment. Some hubs were in receipt of other funding sources which were used to support participants in their journey into the sector more widely. For example, to access courses, or by providing more training support once they were in work. These models added value to the onsite funding by enabling participants who wanted to, to gain additional qualifications. Hubs could provide more support and guidance for participants about approaches and strategies during early stages of a job, to try to mitigate participants becoming disheartened with the industry. Some participants found it difficult to negotiate conditions during their first few weeks, including in relation to expected tasks, and rates of pay. Future programmes could consider how to support people once they start work in the sector, both to stay, and then to progress.

8.4 Value for money and cost effectiveness

The total funding invested by the Department for Education (DfE) was £7.4 million. The programme achieved 6,373 ESR participants, meaning the average cost per ESR participant was £1,158. Of the 2,934 participants who entered and sustained work, the average cost was £2,516 per participant.

The CSF2 offered better value for money when compared to the CSF1. In the CSF1, the cost per ESR participant was slightly more expensive, £1,423 compared to £1,158 for CSF2. This implies that the ability of hubs to get participants to achieve site readiness were relatively unchanged. However, there is a large difference in the cost per sustained job outcome for the CSF2. In the CSF1 the average cost per sustained job outcome was £6,502, compared with £2,516 in the CSF2 (DfE funding only). The fall in average costs per job outcome is partly driven by the CSF2 programme doubling the proportion of participants securing sustained job outcomes from 23 to 46 per cent. When the CSF2 was introduced, the hubs were established, had effective referral routes in place, and were well-known among employers. Additionally, hubs placed greater emphasis and resource on employer engagement and job brokerage in CSF2. It may also reflect labour market conditions during the delivery period, where more people who were 'job-ready' were seeking work (due to job losses in the early phase of the pandemic), and the relative buoyancy of the construction sector compared to other industries during this time.

While the CSF2 offered better value for money than the CSF1, compared to other large scale government employment programmes it appears relatively expensive. However, national government programmes can benefit from economies of scale whereas small scale local interventions cannot. Secondly, the comparator government programmes used in the value for money analysis, reach beyond the construction industry and there may be industry-specific constraints on the effectiveness of a programme which require an industry context. Additionally, in CSF2 participants gained skills and qualifications alongside employment outcomes.

The CSF2 created several benefits spanning skills and qualifications, employment, reduced welfare receipt, health and wellbeing, and productivity. Employment in the construction industry needs to increase to meet demand and specific training in which the participant obtains a CSCS card is not typically offered through other funding sources, meaning the CSF2 programme filled a gap. The costs and investment may be necessary to reduce barriers to employment in the construction industry, which requires entrants to have specific tickets and qualifications (eg the CSCS card and health and safety level one). Furthermore, the programme was successful at meeting diversity engagement targets, which was an explicit aim, and required resources.

In order to become more financially sustainable and cost effective for the public purse, similar programmes in future could aim to generate revenue from employers. The CSF2 was predominantly funded by the DfE, with additional funding including from employers estimated at four per cent (£273,000). Given that some of the benefits accrue to employers in the construction industry there may be scope for increasing employer contributions. This could take the form of employers paying a fee for each vacancy filled by a hub, drawing on the model used by recruitment agencies in the sector. It would be less appropriate to ask participants to make a financial contribution as the programme targets those who are out of work, and providing free CSCS training is a major selling point of the programme to participants.

In addition, the same outcome of filling skills shortage vacancies in the sector, might have been achieved more cost effectively by reducing the number of ESR participants and increasing the resource used to support participants into work. In the best models, the usual entry routes that are effective for those closer to the sector were strengthened to gain commitment from employers to recruit from the hub (with the specific intention of supporting diverse recruitment). There are several successful ways hubs have done this, including S106 agreements which are enforced locally and where lead contractors ensure an emphasis on social value within the development. Other mechanisms have included starting with the vacancies first and then adapting the training programme to meet employer recruitment needs. Signalling this level of tailoring was felt to bind employers into making a commitment to recruiting from the programme. Another example was a hub which runs a framework of contractors for registered social landlords. They require framework organisations to recruit and develop new starters to the industry from priority groups. The strongest of these examples were found in the existing hubs. This might explain why they were able to continue to convert ESR participants into sustained job outcomes more readily, despite uncertainty within the industry.

Some staff and stakeholders suggested that asking employers to guarantee job interviews for participants, would strengthen the likelihood of employers recruiting to vacancies from the programme. This is the model used in sector-based work academies. Considering ways to bolster sector buy-in and commitment to recruiting from the programme, would be valuable and would be likely to support diverse entrants.

8.5 Learning for skills and employment policy

The CSF2 has demonstrated both employer and participant demand for short, skills specific training that enables people to access entry level roles. There is evidence of market failure that warrants investment of public funding.

The CSF2 has straddled both the remits of the DfE (supporting (re)training) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The labour market effects of the pandemic have contributed to a growing emphasis on supporting job entry and routes into employment from government. These include primarily 'skills-based' pathways such as apprenticeships, Bootcamps, Traineeships, and T-levels (which have an extended industry placement), as well as programmes with more of an employment focus overseen by the DWP. These include sector-based work academies and Kickstart. All these programmes use employer engagement to target job vacancies to eligible participants. Some stakeholders noted the increasingly crowded landscape of policy initiatives seeking to involve employers. Consequently, it could be difficult for employers to understand the differences between programmes and identify which was most appropriate to support their recruitment needs.

The second wave of the DfE funded Bootcamps programme aims to support high-quality medium to higher level skills (Level three or above) based on 'in-demand' skills needs, linked to job vacancies. Some of these will be in the construction sector. The hubs have the infrastructure, including employer links, which have taken time and investment to develop. Where it meets employer need, the Bootcamp programme could offer hubs the opportunity to extend the current employment pathway for participants wanting to secure access to higher level and more technical job roles.

There are several lessons for working with employers to create entry routes to employment. The hub model has been most resilient where there have been a large volume of vacancies, and a relatively long-term time horizon, such as found on large development sites. This, combined with an urban context which creates economies of scale for recruitment opportunities, creates conditions for public sector investment in social value and widening access to labour market opportunities. These local conditions may help the transferability of similar models to other contexts. These local conditions may help the transferability of similar models to other contexts.

Other funding sources can complement the model, and add value both to employers, extending their reasons for working with the hub, and for participants, such as supporting their progression in work. To sustain job entry, especially in a sector where work is project-based and use of self-employment and flexible forms of work are high, programmes need to invest in participant support beyond immediate job entry.

The CSF2 aimed to be employer-led and respond to demand. Demand-based programmes are affected by changes beyond their control, such as the pandemic, and employers can change their plans quickly. Providers therefore need to be responsive, for example in their contracting with training providers, and agile in their ways of working. Too great an emphasis on payment by results can make it difficult for providers to be strategic and invest in capacity and capability.

The hubs adapted to the pandemic restrictions and worked to support participants remotely. Hubs were able to deliver effective training remotely and support participants to become employment and site ready, even where in-person elements such as site visits and skills training could not be delivered. Remote training has been effective for some groups such as those with construction experience, caring responsibilities, and people currently in work. However, it worked less well for others, including those who would have benefitted from building networks within the sector, such as career changers and those from under-represented groups. Elements of remote participation and support could be built into the design of future models, and would support accessibility for some groups, but many of the benefits come from the physical and onsite nature of the experience.

The CSF2 had targets for both volume of outcomes, and diversity of participation. The employer-led response was to provide everyone with the same minimum requirement for job entry (eg health and safety and CSCS cards). Future programmes should differentiate between the need to meet demand for skills shortages, from anyone suitably qualified, and in the medium-term, to enable a more diverse workforce. Participants from diverse groups often needed more support or encouragement to enter occupations that lack diversity, and conversely when employers recruit via usual recruitment mechanisms for vacancies (eg networks), diverse candidates can remain 'locked out'. Consideration needs to be given to different career pathways than apprenticeships, and ensure they are financially accessible for older participants. Apprenticeships were viewed as financially unfeasible for many career changers in mid-life. Lastly, while employers are able to specify the technical skills and personal attributes they are seeking for vacancies, they may be less aware of how their recruitment, working practices and the industry norms can create challenges to job entry among people from diverse groups. Providers also need to support employers to consider how they recruit, and the openness and fairness of their processes. Employers alone may not be able to specify all the requirements, some of which are quite intangible and may be subject to bias.

9. Technical Appendix

9.1 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 a management information return which has the following fields:

Table 9.1 Fields in management information

| Field |
|--|
| Hub |
| Forename |
| Surname |
| Date of Birth |
| Address |
| Postcode |
| Email address |
| Phone number |
| Does the trainee currently work in construction |
| Entry route |
| Ethnic group |
| Gender |
| Learning Difficulty or Disability/Health problem |
| Classified as Not in Education or Training 16–24 (NEET) |
| Ex-offender |
| Care Leaver |
| Previous level of educational attainment |
| Previous core subject of educational attainment |
| Date attainment of core qualification |
| Employment status at enrolment |
| Job title of most recent occupation |
| End date of most recent employment if not currently employed |
| Primary sector of current or most recent employer |
| Current or most recent occupation |
| Does trainee currently have CSCS card |
| Job role trainee interested in |
| Consent to participate in evaluation |
| Referral Partner |

CSF start date
 Intervention type
 Provider
 Start date
 Completion date
 Has trainee had taster session during CSF engagement
 Has trainee had work experience during CSF engagement
 Date site and employment ready
 Interventions after achieving ESR
 Date employment commenced
 Partner assisting in placing trainees into jobs
 Construction Occupation
 Job level
 Weekly Salary (GROSS)
 Weekly Working hours
 Type of employment
 Primary construction project working on
 Employer name
 Employer contact details
 Employment offered/started but declined/ended - please give reason
 Date of 12 weeks employed
 12 weeks employment evidence
 Trainee failed to continue job to 12 weeks due to Covid-19 (with evidence)
 Trainee considered from non-traditional entry or under-represented group
 Trainee from other occupation

Source: IES, 2022

The analysis in this report includes data audited by CITB. The audited data were received by the evaluation team at IES on 8th November 2021. The management information received was to cover all participants in the second phase of the Construction Skills Fund.

Data were received in a single excel spreadsheet containing data from 14 hubs where audited management information was received. This was imported into Stata where the data were cleaned and further analysis undertaken. This analysis 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 details information about the 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 after participating in the hubs.

- 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 9.1 shows a graphical representation of how the sample size shrinks as a result of invalid or incomplete information and which base sizes were used with the three analyses.

The exclusion criteria for the hub delivery analysis

1. Removal of duplicate values within each hub.
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:

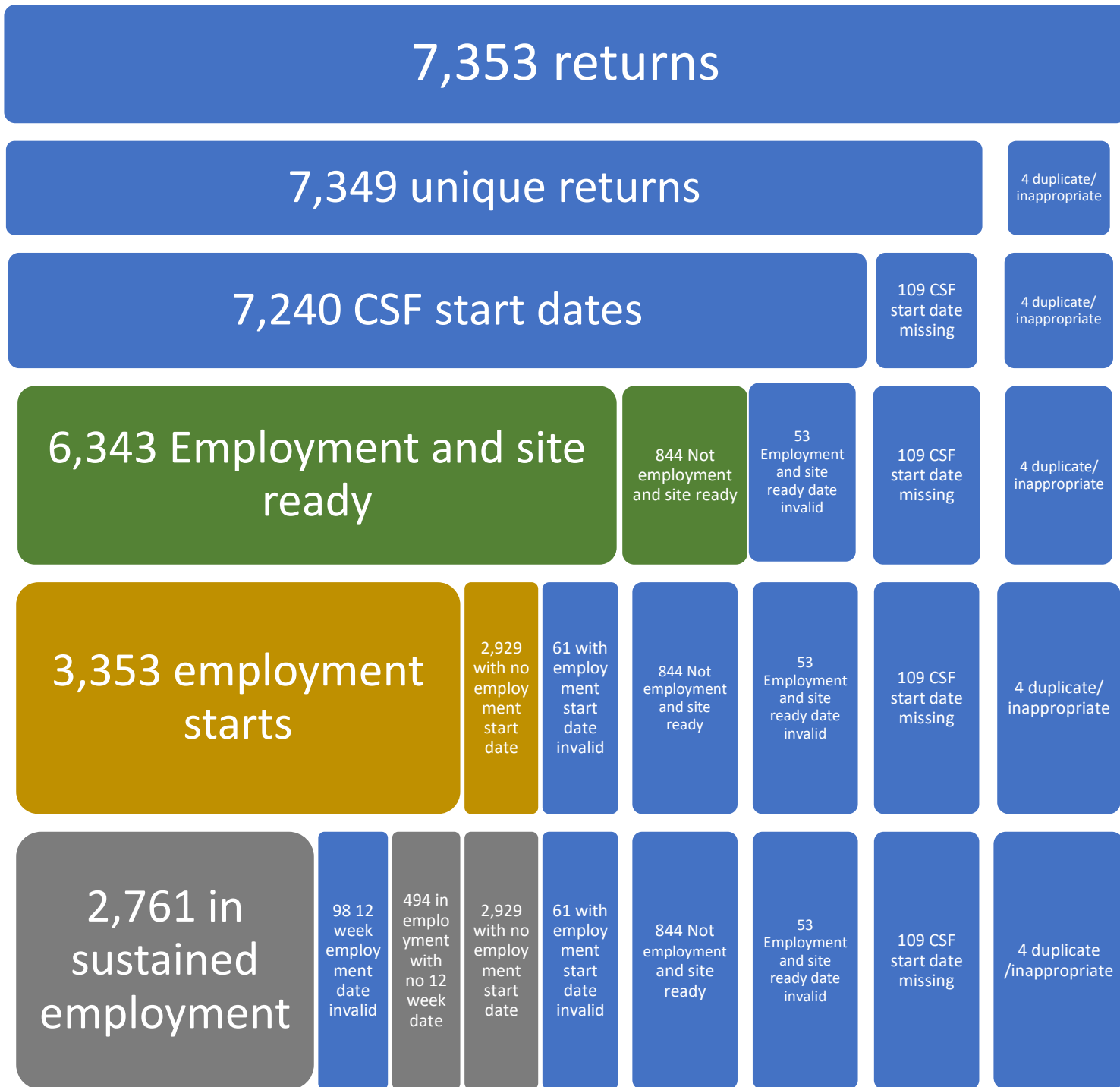
4. Excluding those who are not employment and site ready.
5. Excluding participants who have an employment start date prior to employment and start ready date.

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

In addition to the above:

6. Excluding those who have a 12 week employment date prior to their date of employment commenced.

Figure 9.1: Sample selection in management information analysis



Source: IES, 2022

9.2 Qualitative data collection

The participant sample included participants from all 14 hubs. The tables below detail the employment and demographic characteristics of the achieved sample.

Table 9.2 Achieved sample, by employment status

| | Outcome |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Employed at the time of interview | 22 |
| Unemployed at the time of interview | 8 |

Source: IES, 2022

Table 9.3 Achieved sample, by participant demographic characteristics

| Demographic characteristics | # of achieved interviews |
|--|--------------------------|
| Male | 22 |
| Female | 8 |
| White ethnic background | 17 |
| Black, Asian or Minority ethnic background | 13 |
| Aged 16–24 | 9 |
| Aged 25–49 | 16 |
| Aged 45+ | 5 |

Source: IES, 2022

9.3 Additional tables

Sustained job outcomes: who found work?

Table 9.4 Sustained job outcome by gender

| | Female | | Male | |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|------|-----|
| | N | % | N | % |
| No sustained job outcome | 237 | 65 | 3167 | 55 |
| Sustained job outcome | 126 | 35 | 2634 | 45 |
| Total | 363 | 100 | 5801 | 100 |

Base: participants who were Employment and Site Ready (N=6343)

Note: data for 179 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Table 9.5 Sustained job outcome by ethnicity

| | White | | Ethnic minority | |
|--------------------------|-------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | N | % | N | % |
| No sustained job outcome | 2161 | 51 | 1200 | 67 |
| Sustained job outcome | 2063 | 49 | 604 | 33 |
| Total | 4224 | 100 | 1804 | 100 |

Base: participants who were Employment and Site Ready (N=6343)

Note: data for 315 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Table 9.6 Sustained job outcome by disability status

| | No Disability | | Disability | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----|------------|-----|
| | N | % | N | % |
| No sustained job outcome | 2973 | 54 | 398 | 68 |
| Sustained job outcome | 2563 | 46 | 186 | 32 |
| Total | 5536 | 100 | 584 | 100 |

Base: participants who were Employment and Site Ready (N=6343)

Note: data for 64 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Table 9.7 Sustained job outcome by age

| Age | 16–20 | | 21–29 | | 30–39 | | 40–49 | | 50+ | |
|--------------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| No sustained job outcome | 904 | 59 | 1023 | 55 | 733 | 53 | 437 | 53 | 325 | 56 |
| Sustained job outcome | 618 | 41 | 836 | 45 | 651 | 47 | 394 | 47 | 259 | 44 |
| Total | 1522 | 100 | 1859 | 100 | 1384 | 100 | 831 | 100 | 584 | 100 |

Base: participants who were Employment and Site Ready (N=6343)

Note: data for 163 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Table 9.8 Sustained job outcome by education level at enrolment

| | None or entry level | | level 1 or 2 | | level 3 or above | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----|--------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| No sustained job outcome | 543 | 41 | 1744 | 57 | 949 | 64 |
| Sustained job outcome | 775 | 59 | 1331 | 43 | 545 | 36 |
| Total | 1318 | 100 | 3075 | 100 | 1494 | 100 |

Base: participants who were Employment and Site Ready (N=6343)

Note: data for 456 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Table 9.9 Sustained job outcome by prior construction experience

| | No prior experience | | Some prior experience | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| | N | % | N | % |
| No sustained job outcome | 2887 | 57 | 424 | 44 |
| Sustained job outcome | 2167 | 43 | 531 | 56 |
| Total | 5054 | 100 | 955 | 100 |

Base: participants who were Employment and Site Ready (N=6343)

Note: data for 334 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Table 9.10 Sustained job outcome by new/existing hubs

| | Hubs not existing prior to CSF1 | | Hubs existing before CSF1 | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| | N | % | N | % |
| No sustained job outcome | 1,682 | 62 | 1,741 | 50 |
| Sustained job outcome | 1,037 | 38 | 1,724 | 50 |
| Total | 2,719 | 100 | 3,465 | 100 |

Base: Participants who were Employment and Site Ready and had a valid employment start date (N=6184)

Source: CSF2 Management Information

Profile of hub participants

Table 9.11 Enrolment by gender

| | N | % |
|--------|-------|-----|
| Female | 411 | 6 |
| Male | 6,751 | 94 |
| Total | 7,162 | 100 |

Base: Registered with hub (N=7,240).

Note: Data for 78 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Table 9.12 Enrolment by ethnicity

| | N | % |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| White | 4,858 | 69 |
| Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups | 295 | 4 |
| Asian/Asian British | 387 | 6 |
| Black/African/Caribbean/Black British | 1,231 | 18 |
| Other ethnic group | 242 | 3 |
| Total | 7,013 | 100 |

Base: Registered with hub (N=7,240).

Note: Data for 227 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Table 9.13 Enrolment by age band

| | N | % |
|------------|-------|-----|
| Aged 16–20 | 1,843 | 26 |
| Aged 21–29 | 2,191 | 31 |
| Aged 30–39 | 1,575 | 22 |
| Aged 40–49 | 931 | 13 |
| Aged 50+ | 635 | 9 |
| Total | 7,175 | 100 |

Base: Registered with hub (N=7,240).

Note: Data for 65 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Table 9.14 Enrolment by disability status

| | N | % |
|----------------------------|-------|-----|
| Does not have a disability | 6,407 | 90 |
| Has disability | 693 | 10 |
| Total | 7,100 | 100 |

Base: Registered with hub (N=7,240).

Note: Data for 140 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Table 9.15 Enrolment by highest education level prior to starting on programme

| | N | % |
|---|-------|-----|
| No qualifications | 1,192 | 17 |
| Entry level/other qualifications | 317 | 5 |
| Level 1 (ie NVQ/Vocational qualifications level 1/GCSEs at grade D-G or 1-3) | 1,117 | 16 |
| Full level 2 (ie NVQ/Vocational qualifications level 2/GCSEs at grade A*-C or 4-9) | 2,481 | 36 |
| Full level 3 (ie NVQ/Vocational qualifications level 3/AS and A-Levels/Advanced Diplomas) | 1,057 | 15 |
| Level 4 or above | 657 | 10 |
| Total | 6,821 | 100 |

Base: Registered with hub (N=7,240).

Note: Data for 419 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Table 9.16 Enrolment by prior construction experience

| | N | % |
|-----------------------|-------|-----|
| No prior experience | 2,759 | 38 |
| Some prior experience | 4,424 | 62 |
| Total | 7,183 | 100 |

Base: Registered with hub (N=7,240).

Note: Data for 57 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

Table 9.17 Enrolment by non-traditional entry or under-represented group

| | N | % |
|---|-------|-----|
| Trainee from both groups | 1,525 | 22 |
| Trainee from under-represented group | 881 | 13 |
| Trainee is from non-traditional entry route | 2,015 | 29 |
| Trainee is not from either group | 2,589 | 37 |
| Total | 7,010 | 100 |

Base: Registered with hub (N=7,240).

Note: Data for 230 participants was missing, incomplete or invalid.

9.4 Logistic regression methodology and results

A logistic regression was conducted to assess the participant demographics and factors that make them more likely to achieve a sustained job outcome. The maximum sample was those with a CSF start date and, that if participants were employed where the employment start date was valid (ie not before the CSF start date). This gave 6,184 participant records. However, the achieved sample was 5,327 because of missing data for some of the control variables.

The following equation is estimated using a logistic regression:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \beta_2 \text{Hub}_i + \beta_3 \text{Month of CSF start date}_i + \beta_4 \text{Regional unempl rate}_i + \beta_5 \text{Regional inactivity rate}_i + \epsilon_i$$

where y_i is a binary indicator for the participant having a sustained job outcome, X_i is a vector of control characteristics including, age, age squared, gender, ethnicity, disability status, education level and employment status (prior to enrolment), and previous experience in construction. β_2 captures hub fixed effects, and β_3 captures time fixed effects by month of CSF start date. Controls are also included for regional unemployment and regional inactivity rates in the quarter the individual started on the programme. Table 9.18 below presents the marginal effects results; each coefficient may be interpreted as a one unit change in the independent variable increasing/decreasing the likelihood of achieving a sustained job outcome in percentage points.

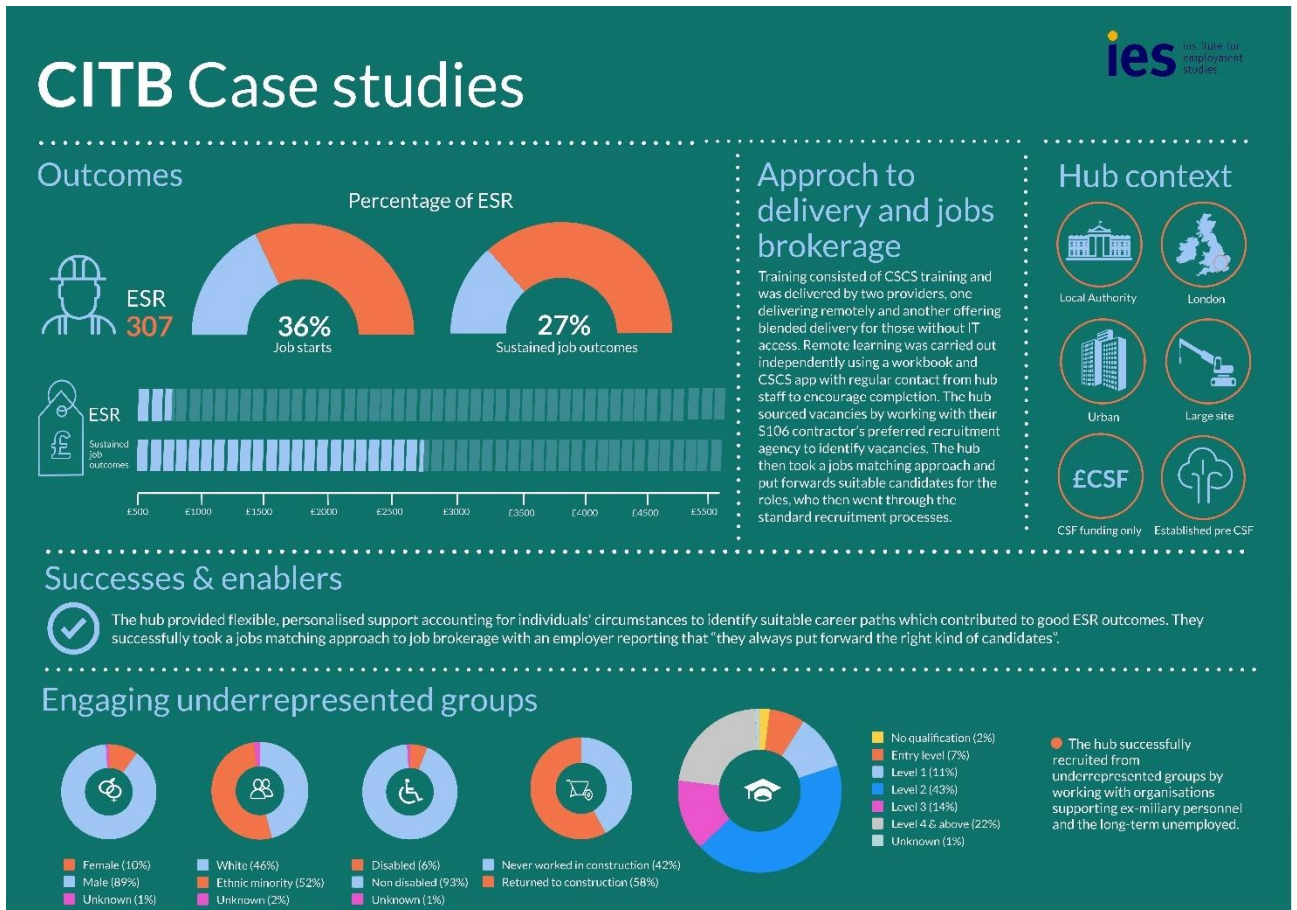
Table 9.18 Logistic regression results (marginal effects)

| | (1) |
|--|--------------------------|
| Gender | 0.0126 (0.0293) |
| Age | 0.00531 (0.00328) |
| Age squared | -8.12e-05* (4.56e-05) |
| Has a disability/health condition | -0.0933*** (0.0237) |
| Ethnic minority group | -0.164*** (0.0161) |
| Education level (ref. category = no qualifications) | |
| Entry level/other qualifications | -0.185*** (0.0354) |
| Level 1 (ie NVQ/Vocational qualifications level 1/GCSEs at grade D-G or 1-3) | -0.145*** (0.0234) |
| Level 2 (ie NVQ/Vocational qualifications level 2/GCSEs at grade A*-C or 4-9) | -0.119*** (0.0196) |
| Level 3 (ie NVQ/Vocational qualifications level 3/AS and A-Levels/Advanced Diplomas) | -0.147*** (0.0243) |
| Level 4 or above | -0.175*** (0.0284) |
| Previously worked in construction | 0.0819*** (0.0179) |
| Number of interventions completed | -0.00566 (0.00459) |
| Ex-offender | -0.172*** (0.0254) |
| Care Leaver | -0.0549 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| | (0.0476) |
| Regional unemployment rate | -0.0912*** |
| | (0.0225) |
| Regional inactivity rate | -0.134*** |
| | (0.0272) |
| Employment (ref. category = unemployed) | |
| Casual work | -0.0808* |
| | (0.0452) |
| Employed | -0.0846*** |
| | (0.0255) |
| Self-employed | -0.0149 |
| | (0.0619) |
| Hub fixed effects | Yes |
| Month of CSF start date fixed effects | Yes |
| N | 5,327 |

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

9.5 Hub case study infographics



CITB Case studies

Outcomes

Percentage of ESR

ESR 200

54% Job starts

51% Sustained job outcomes

Approach to delivery and jobs brokerage

The training was delivered remotely using videos, work sheets, tests and one to one support, which meant that it took participants longer to complete as the training was self-directed.

Training covered the intended content with the exception of site visits, and an employer provided work experience which was delivered online during lockdowns. The hub worked with employers and recruitment agencies to source vacancies for participants.

Hub context

- Local Authority
- North central
- Urban
- Large site
- £CSF+
- Additional funding
- New for CSF

Successes & enablers

The hub's main success has been strong, mutually beneficial relationships with partners and employers. Employers recognised the need for the programme and were incentivised to work with the hub as they want a strong relationship with the council and had skills gaps that the hub could fill.

Engaging underrepresented groups

- Female (7%)
- Male (93%)
- White (82%)
- Ethnic minority (16%)
- Unknown (2%)
- Disabled (17%)
- Non disabled (81%)
- Unknown (2%)
- Never worked in construction (45%)
- Returned to construction (54%)
- Unknown (1%)

- No qualification (11%)
- Entry level (3%)
- Level 1 (19%)
- Level 2 (38%)
- Level 3 (12%)
- Level 4 & above (13%)
- Unknown (4%)

- Working with community organisations embedded in deprived communities generated referrals of older men with construction experience.
- The hub's success in recruiting disabled participants was enabled by remote delivery which made the training more accessible, including for some autistic participants.

CITB Case studies

Outcomes

Percentage of ESR

ESR 340

55% Job starts

49% Sustained job outcomes

Approach to delivery and jobs brokerage

They delivered a mix of in person and remote training depending on pandemic restrictions, training providers and course requirements. They could deliver most of the planned content of the training remotely, including online site visits, but some practical courses could not be delivered. The format of the training changed to accommodate remote learning and was delivered using mix of short online sessions delivered over a longer period of time and independent learning. The hub sourced vacancies by working with main contractors to engage subcontractors and were supported by a partner organisation to engage employers. Once a vacancy was secured, the hub put forward suitable participants for the role. The hub continued to support participants who did not find work.

Hub context

- Local Authority
- London
- Urban
- Large site
- £CSF
- CSF funding only
- Established pre CSF

Successes & enablers

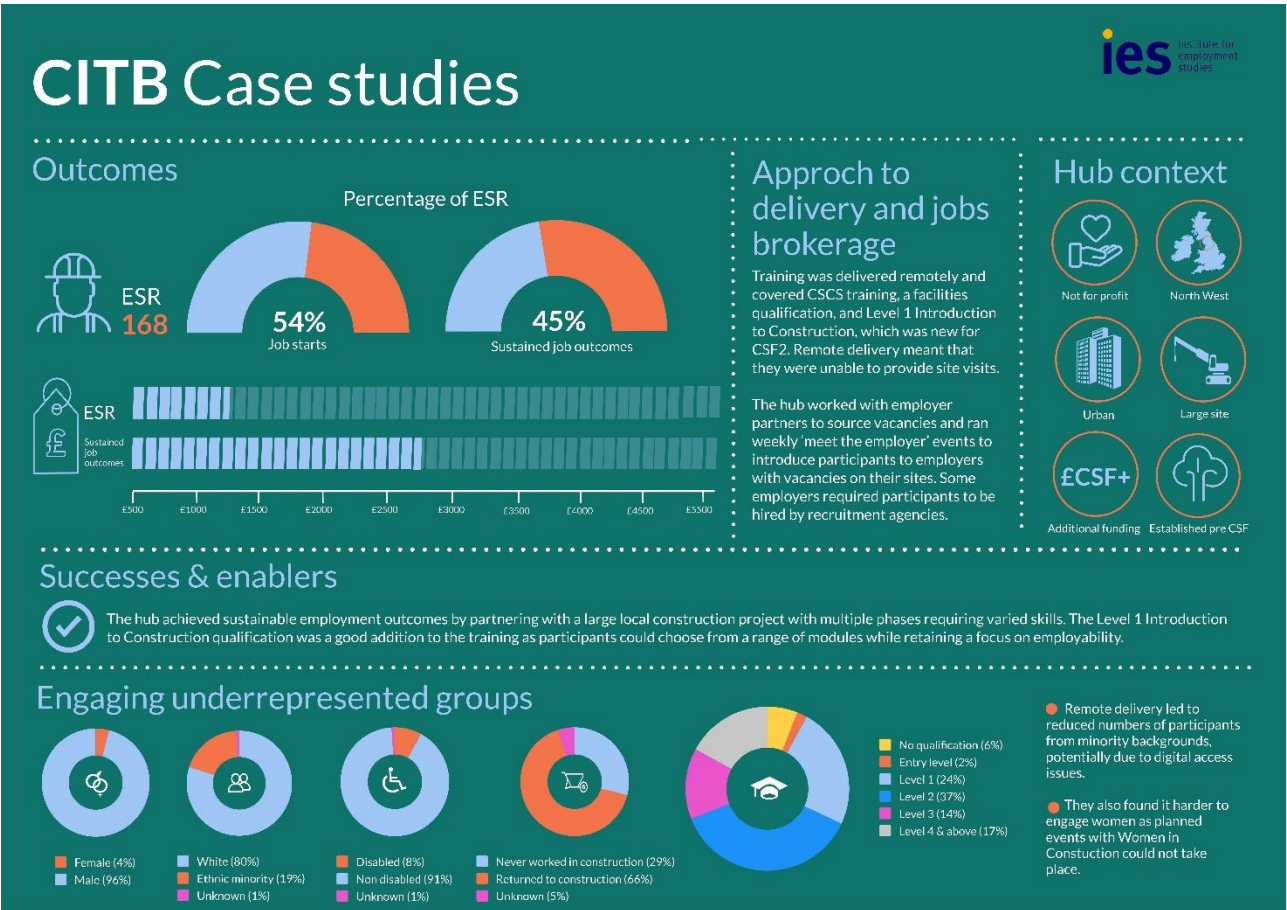
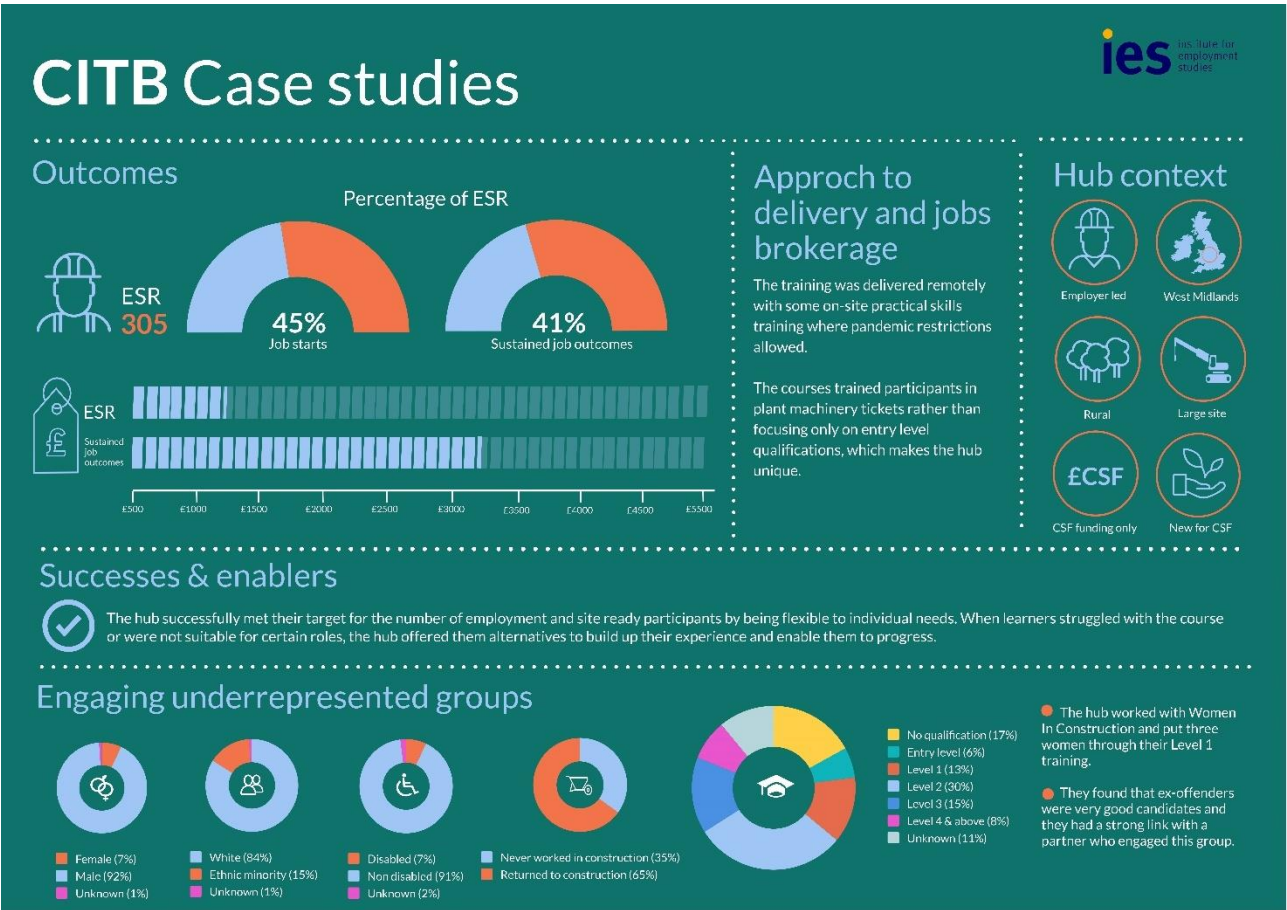
Having flexible relationships and sustained contact with employers generated apprenticeships and employment opportunities. Sustained employment outcomes were achieved by providing intensive in-work support to troubleshoot issues participants faced, including problems with pay, interpersonal problems, and instances of racism. Hub staff called participants as often as once a day during the early stages of employment to support them to remain in post.

Engaging underrepresented groups

- Female (6%)
- Male (92%)
- White (40%)
- Ethnic minority (55%)
- Unknown (5%)
- Disabled (6%)
- Non disabled (91%)
- Unknown (3%)
- Never worked in construction (26%)
- Returned to construction (65%)
- Unknown (9%)

- No qualification (4%)
- Entry level (5%)
- Level 1 (11%)
- Level 2 (40%)
- Level 3 (21%)
- Level 4 & above (11%)
- Unknown (8%)

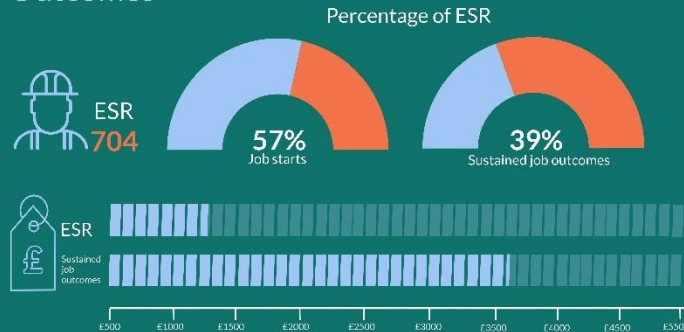
- The hub tried to engage female participants by working with Women into Construction but found it difficult as women face many barriers to entering work in the industry.
- Successfully engaging underrepresented groups involved working with partner organisations with links to these groups and expertise in engaging them.



CITB Case studies



Outcomes



Approach to delivery and jobs brokerage

The training was delivered remotely by a number of providers including colleges and training agencies. Training focused on basic CSCS and health & safety qualifications, and less on higher level skills, due to demand from participants.

The hub mostly worked with recruitment agencies to source jobs for participants because of a lack of demand for entry level workers from employer partners who they had planned to work with the source vacancies. These agencies bridged the gap between SMEs and the Hub, and were able to outline skills needs to inform training delivery.

Hub context

- Local Authority
- South West
- Mixed
- Large site
- Additional funding
- Established pre CSF

Successes & enablers

Being based on a large site removed barriers between participants and employers which helped participants to enter employment, and employers to fill vacancies.

Engaging underrepresented groups

- Female (4%)
- Male (95%)
- Unknown (1%)
- White (89%)
- Ethnic minority (10%)
- Unknown (1%)
- Disabled (19%)
- Non disabled (79%)
- Unknowns (2%)
- Never worked in construction (33%)
- Returned to construction (66%)
- Unknown (1%)

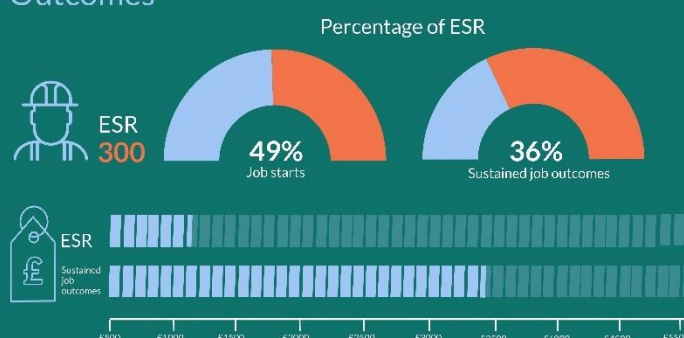
No qualification (14%)
 Entry level (3%)
 Level 1 (18%)
 Level 2 (37%)
 Level 3 (16%)
 Level 4 & above (8%)
 Unknown (4%)

- The hub met targets for engaging underrepresented groups by working with a range of referral partners who provide services to these demographics.
- Engaging these groups requires inclusivity on site including multi-faith prayer rooms and female/unisex toilets.

CITB Case studies



Outcomes



Approach to delivery and jobs brokerage

They delivered across two sites. One had no physical hub so all training was delivered online, at the other location they used blended delivery combining one day of classroom teaching with independent learning using the CSCS app. The training covered CSCS and practical skills training, using pre-recorded videos for the blended course. Job brokerage staff sourced vacancies from engaged employers, and local job listing sites. Staff then spoke to employers to broker vacancies for hub participants, matched participants to vacancies based on participant CVs and sent these to employers. The hub also supported participants to apply for external vacancies and worked with recruitment agencies who attended the training to sign up participants and held a recruitment day.

Hub context

- Training provider
- West Midlands
- Rural
- No large site
- Additional funding
- New for CSF

Successes & enablers

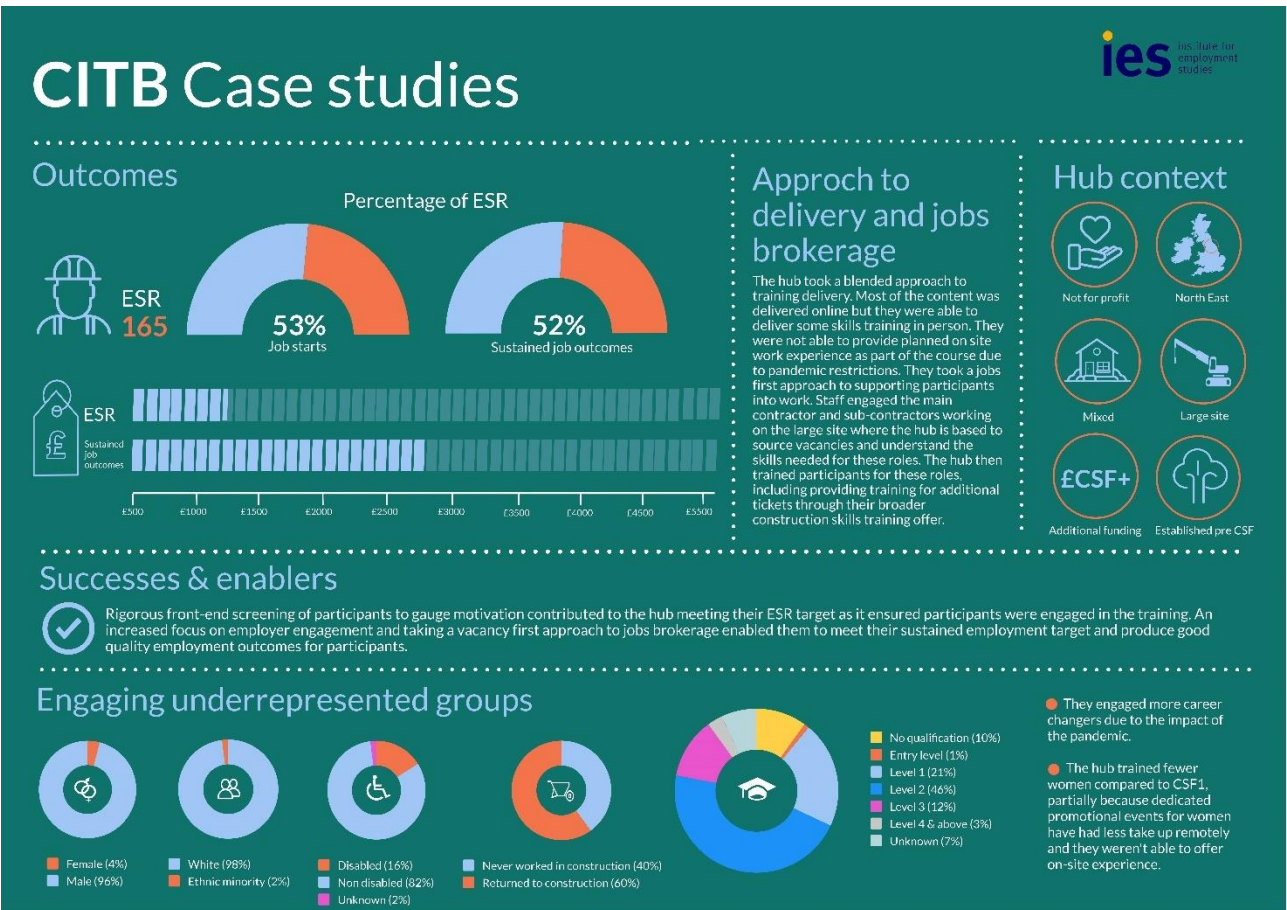
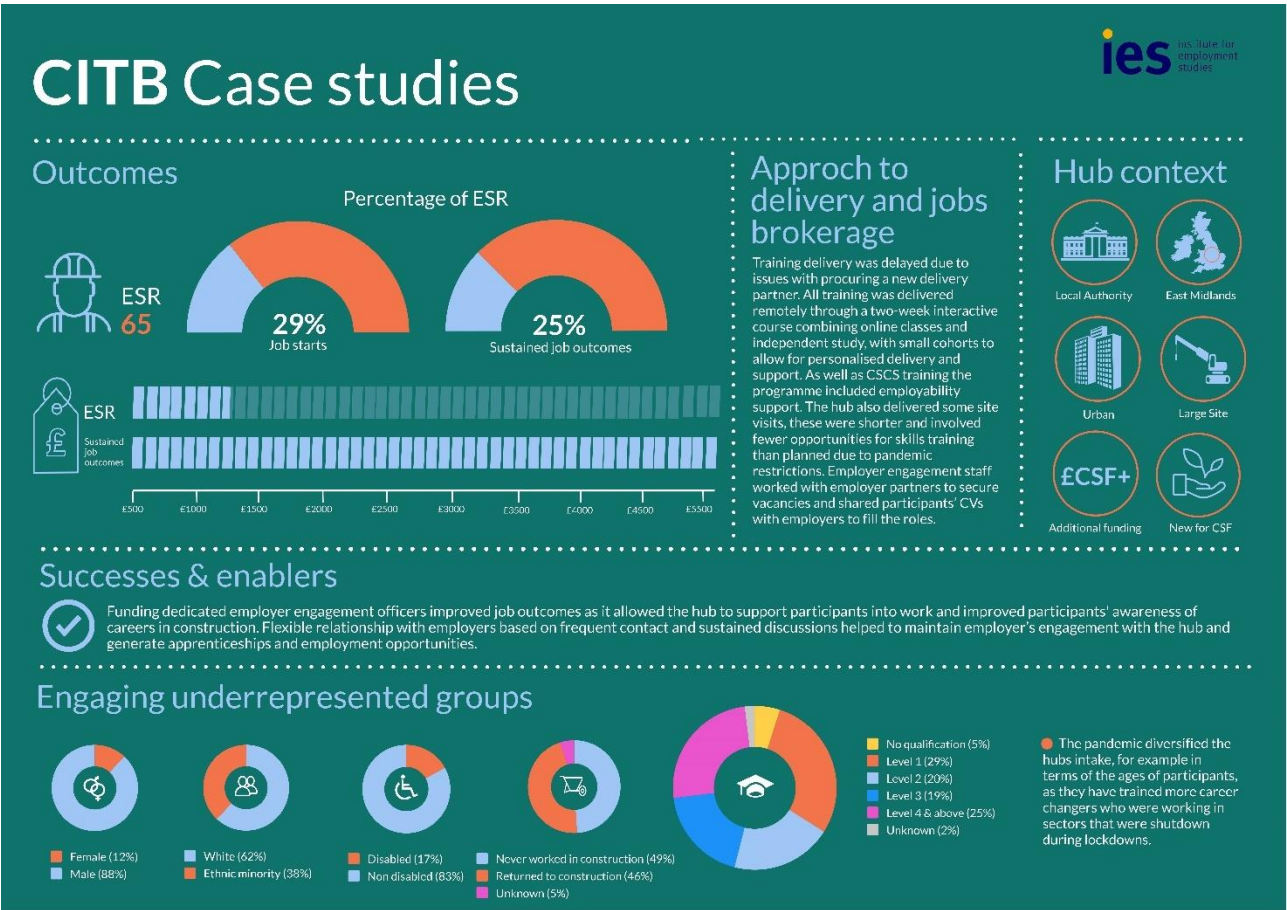
Hiring dedicated employer engagement staff improved employment outcomes as the team could source vacancies and match them to participants. Forming good relationships with employers was key to their approach as many vacancies, especially from SMEs, are filled using informal recruitment processes rather than being advertised.

Engaging underrepresented groups

- Female (2%)
- Male (97%)
- Unknown (1%)
- White (92%)
- Ethnic minority (8%)
- Unknown (1%)
- Disabled (22%)
- Non disabled (77%)
- Unknown (1%)
- Never worked in construction (30%)
- Returned to construction (70%)

No qualification (15%)
 Entry level (4%)
 Level 1 (16%)
 Level 2 (44%)
 Level 3 (13%)
 Level 4 & above (3%)
 Unknown (5%)

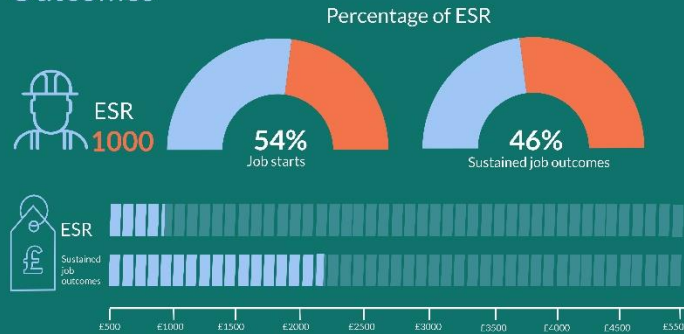
- The hub worked successfully with JCP staff to engage people with disabilities and single parents.
- The hub relied on social media promotion to generate referrals including from underrepresented groups.



CITB Case studies



Outcomes



Approach to delivery and jobs brokerage

Training was delivered primarily online with a weekly in-person course for those who couldn't access remote training. Training covered CSCS training and additional tickets delivered through half day classes based on employer demand. The hub took a Jobs first approach to training, tailoring courses to employers' skills needs and vacancies.

The hub helped participants into work by securing vacancies from employers and then put forward participants to fill them, describing their approach as "not brokering jobs for individuals but finding individuals for jobs".

Hub context

- Not for profit
- North West
- Urban
- No large site
- Additional funding
- Established pre CSF

Successes & enablers

The hub overperformed on their target for job starts due to being employer led and investing staff resources in employer engagement. This was enabled by relying on partners to generate referrals, freeing up staff time to focus on employer engagement and jobs brokerage.

Engaging underrepresented groups

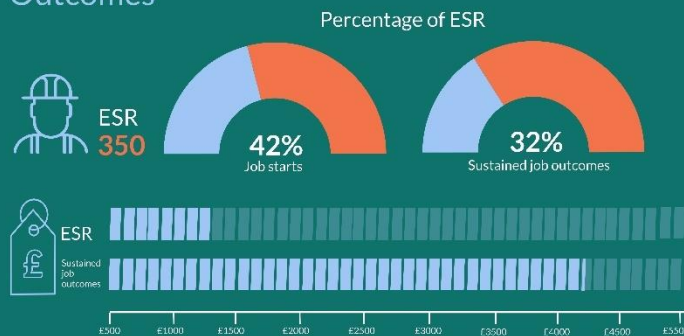


- The hub secured vacancies/apprenticeships specifically for women which may have generated referrals of female participants.
- The hub successfully engaged participants from ethnic minority backgrounds by targeting outreach on areas with a higher proportion of this demographic.

CITB Case studies



Outcomes



Approach to delivery and jobs brokerage

The training was delivered remotely using an open ended, independent learning model using worksheets and one to one remote support which participants completed at their own pace.

They partnered with a local college who supported those without internet access to engage remotely. The hub relied on recruitment agencies to source vacancies for participants.

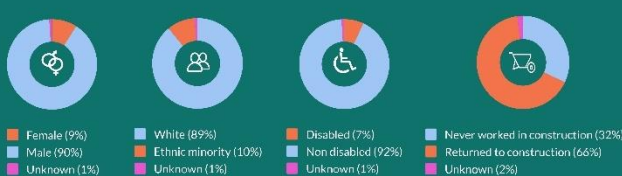
Hub context

- Local Authority
- South East
- Mixed
- No large site
- CSF funding only
- New for CSF

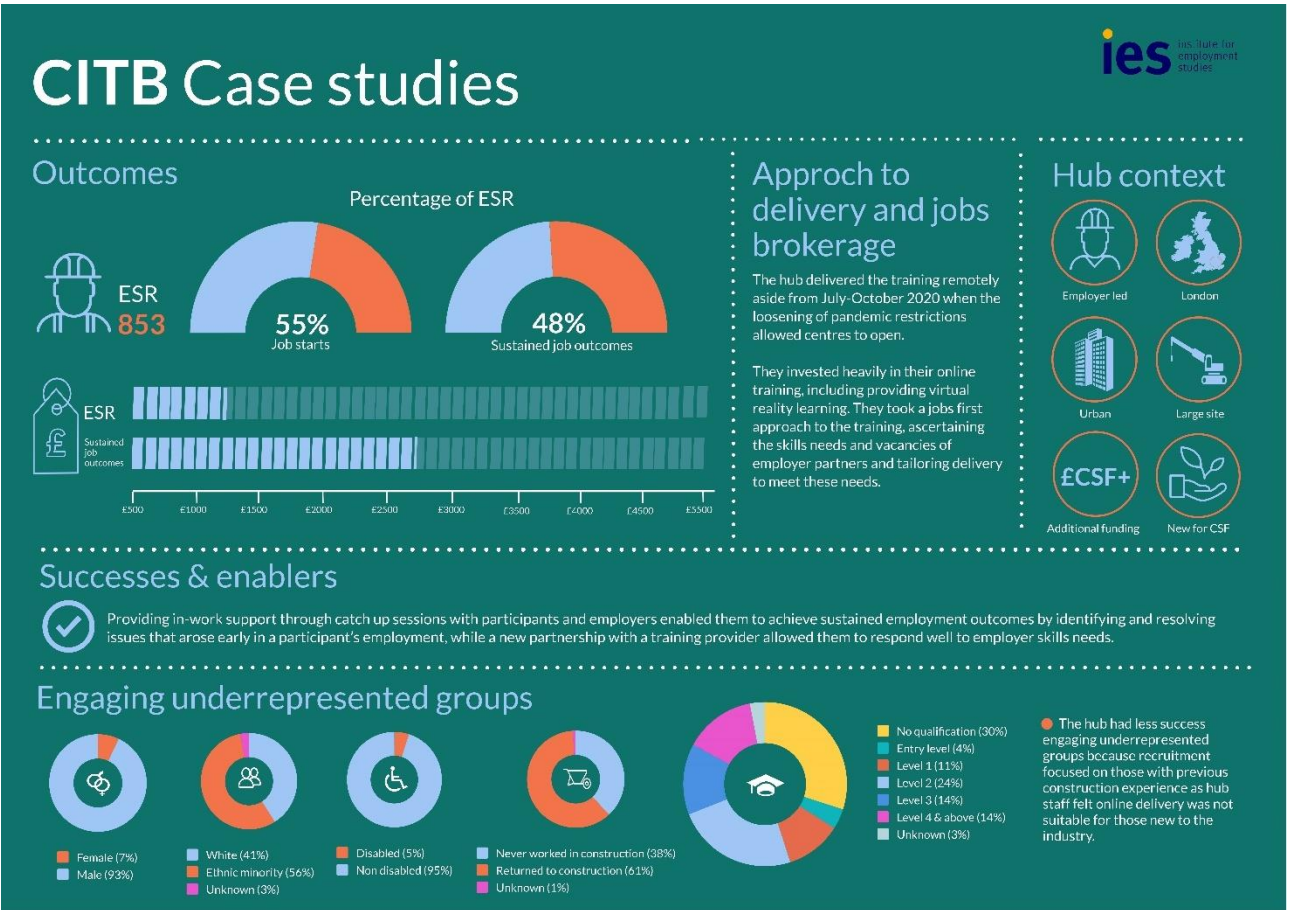
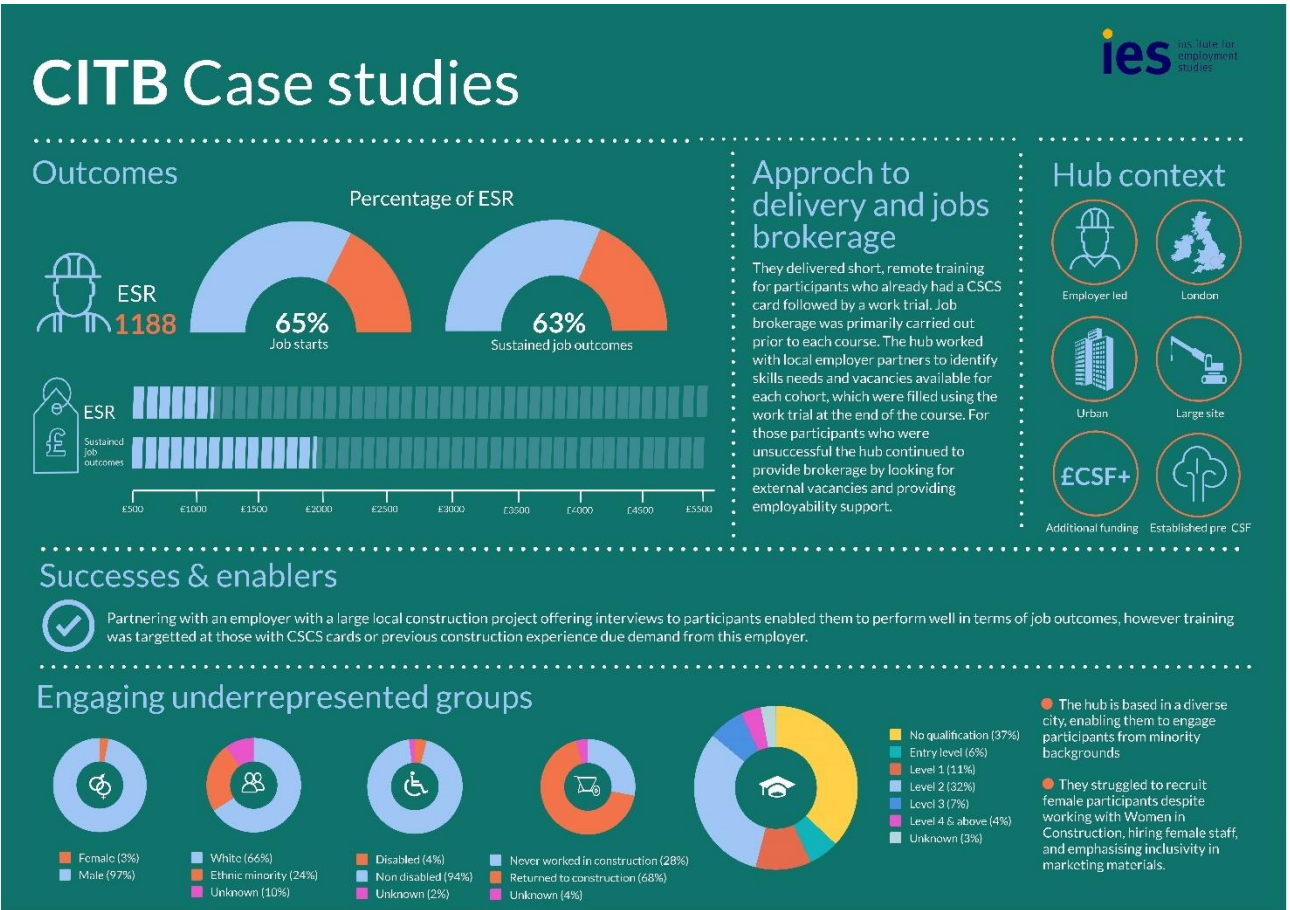
Successes & enablers

Adapting the training to remote delivery worked well and made the hub more accessible for some participants. The hub plans to continue delivering around half of their training online in the future.

Engaging underrepresented groups



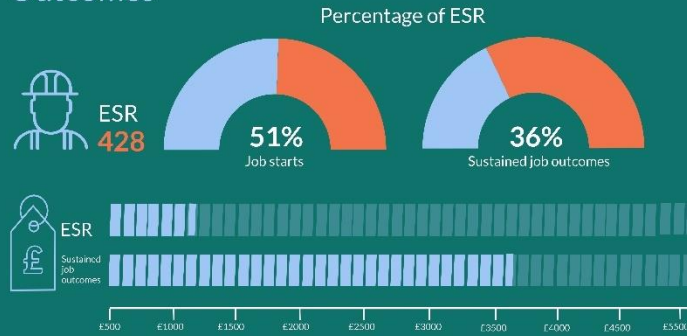
- The hub found it harder to recruit from underrepresented groups as they could not engage in targeted face to face promotion.
- They recruited higher numbers of career changers, especially from domestic trades, due to the pandemic.



CITB Case studies



Outcomes



Approach to delivery and jobs brokerage

The hub engaged a number of training providers to be flexible to participants' IT access and time commitments. Training was primarily delivered online, although one training provider delivered in person for participants without IT access. Online delivery included virtual site tours which worked well.

The hub sourced vacancies from employer partners, including the main and sub-contractors on the site where the hub is based. Participants were encouraged to apply for vacancies and the hub also hosted 'meet the contractor' days where the lead contractor was introduced to participants. The lead contractor reviewed participants' CVs and vacancies on site prior to this and engaged in job matching on the day, encouraging suitable participants to apply for roles.

Hub context



Successes & enablers

Effective screening prior to enrolment, and support to help participants to overcome barriers to engaging in the training, such as IT access and caring commitment, contributed to the hub's ESR outcomes. Working in partnership with large, complex multi-year developments enabled the hub to achieve good employment outcomes.

Engaging underrepresented groups

