
Evaluation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Grants

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Executive Summary

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Grants, managed by the Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) aimed to support innovative and sustainable projects which developed the capacity of the sector to meet the public sector Equality Duty. This report evaluates three years of the EDI Grants, 2010-2011 (EDI-2), 2011-2012 (EDI-3) and 2012-2013 (EDI-4). The Grants were open to organisations in England whose primary function was to provide further education and training, and well as to National Careers Service prime providers.

It is evident from our research that overall, the EDI Grants have delivered value for money in several important respects:

- They have provided an **important source of funding** to support the development of EDI in the FE sector at a time of significant public funding cuts and at a time when some providers may be tempted to cut back on equality and diversity as an organisational/strategic priority.
- Over the course of the three years (2010- 2013), the Grants have grown in profile and attracted increasing numbers of applications. Alongside this, the Grants have succeeded in **funding a range of diverse providers** who have been able to test out various approaches and delivery models in settings other than FE colleges. There has been a **diversification in the focus of projects** over the years to include the newer strands of protected characteristics and projects have also **focused on newer target groups**, such as businesses and the local community, and not just on learners.
- Perhaps one of the strongest messages to emerge out of this research has been the value of the Grants in **giving the newer equality strands greater profile and status**. A number of stakeholders reported that this has been important in areas such as sexual orientation and religion/belief, where many providers still struggle to see the relevance of these themes to their work.
- The **support offered to projects (by LSIS) has been critical** to ensuring that projects have stayed on track and in offering projects ongoing support and opportunities to disseminate their findings more widely to other providers in the sector. This support function is likely to continue to be helpful and necessary,

particularly in the context of the Agency's freedom and flexibilities agenda and the fact that Grant funding was offered on flexible terms. It will also be necessary if the Grants are to continue to emphasise the capacity of the sector to meet its obligations under the Equality Act, since additional support is required to ensure that the emerging good practice is disseminated and embedded more widely, either through online case studies or national/regional events. All project interviewees noted the value of this support in their work.

- The Grants have **successfully encouraged innovation** in provider organisations, often funding activities that otherwise would not have been funded. This is borne out in the sheer diversity of approaches to addressing EDI amongst projects and the fact that many projects have used the Grants to test out new approaches and/or partnerships. Not all of these approaches have been successful but projects and stakeholders all noted the importance of being given the opportunity to trial and test different approaches.
- In some cases, the Grants have **encouraged projects to contribute good practice and learning to the sector more widely**. This was particularly evident amongst the newer equality strands, where stakeholders felt that many providers still would not know how to address EDI in these areas, or what good practice might look like, or where they might go to get more support on it.

However, our findings also reveal a couple of areas which the Agency might wish to consider developing:

- The first is the **monitoring and reporting system of the Grants**. As noted above, this has largely worked well and offered the projects a key source of support. The systems used by the Agency and LSIS developed over the three years. However, in 2012/13 this system was heavily dependent on accurate self-reporting on the part of the projects. It would be too resource-intensive to independently evaluate every single project. However, simple changes to the reporting structures and templates that many projects have been working to could encourage clearer statements from projects about their aims, approaches and outcomes. One such change should be a clearer emphasis in the reporting templates on evidencing statements made in the project interim and final reports. For example, avoiding the use of scales (1-10) in asking projects about how far they have achieved their objectives, in favour of more open questions which encourage projects to clearly explain how far they have progressed against their initial objectives and to provide evidence for this. A similar emphasis could be worked into dissemination events so that other providers can clearly see the impact of the Grants and the distance travelled since the start of particular projects. Where some project reports are of particularly poor quality, follow-up by the managing agent or critical friend could provide additional support to encourage greater accountability amongst these projects to their stated

deliverables. The second is the emphasis of the Grants, which, judging by the prospectuses for 2010-2013, has been heavily weighted towards innovation. As noted above, this emphasis is right and proper, and has delivered considerable value to the sector. However, **the Agency should perhaps consider giving more (or equal) emphasis to the need to embed, sustain and extend good practice within the sector as a whole** as this is likely to deliver greater value for money and improved equality outcomes in the longer term. These kinds of approaches were distinctly lacking in the 2010-2013 Grants, particularly around leading improvement, where better performing providers could share their work with weaker providers, and around extending good practice already available on the Excellence Gateway.

Based on the findings of this research, we would recommend that the overriding aim of the Grants be to embed, sustain and extend good practice on EDI in the sector, and that projects should be steered towards this goal by considering innovation, sustainability and partnership working as key themes in guiding their potential activities. This would retain the Grant's emphasis on innovation, sustainability and partnership working but would ground it more strongly within a longer-term vision of a sector that is better equipped to meet its obligations under the Equality Duty.

1 Introduction

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Grants (also known as the Equality, Diversity and Partnership Funds) were given to Further Education (FE) colleges and training organisations. Primarily, they aimed to support the organisations to develop the capacity of the sector to meet the public sector Equality Duty. The importance of this work is emphasised in the:

- Underrepresentation of particular groups in FE persists, for example the findings of the Little report regarding the participation of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in apprenticeships.¹
- The continued need to proactively challenge barriers to participation for some groups, for example negative stigma for those with mental health conditions.

Eighty seven projects were funded over the three years this evaluation covers, 15 in 2010-2011 (EDI-2), 25 in 2011-2012 (EDI-3) and 47 in 2012-2013 (EDI-4). In EDI-2, grants were offered in any amount up to £25,000, but by the latter year the funding had been split into small grants (ranging from £1,000 to £4,999) and large grants (£5,000-£25,000). Small grants were to provide a more flexible option with minimal bureaucracy.

The Agency and Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) funded and managed the grants together. They welcomed projects covering a **wide range of equality issues**, as well as those which dealt with multiple identities. Although an exhaustive list was not provided in any prospectus for the EDI Grants, some themes were identified. A few examples of those include: *'transgender equality'*, *'informing learner choice by promoting the benefits of atypical routes'*, *'supporting employers to recruit apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities'*, *'embedding equality and diversity within mainstream activities and resources, such as general curriculum and training materials'* and *'addressing BAME underrepresentation in Apprenticeships'*. Projects were **not** to fund the direct delivery of education and training.

¹ Little P (2012), *Creating an inclusive Apprenticeship Offer*, Apprenticeship Unit.

The **priorities of the grant** were **innovation, sustainability and partnership working**. Innovation was conceptualised as *'a new approach that the sector can learn from'*, or where projects built on the lessons learned from previous projects. Sustainability was demonstrated where project benefits continued after the funding period and learning was transferred to other providers. Lastly, relevant partners had to be involved in delivery, to make projects more effective and efficient.

FE and training providers are required to comply with the **Equality Duty**, which plays a key role in ensuring the equitable provision of, and access to, services for students. The duty covers age, disability, gender, transgender identities, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnerships, included in the Equality Act 2010, are not part of the public sector Equality Duty. Public authorities, including colleges and training providers, are required to consciously consider the following in their decision-making:

- elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The evidence this report is based on comes from several aspects of research. Firstly we conducted a **review of documentation associated with the EDI Grants**: the prospectuses, application forms, case studies, final reports and associated project documents, all of which came to just under 400 documents in total. This review identified examples of good practice worth bringing to wider attention, as well as the rationale and parameters of the Equality and Diversity Partnership Grants. We were able to then pinpoint common themes and trends across the years from all funded projects. Secondly, we used an **online survey of lead staff** of EDI projects in order to capture systematic information as well as issues relating to good practice, challenges and lessons learned. It is important to note that the vast majority of the documents in this review contained self-reported information from the projects themselves, and not information from independent evaluations. The survey was designed using SNAP software and a link was provided to a dedicated website, with requests and reminders sent via email. Of 96 requests, 20 complete responses were received giving a response rate of 18 per cent.² Lastly, we used **qualitative interviews** with sector stakeholders and particular project leads in order to expand and illustrate specific issues and good practice case studies identified through the documentary review and survey. These interviews were with six sector stakeholders and 12 project leads.

² 12 requests out of the 96 bounced back from invalid email addresses.

2 About the EDI projects

The Equality and Diversity Partnership Project Grants are open to organisations in England which provide further education and training as a primary function, as well as to National Careers Service prime providers. Furthermore, such institutions must be subject to Ofsted inspection, and be funded by the Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) or Education Funding Agency (formerly the Young People's Learning Agency).

Eligibility of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) is conditional on the last two requirements. Although consultancies and other bodies involved in supporting learning and skills providers are not eligible, they may form part of a partnership, providing the lead organisation complies with the above regulations. Furthermore, the outcomes of the project must offer clear and sustainable benefits to other organisations with the FE sector. In line with the Skills Funding Agency's mission, a large proportion of funding was reserved for adult learners (aged over 19) and potential learners. This provision rose from 50 per cent in 2010-2011, to three-quarters in 2012-2013.

This report evaluates the 87 projects from three years of the Grants: the 15 from 2010-2011 (EDI-2), the 25 from 2011-2012 (EDI-3) and the 47 from 2012-2013 (EDI-4).

In EDI-2, all 15 projects were large grants, ranging from just over £9,500 to the maximum £25,000. In EDI-3, of the total 25 projects, 14 were large (£10,369 – £25,000), and 11 were small (£1,170 - £5,000). In EDI-4, 27 were large grants (£11,917 – £25,000) and 20 were small (£2,000 – £5,000).

2.1 The type of providers and projects

2.1.1 The types of providers

Table 2.1: The types of provider

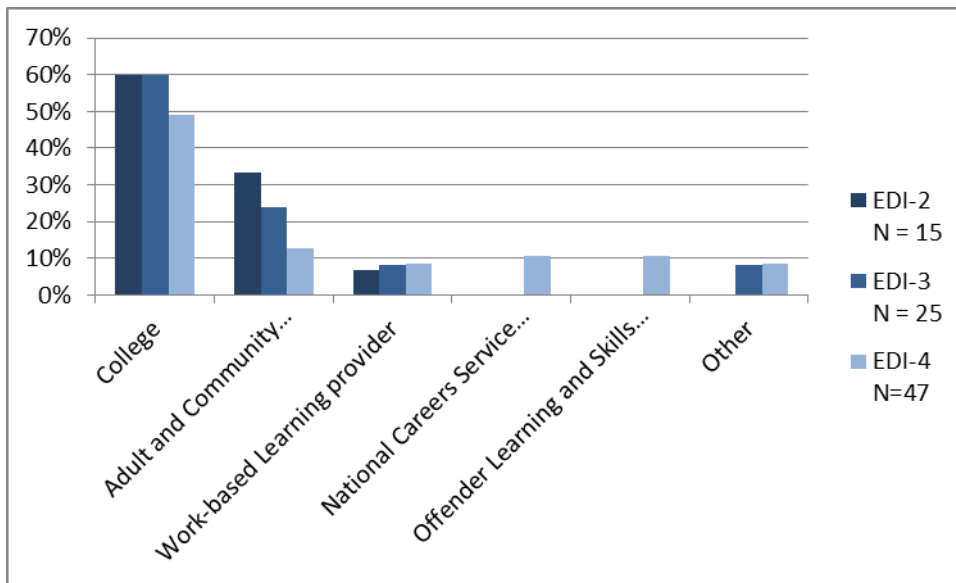
Type of provider	Number of institutions	Percentage of projects
College	47	54
Adult and Community Learning provider	17	19
Work-based learning provider	7	8
National Careers Service prime provider	5	6
Offender Learning and Skills provider	5	6
Other	6	7
Total	87	100

IES analysis of the documentary review

Over the second, third and fourth rounds of the Equality and Diversity Partnership projects (2010-2013), the majority of lead institutions who bid successfully for funding were colleges, overwhelmingly general Further Education (FE) colleges (54 per cent). Colleges other than FE in this category consisted of land-based, specialist, sixth form and tertiary colleges. The second largest grouping of lead providers was Adult and Community Learning providers (19 per cent). Amongst the remainder, there proved to be considerable diversity in provider type, with the body of organisations including Work-based learning providers (eight per cent), National Careers Service prime providers (six per cent), Offender Learning and Skills providers (six per cent) and 'Other' providers (seven per cent) (see Table 2.1).³ Over the three years, the proportion of successful bids delivered by FE colleges decreased a little, down six percentage points from the second year to the fourth. Likewise, the proportion of projects led by Adult and Community Learning providers also decreased year on year: one third of projects in 2010-2011, just under one-quarter in 2011-2012, and down to 13 per cent in 2012-2013. In their place, the range of providers diversified to include those such as National Careers Service prime providers, prisons, and an HEI (Figure 2.1).

³ 'Other' providers included charities, membership organisations and a Higher Education Institution (HEI).

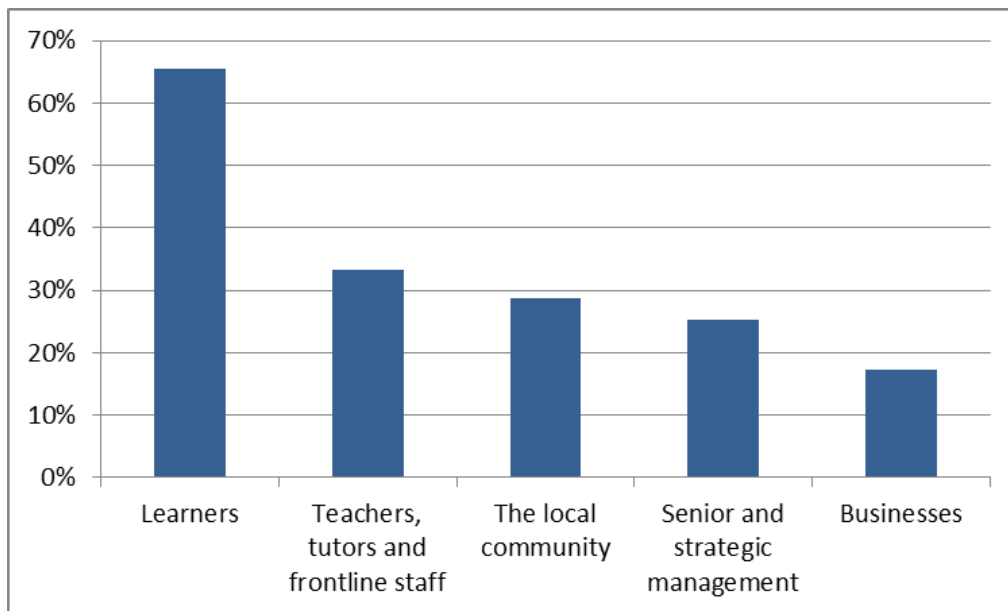
Figure 2.1: The percentage of different types of lead provider by year



IES analysis of the documentary review.

2.1.2 Target groups directly engaged on the projects

Figure 2.2: The percentage of projects that engaged each target audience 2010-2013



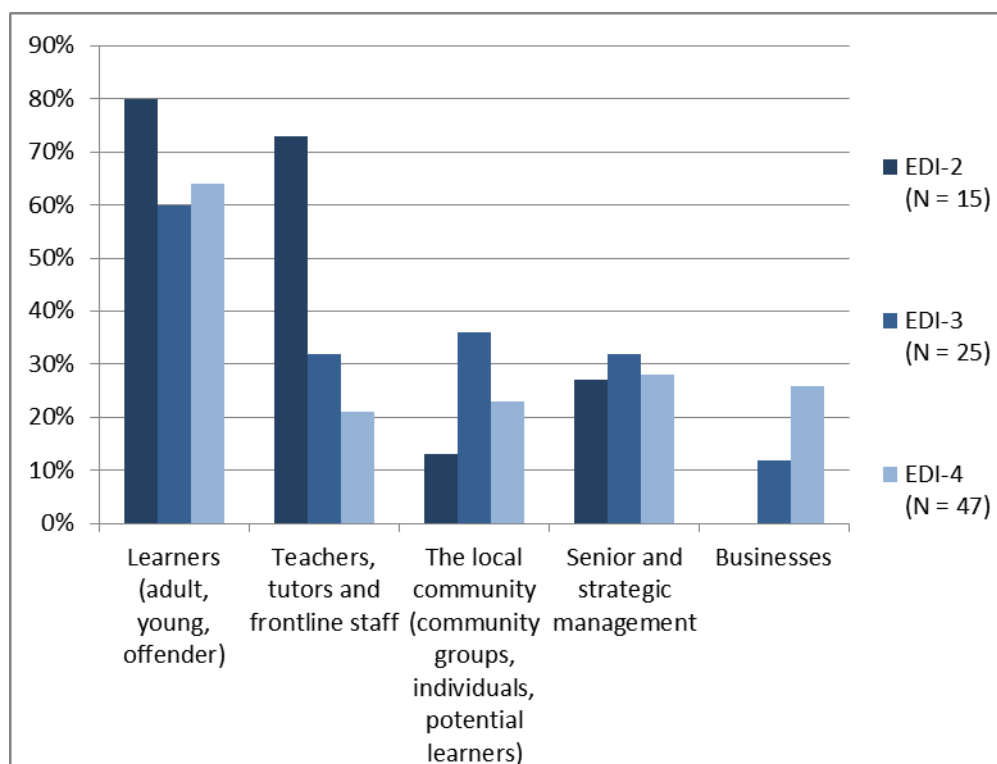
IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

Over the three years, the most common target audience directly engaged on projects was learners, with 66 per cent of projects directing their delivery towards this group. This included a range of learners, including adult and offender learners as well as younger college students. One third of projects directed their attention towards teachers, tutors and frontline staff, and a slightly smaller proportion (29 per cent)

engaged the local community. This latter category included community groups as well as individuals. Senior and strategic management were the target audience of 25 per cent of projects, and a somewhat smaller 17 per cent of projects over the three years engaged businesses, which for the most part were local enterprises (see Figure 2.2 above). Potential learners, a key priority of the Agency's mission, manifest both in the 'learner' category – where current students were engaged in a new learning experience – and in the 'local community' where individuals were not enrolled in any form of education.

However, this description belies some quite significant changes in which participants were targeted from year to year of the Grants. Whilst teachers, tutors and frontline staff were a core concern in EDI-2, with 73 per cent of projects engaging them as direct beneficiaries, this decreased to 32 per cent in the third year, and then again to 21 per cent in the fourth year. Contrastingly, businesses were not described as direct targets of project delivery in EDI-2, yet the attention paid to them increased year on year, with 12 per cent of projects naming them in the third round, expanding to 26 per cent in the fourth. Furthermore, although learners were persistently the chosen beneficiaries of the greatest percentage of projects, this diminished from 80 per cent in the second round to 60 per cent in the third, and then up a little to just under two thirds in the fourth. Nevertheless, this in some ways reflects the diversification of target groups directly engaged during the project. Figure 2.3 below illustrates these fluctuations. It is unclear why this is the case, but the much smaller number of projects in EDI-2 may account for some of the changes.

Figure 2.3: The percentage of projects that engaged each target audience by year



IES analysis of the documentary review.

2.1.3 Focus of the projects

Table 2.2: The equality, diversity and inclusion focus of projects 2010-2013

Equality issue	Percentage of projects
General EDI	31
Ethnicity	23
Disability	22
Gender	20
LGBT	8
Offenders or potential offenders	8
Age	7
English for Speakers of Other Languages	5
Faith and Belief	2
Maternity	2
Other	2

IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

In order to develop the capacity of the FE sector to meet the public sector Equality Duty, each project centred the emphasis of their actions towards one or several equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues. The largest percentage of projects

approached this with a holistic equality focus as supposed to targeting particular characteristics. This allowed them to include a range of barriers and challenges facing different disadvantaged individuals under the same rubric (which could broadly encompass many equality issues, for example the aim of one project *'to develop a more inclusive working culture on the grounds of gender, race, age, disability and sexual orientation'*). Thirty one per cent of projects had such an equality focus, named 'general EDI' in Table 2.2. Examples of how this played out on the ground include:

- improving an institution's approach to EDI or EDI record
- increasing awareness of EDI among the organisational community
- embedding EDI through the curriculum

Ethnicity, disability and gender were themes that similar proportions of the projects targeted: 23, 22 and 20 per cent of all projects respectively. Furthermore, these often were combined in project planning and delivery. For example, one approach – particularly of colleges – was to have multiple areas of interest all within the same project, such as gaps in academic attainment related to ethnicity and gender, and/or disability. Also some projects focused on LGBT rights, even though the wording of the equality duty separates sexual orientation from transgender rights which is considered a gender identity issue. Alternatively, some projects focused on multiple equality issues through a narrower approach, for example supporting Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women, or young Caucasian males.

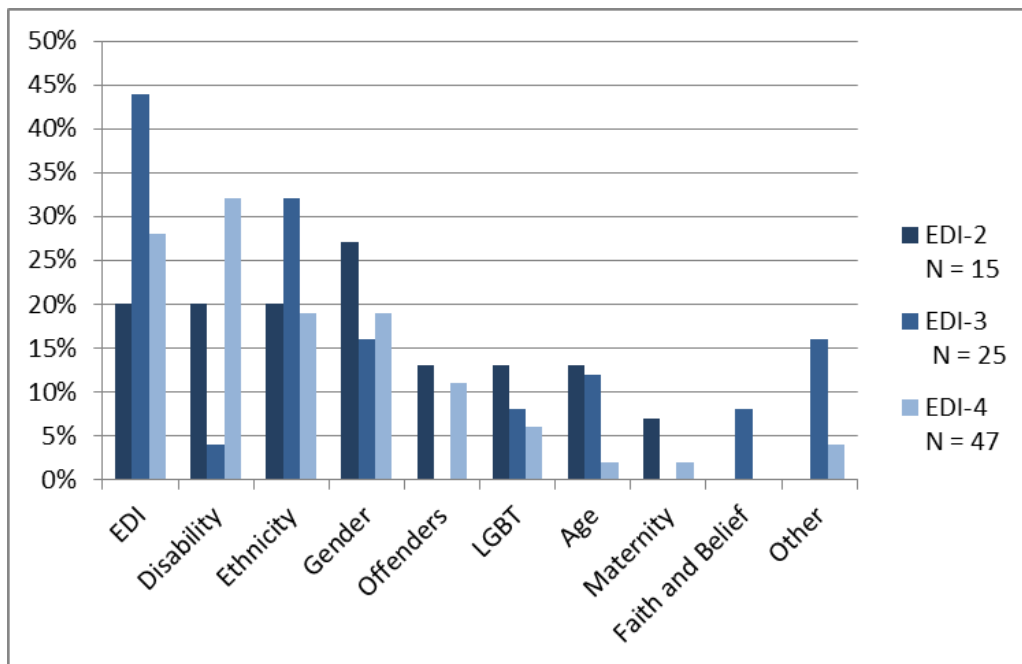
The 'newer' EDI themes such as faith and belief, sexual orientation, age and – to a lesser degree – LGBT received a smaller share of funding, broadly reflective of the smaller numbers of bids that were received on these themes. One sector stakeholder has welcomed the fact that the Grants make space for *'the equality strands that probably were neglected a bit more'* which has meant it produces projects looking at *'a lot of different things as supposed to just focussing on race'*.

Over the three years, projects' EDI focus changed emphases. LGBT and gender decreased in prominence from the second round to the latter two, and ethnicity was the target of a greater proportion in focus of the third year than either other year. EDI itself was likely more commonly focused on in the third year. Disability, prominent in both the second and fourth years, was the specific focus of just one project in the third year.⁴ The diversification of focus in the third and fourth years in some ways reflects

⁴ Individual equality issues were still included as one of many small parts of projects with a general EDI focus, this denotes where the focus on individual characteristics in particular detail changed.

the large increase in the number of funded projects. This proliferation is exemplified in several projects targeting maternity (in the form of supporting young parents), sexual exploitation and trafficking, faith and belief, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Offender Learning and Skills providers were lead providers only in the fourth year, explaining the rise in the percentage of projects focusing on offenders. The percentage of projects focusing on age decreased sharply in the fourth year down to two per cent (see Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: The percentage of projects that focused on different equality issues by year



IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

The above describes the spread of and change in the equality *focus* of projects, and does not correspond to the make-up of project participants who may or may not identify with those themes.

2.1.4 The nature of issues to be addressed through the projects

Table 2.3: The area of 'need' to be addressed

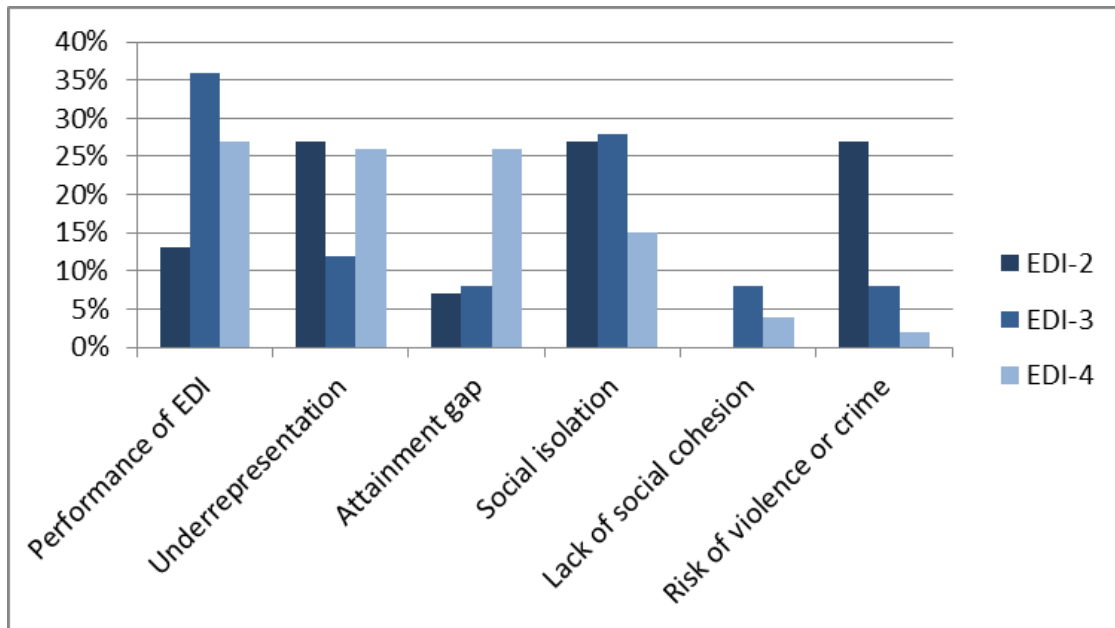
The issue to be addressed	Percentage of projects
EDI poorly embedded/performing	28
Underrepresentation	22
Social isolation	20
Attainment gap	17
Higher risk of violence, aggressive or criminal acts	8
Lack of social cohesion	5

IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

The most common rationale for bidding for the project was the belief that EDI could perform better, or be better embedded or understood (28 per cent of projects). Several projects named their Ofsted report as a catalyst of this. A further sizeable percentage of projects (22 per cent) cited underrepresentation, either in a specific discipline such as women in construction, or in a broader discourse of education, employment or training (EET), such as disability representation in apprenticeships. One fifth of projects explained the need for their project in terms of the social isolation that particular disadvantaged groups experienced, with notable examples being migrant women for whom English is an additional language, and young parents who face particular barriers in accessing EET. Next, 17 per cent of projects highlighted an attainment gap as their core issue. A smaller number of projects identified two other areas of need. Several described their rationale in terms of a need for preventative actions, where learners were perceived to be at risk of joining extremist organisations or returning to crime (eight per cent). A smaller number of projects expressed a need for social cohesion, where divisions had emerged in the local community (five per cent, see Table 2.3).

There were some notable fluctuations across the years, which in some cases provide context for the different emphases in EDI theme (see Figure 2.4 above). Particularly, the performance of EDI was described as the core issue by a greater percentage of projects in the third year than in either of the other two. This matches the greater proportion of projects in the third round that had a broader conceptualisation of equality and diversity, as supposed to a focus on a particular characteristic. It is not clear why this may be the case. Finally, although the change in 'risk of violence or crime' appears dramatic, there was a strong emphasis on preventative measures in EDI-2 despite the relatively smaller number of projects. (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: The percentage of projects describing the nature of their issue to be approached



IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

3 Project delivery

3.1 Management of projects

Projects across the years used a variety of structures when it came to managing their delivery; some solely used internal operational staff to form a project working group, others also included external team members, and some were the premise of one or two individuals. In addition, some projects used strategic steering groups, and liaised with senior management. Despite the quite considerable diversity manifest in the providers, target audience and EDI focus of the projects across the years, two key themes in terms of project management have emerged which are congruent with successful delivery:

- project commitment
- senior management buy in.

To varying degrees during this research, successful project management was explained in terms of these two critical factors. During interviews, many project staff emphasised the dedication of themselves and their team – **project commitment** – as pivotal to the success of their project. To sustain momentum, project staff indicated *‘personal investment’, ‘motivation’* and *‘must-win’* attitudes – *‘whatever happens, we’re going to make this happen, because if we don’t, we’ve had it’* – as the factors that ensured impact was attained. Amongst certain projects, notably where participants were at first unsure of the immediate value of their involvement, project commitment was crucial in guaranteeing that positive outcomes could be secured: *‘even if the people you’re delivering to don’t get it yet, your job is to make them get it’*.

‘You have to have the involvement of the right people who will go the extra mile.’

‘It’s a no-brainer, but you have to make sure you know who your key people are in terms of the delivery, and you have to make sure they’re on board and they know what the project is.’

‘[The factor critical to our success was] probably the tutor we work with because she is not just motivated but she approaches things with 110 per cent commitment.’

‘The passion displayed by all members involved with this project has been key to the response it has received.’

It appears crucial that at project inception, individuals are identified as being *'specifically detailed with making sure the project happened'*, within both the lead provider, and partners. One project described in their final report that not doing so had meant some partners were unable to participate fully, because the correct person who could take the project forward had not been identified. In the opinion of one sector stakeholder, the same holds true for any interaction with employers (for example on projects concerning apprenticeships), and projects must identify which employers are *'willing to go the extra mile or not'*.

At moments where unexpected difficulties emerged, having strong project commitment facilitated greater flexibility and a willingness to negotiate, in order that delivery could continue. In the words of one project interviewee, *'I would say this... of course [the project] had challenges, but why did we overcome them... the answer was that people wanted it to happen. An enabling attitude'*. Dedication allowed *'teething problems'* to be surmounted through *'sheer perseverance'*.

Alongside the tenacity of project managers and staff demonstrated in successful projects, the **way in which staff are tasked to a project** also bears importance. For example, the initial phase of one project demanded a large degree of additional work, which was carried out by staff from the wider organisations in addition to their day-to-day work. Although most staff could see the benefit of their actions in the long term, the requirement did prove exacting – an aspect recognised by one sector stakeholder who espoused that *'these projects are often being done in addition to the day's jobs and this is a challenge'*. One final report explained the impact that this had on their delivery:

'Typically staff have to be secured through overtime arrangements or managers incorporate the project work into their operational roles. This clearly has had an impact on individuals concerned and their workload which has been reflected in slight slippage in timeframes for achieving a few milestones along the project timeline.'

In contrast, where one project team consisted of pre-existing EDI staff, for whom such work was an integral part of their role, the tasks of the project were less of an additional requirement. However, the latter example is not appropriate for all providers, particularly smaller organisations or voluntary sector organisations, who experience greater staffing and financial constraints.

Furthermore, a higher level of **senior management buy-in** was also highlighted by many projects as a contributory factor to successful project management. For the most part, projects explained that it was the support and backing of their governor or CEO that proved important, with final reports describing it as *'crucial'*, *'paramount'* and *'essential'*. Elaborating in an interview, one project manager explained that without the public approval and encouragement of senior management, it would have been tough to engage people to participate in and endorse the project. Other beneficial outcomes of such support included ensuring that time and resources could be obtained. A sector

stakeholder encapsulated this cluster of ideas in explaining that senior management buy-in *'doesn't have to be "active" support from the top'* to be successful - *'it could just be the top person allowing activity to go ahead, be mainstreamed and disseminated'*. This knowledge has been passed on to future projects, for example one project now states that: *'With my current project, I've learned that buy-in is important so I got buy-in from the start by going into a managers' meeting to talk to them about it'*.

Nevertheless, some projects did have more 'active' leadership from higher up, which also played a strong role. One project explained in its final report that company directors attended a networking event with local employers which *'showed the audience how seriously we took these meetings and that we valued their presence'*. It appears to be the case that where project goals chime with wider strategic priorities of the organisation, greater resources and attention are afforded to that project. For example, certain colleges highlight their recent Ofsted reports, which led EDI to be designated as a core interest. Contrastingly, where the equality agenda is absent from strategy, this may result in it being harder to persuade decision-makers to take activity forward. Further down the line, this proved important in embedding, sustaining and mainstreaming the lessons learned. In relation to capitalising on the learning of projects, a sector stakeholder emphasised that:

'To sustain it, it needs to be very closely aligned to leadership practice, to organisational change and development.'

Concluding this point, one project stated that support from all areas of an organisation was essential for successful project delivery: *'It's all very well knowing the manager and talking to the manager, but the action themselves comes from the guys on the ground'*.

Lastly with regards to project management, it is clear that a good deal of **careful project planning** was key in securing successful delivery, particularly in relation to partnership working. Having collaborated with two large employers, one project lead explained that they had been meticulous in formulating their approach before commencing their activities. They found that *'you had to make sure everything was planned intricately, and that it was really very detailed, but once you'd done all the planning it kind of ran relatively smoothly'*. It was not merely pre-emptive planning that was emphasised, but also continuing this along a project's journey. A number highlighted that planning should involve timetabling project steering group meetings and disseminating the minutes. This allows projects to be kept on track – and remedial actions taken if that proves not to be the case. Many projects realised the need for additional contingency plans, although quite a few garnered this understanding in hindsight:

'We should have... built in more time for the unexpected.'

'We would have put contingency planning into place to address unexpected staff resource shortages.'

A minority of projects were plagued with bad luck, impacted by accidents, illness and funding being cut from themselves or their partners, for which they were unable to plan or locate solutions. Although this proved to be a fairly small number of projects, it exemplifies that when a particularly unfortunate event befalls a project, it jeopardises the chances of success.

3.1.1 Additional support offered to projects

LSIS monitored and offered support to the EDI projects in several ways:

- LSIS assigned a 'critical friend' to each project who was expected to maintain regular contact and typically visit larger projects.
- In 2012/13, LSIS provided a forum in a 'virtual learning environment' for projects to share updates on their progress and support one another.
- LSIS required projects to complete reports at the end of the funding period, and in the case of larger projects, an interim report around February.
- LSIS required projects to present at dissemination events at the end of the project.

In addition to this, case studies and outputs from most of the projects funded in 2012/13 are available online on the Equalities Toolkit website developed by the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)⁵ and those from 2010/11 and 2011/12 are also available on the Excellence Gateway site.⁶

It is clear from the research that the role of the managing agent was often important in helping to support effective project delivery. For example, project reports completed at the end of the period often contained useful information on lessons learned by the project and on key outcomes and impacts. In addition, some projects noted that the process of completing these reports encouraged useful self-reflection on progress made and the potential for future work following on from the projects. Some projects reported that their regular contact with LSIS was helpful as they could draw on

⁵ <http://www.equalitiestoolkit.com/case-studies>

⁶ <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/16911>

support, advice and information when they needed it, while other projects reported that LSIS played a useful role in keeping their project on track and generally holding the leads accountable for delivering what they intended to. In a few cases, projects noted how supportive their 'critical friend' had been, particularly where that person had offered in-depth expertise and advice on a particular area of equality and diversity that the project had little experience of, such as religion/belief. The use of the virtual learning environment was reported to be useful and informative to those projects that used it, particularly in terms of accessing updates, news about events and related EDI documents, although a small minority of projects reported difficulties in accessing and navigating the site. The online case studies were also reported to be useful to many project leads, particularly in terms of providing an opportunity to disseminate their good practice more widely and in learning more about what other providers were doing. Again, however, a small minority of project leads conceded that, due to time pressures, they probably did not access the site, or update their own case studies as often as they should. However, the most positive feedback from project leads and stakeholders about the role of LSIS was in organising and facilitating dissemination events. Participation at these events was a condition of funding for all projects, to varying degrees. Project leads reported that these events were invaluable in disseminating their work, learning from the work and experiences of other providers, building a profile for their work in the area of equality and diversity and in getting the opportunity to network. One project lead described how her college had gone on to achieve an Investors in Diversity accreditation, partly as a result of the dissemination activities that LSIS had encouraged. Another project lead described how the positive feedback that he had received from these events had given him the confidence and wider recognition among his peers to consider further developing equality and diversity work at his college.

3.2 Partnership working

Partnerships were a core aspect and central focus of the Grants. Organisations that joined forces with the lead providers across the years were very varied including: charitable organisations, community groups and centres, FE colleges and Higher Education Institutions, Information, Advice and Guidance services, membership organisations, private training companies, independent consultants, hospitals and NHS Trusts, councils and their subsidiaries, religious organisations and institutions, Jobcentre Plus, prisons, private firms and individual employers.

The degree to which the aforementioned organisations participated as partners ranged from having a more or less equal role to the lead, to supporting in a less substantive – perhaps 'in kind' – way, such as providing guidance on a project's trajectory. One theme is that many organisations have used the Grants as an opportunity to test new partnerships (or extend and build on existing partnerships). For some, this has been a core outcome of their actions:

'One major strength of this project has been partnership working. This has helped us develop links, forge new relationships and bring support networks together in focus groups.'

Although not every venture has been entirely successful, this is to be expected from such endeavours. There remains value in providing the opportunity for projects to have the space to test out **new collaborations**, as many relationships forged through the Grants have proved to be both successful and sustainable. For example, the piloting of a new affiliation in several cases has since resulted in successive partnership bids and a real sense of trust. Alternatively, other projects drew on the wealth of a **pre-existing partnership**, so could try out a new approach whilst being secure in the knowledge that their partner had a track record of delivering, and that they had the expertise a project needs. *'The use of well-established business networks and contacts has been invaluable and provides a route to sustainability for the project's aims'*. Former relationships also proved helpful at difficult junctures: time pressures and a 'hard-to-reach' target audience meant one project experienced problems in engaging participants, and *'thereby used existing partnerships to enable engagement with a wider group of 'at risk' women'*.

Positive partnership outcomes appear to rest on one or more of a few things. Firstly, where a **shared passion** for the issue existed between partners, this contributed to a positive working relationship. One project exemplifying this had partners with an ardent belief in their equality issue, who were later described as *'very passionate'* and *'a force to be reckoned with'*. Success was attributed to their *'sheer tenacity'*. An additional example emerged from one project manager, who in describing their partners explained: *'they're very local, they are similar to [us] in their bottom-up approach to what's needed and how are we going to do it'*. The similar, learner-centred approach fostered a consensus in the approach to participants and sustainable partnerships. Additionally, where the **potential benefits of the project are equally shared** across the partnership, this appears to have also aided success. For example, where all the members of one project were facing the same issues in their EDI performance, they could equally benefit from the project, which appears to have bolstered their commitment to the project.

A further key aspect elicited from final reports and interviews with project staff was the **combination of skills and expertise** that different partners could bestow. Some could accredit or administer qualifications; they might engage different target audiences which could benefit all, or have particular local knowledge. In one project, notable for its successful partnership working, the lead brought knowledge of health and wellbeing, another focused on entering employment, and another contributed advocacy expertise. Final reports illustrated the benefit that projects perceived in combining various strengths:

'Use the skills of others where needed.'

'Partnership working enabled access to skills and expertise.'

'Partnership working helped make the project effective and efficient by using each partner's expertise and skills to best effect.'

'Work with organisations who have contact with your target groups and with other providers who can offer progression opportunities.'

The specificities of 'on-the-ground' knowledge that certain partners can contribute can be of huge value. In particular, **working with respected community groups** was invaluable for some projects aiming to engage the 'hardest-to-reach' marginalised people, especially for 'newer' equality issues. Indeed, some projects noted that over the process they learned it would have been beneficial to *'develop a broader partnership at an earlier stage with specialist organisations'*. Echoing this sentiment, one sector stakeholder explained that *'having ready access to specialist community organisations can be really important'* because of the personal nature of individual experience. One project framed this need in terms of 'trust', comparing one strand of the project where they did not have local links with a particular community, to another one where they did:

'[In one location] we got in touch with a local organisation that was working with a few of these groups... they helped us build up a trust with the community, and that's how we got to do the research... in [another location] it was slightly different because [our staff member] that's working in that area has built up trust with this particular group, so they approach her anyway.'

Alternatively, another project working around sexual orientation found that because provision of support regionally was sparse, forming joint connections with community groups and pooling local knowledge and support was the best way forward.

However, as indicated previously, partnership working could also produce **challenges** to project delivery, with **timing** being one of the most common comments. Although all aspects were completed in the end, one project member described the delays ensuing from waiting for one partner to finalise details and waiting for another to deliver materials, meaning milestones were missed. Eventually, the project had not completed when the funding finished – although all goals have since been fulfilled. The *'time constraints'* of working with partners for some projects *'initially caused some co-ordination issues'*, and for others resulted in a *'bottleneck'*. Additionally, **capacity** of partners proved to be a challenge for some projects, exemplified where one partner was designated to play a prominent role in a project, but could not deliver and instead provided advice. Solely **relying on the 'goodwill'** of a partner to input into a project is likely to prove difficult in current times, with limited funding and the precarious position of organisations, especially voluntary ones. For example, one project

explained that *'some of the partners [we] anticipated working with did not engage with the project for various reasons'* – citing funding and a lack of time.

These three aspects demonstrate the need for clarity right from project inception, both in terms of planning and the specificities of project delivery, as well as communication throughout the process, described as being *'paramount to ensure success'* by one project. In the words of one sector stakeholder, *'effective partnership working is commitment, personal engagement of partners and good communication'*.

3.3 Main project activities⁷

Table 3.1: Project activities

Type of project activity	Percentage of projects
Training and educating	78
Developing a resource	61
Research	54
Excursion	22
Events	22
Networking	15

IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

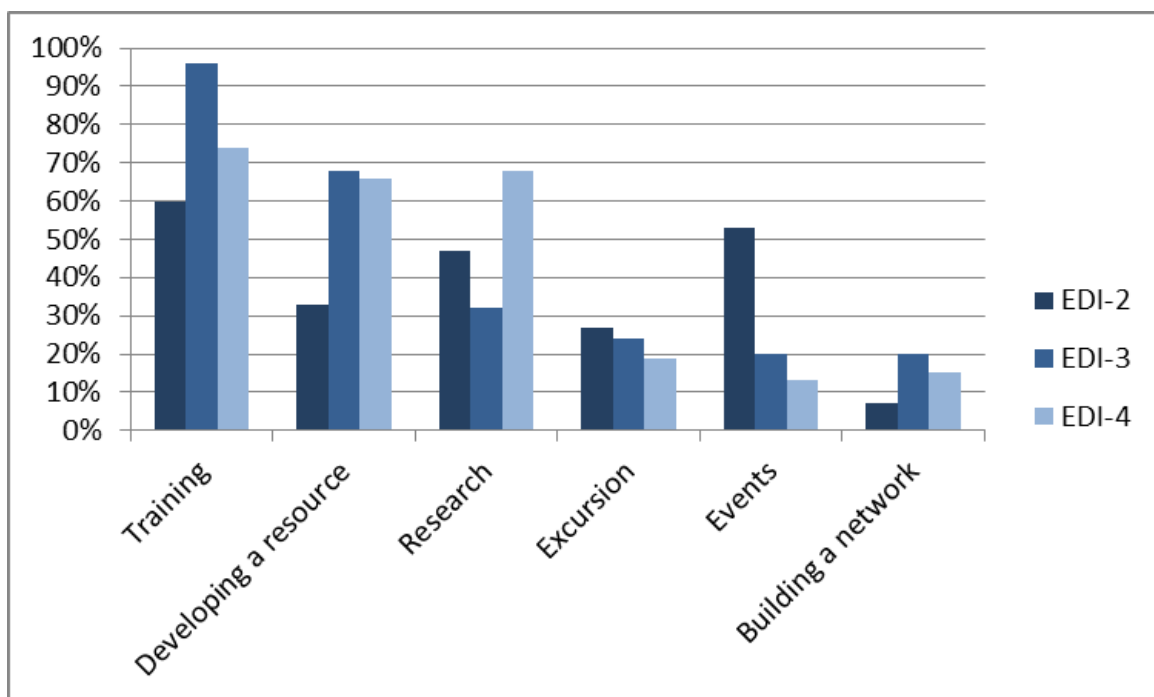
Table 3.1 describes the main activities of EDI projects across the three years. Most commonly, projects used some aspect of training as one of their project activities – 78 per cent of projects chose this approach. The reality of how this played out on the ground was quite broad, and the approaches were directed towards learners and staff alike. Broadly speaking, the forms that it took can be categorised in the follow typology:

- teaching of 'soft' skills such as interview-, language- or ICT- related skills
- training to raise awareness of and embed the equality agenda more generally
- mentoring, for example providing support and advice during apprenticeships
- education towards gaining formal qualifications
- other workshops or training, for example to raise confidence or aspirations.

⁷ All projects had to produce a case study, a final report and attend three dissemination events. Large grant projects also had to produce an interim report. These are not included in Table 3.1.

Developing a resource was a chosen activity of the next largest proportion of projects (61 per cent). Most commonly this tended to be a guide or toolkit, which allowed the outcomes of their project to be disseminated to the wider sector. For some projects, this formed their longer term impact, as they suggested it would help to embed knowledge and lessons learned into practice. Additionally, projects also created websites, films, video- and photo-diaries as project outputs, as well as leaflets and posters to raise awareness – and some created multiple resources. Fifty four per cent of projects used an aspect of research as a core project activity, with some projects administering and analysing questionnaires, surveys or other quantitative data, and others using face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Using excursions as a means to achieve project objectives proved to be less common, with just over one fifth of projects (22 per cent) taking participants to locations such as workplaces, educational institutions, museums and outdoor parks. The same proportion held an event as an integral part of their delivery, ranging from conferences and exhibitions, to more informal talks or workshops. Lastly, 15 per cent of projects used networking, either amongst fellow FE institutions, between senior and strategic managers or in the local community. Figure 3.1 shows how the percentage of projects undertaking each activity varied by year.

Figure 3.1: The percentage of projects using different aspects of delivery by year.



IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

For the most part, projects did not dramatically deviate from their planned activities, and any alteration tended to be a minor reworking of the original itinerary. For example, one project which took participants on excursions changed from visiting places of work to colleges and universities in line with the wishes of participants.

Alternatively, another project changed the intended location of a social enterprise following research into the most appropriate option.

Nevertheless, there were some projects where there was a stark disjunction between the content of their plan on application and the eventual outcomes of the project. For a handful of projects, they were unable to deliver due to staff sickness or drop-out, and they were not able to secure an alternative member of staff to take over responsibility for the project. One further project deliberately changed their focus during delivery, from BAME to gender, following a realisation that the underrepresentation in their provision was greater for men than it was for ethnic minorities.

3.4 Difficulties and challenges faced, and solutions used

Table 3.2: Difficulties and challenges

Difficulties and challenges faced	Percentage of projects
Lack of participant engagement	87
Administration	60
Co-ordination	53
Delays	47
Lack of partner or senior management engagement	36
Staff or tutors not available	36
Lack of community support (staff, other projects)	26
Funding	17
Challenges to sustainability	15

IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

Table 3.2 depicts the various thematic challenges that projects encountered during their delivery. Across the three years, 87 per cent of projects found it tricky to engage as many participants as they may have liked. The following excerpt from an interview explains the kinds of issues that arose in making contact:

'The things that we set up... research with some groups, they were actually a bit shy about attending and they didn't. To mitigate that right at the beginning, we did have a volunteer... that would be willing, but they actually decided it was raising her profile a bit too much in the community... So she kind of dropped out.'

Sixty per cent found the level of administration problematic and spoke of producing reports and answering emails. For example, one project stated that: *'I did find we got tied up in the VLE, paperwork and events which took time away from the project'*. Just over half of projects (53 per cent) found that co-ordination was challenging, either in-house amongst operational staff, or across partnerships, and just below half (47 per cent) cited

delays as a challenge. Within the aforementioned two categories, a plethora of experiences is contained, for example the following statements from final reports:

'Logistics were the biggest barrier - having someone in place right from the start is key. Forming links with employers/young people needs to happen right from the start.'

'A late start to the project was due to difficulties paying... funds into a suitable and accessible account.'

'It is sometimes difficult to keep on target when a project spans a long holiday in the education world.'

'The old favourite, time management. I project led this venture but ended up poorly and the project stalled while I was away.'

The same proportion of projects (36 per cent) found both that there was a lack of partner or senior management support, and that there were simply not the staff available on the ground to run the project. Just over one quarter of projects (26 per cent) discussed a lack of community support, for example from the wider academic community, or from other projects over the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), introduced in 2012/13. Funding manifested as an issue for 17 per cent of projects, which also included where partners were unable to fully participate due to their own funding being cut. Finally, there were some projects (17 per cent) who explained that although their project itself had worked very well, the difficulty they had discovered was that they could not sustain the project activity or impact after the funding had ended. One response from the IES survey of the Equality and Diversity Partnership Grants project staff provides some context:

'On-going impetus [is lacking] when additional influences such as reductions in funding allocations make sustainability difficult.'

Table 3.3: Solutions to challenges

Solution	Percentage of projects
Rescheduling or changing timescale	22
Altering recruitment practices	22
Discussions and compromises	18
Updating means of delivery	18
Additional staff or changes in staff	17
Additional sessions, training and administration	11

IES analysis of the documentary review. Note: As projects often had a combined focus, sum percentage is greater than 100.

Table 3.3 illustrates the percentage of projects that outlined the steps they had taken to redress their challenges. First and foremost, in the final report of each project, although all explained the difficulties they faced, they did not always explain how they had

addresses these difficulties. Thus, the percentage of projects is notably lower. Twenty two per cent of projects described how events or actions were rescheduled, or how a timescale had been reworked in order to ameliorate the impact of delays or issues with co-ordination. The same percentage of projects altered their recruitment practices so as to better engage participants to the projects, which included promoting the project in alternative locations or alternative media, as well as garnering support in doing so through other organisations. For some projects (18 per cent), the actions that were needed were more subtle, and so the project team simply needed to sit down with the necessary individuals, discuss, re-evaluate, and in some cases come to a compromise to keep project delivery on track. An identical percentage of projects changed their means of delivery – for example the aforementioned projects that altered the location of excursions, or the site of the new social enterprise. A slightly smaller percentage (17 per cent) of projects either brought in additional operational staff, or managed to replace staff members who could not continue. Finally, where projects found that either participants or staff were not quite ready to start at the level that had been planned for – or that greater preparation needed to be carried out – additional sessions, training and administration were set up. Eleven per cent of projects approached the nature of challenges in this way.

Factors common to effective delivery and lessons learned

1. **Project planning:** Planning time and resources (as well as undertaking sufficient research) will help to ensure that developments are achievable and sustainable. This includes assigning contingency arrangements where necessary: *'You've got to be cautious and you've got to plan, and don't be as surprised if things take twice as long as you expect... in fact you should probably build that into your project planning stage'*. Additionally, allowing flexibility in project delivery is important.
2. **Engaging the target audience:** Two aspects of engaging the target audience are influential with regards to effective delivery. Firstly, it is essential that sufficient time is set aside to make contact and build trust. Furthermore, *'it is not sufficient to say that our programmes are "open to everyone", you need to proactively engage with new target groups'*. Where necessary, a trusted community organisation can be well-placed to facilitate this. Secondly, involving participants as much as possible at different stages of a project can better support the drive of projects and improve outcomes.
3. **A robust partnership:** Where partners share a commonality of purpose (in terms of passion for 'the cause', or benefitting equally from outcomes), the chances of success and sustainability during and after the project can be advanced. On the other hand, relying on 'goodwill' alone may be problematic in a context of limited funding and the precariousness of organisations, as *'maintaining the active participation of busy people is a challenge, regardless of how enthusiastic they might be'*. If partners can bring complementary and contrasting skills to the table, this can help *'make the project effective and efficient by using each partner's expertise and skills to best effect'*.
4. **Senior management buy-in:** Prior to the start of any project gaining the support of the senior leadership team may enhance the structure and dynamics of the project. The backing of senior management can help to secure time and resources, as well as making sure activities can go ahead, encouraging participation and facilitating dissemination.

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5. **Commitment to project:** In finding the key people of a project team, it is highly important that they are utterly committed to the project and have real belief in what is being delivered: *'the right people who will go the extra mile'*. Projects explained that this was crucial in ensuring the impact is secured and momentum sustained over the life-time of a project. Additionally, this level of tenacity proved vital when difficulties arose, as such individuals were willing to find solutions.

4 Outcomes, impact and sustainability

This chapter outlines the outcomes, impacts and sustainability of the EDI projects from 2010 to 2013, and discusses what emerges as the four biggest impacts in depth. The chapter then goes on to discuss the sustainability of EDI activity and the influence of the projects into the sector more broadly.

4.1 Project outcomes and impact

Projects reported a wide range of outcomes and impacts. They are grouped together here because projects did not always distinguish between the two in their own reporting. These are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Outcomes and impacts reported by projects

	Outcome/impact	% of projects
POSITIVE LEARNER OUTCOMES	Increases in confidence/aspirations/self-esteem	34
	Gain in skills	27
	Formal education, employment or training outcomes	21
	Greater engagement in learning and/or society	16
CHANGE IN PRACTICE	Improved partnership working	37
	EDI more strongly grounded in delivery	36
	More trained/confident/expert staff or employers	29
	Improved environment for target groups (safe, supportive)	10
	Better collaboration/team working within institution	5
INCREASED KNOWLEDGE	Increased awareness/understanding	60
	Identification of areas for improvement	13
	Better data/improved data collection methods	9
	Case studies/best practice	5

IES analysis of the documentary review. Note, projects often reported more than one outcome/impact and this is reflected in the figures here.

4.1.1 Increased awareness and understanding of EDI

By far the greatest of these was a reported **increase in awareness and understanding of EDI**, which was reported by 60 per cent of projects. This included improved awareness and understanding of EDI among a range of target groups including staff, learners, project partners, networks, employers and community organisations.

Often this would be the result of training or workshops which sought to raise awareness or understanding around an EDI theme, or themes, or events which sought to provide an open forum in which these issues would be discussed among staff or learners. In other cases, activities centred around the production of a resource or toolkit that could be disseminated to other providers to help raise awareness and understanding of an EDI theme.

Although this outcome was widely reported amongst projects, increased awareness and understanding of equality and diversity were often difficult outcomes to measure. The most common monitoring tools for gauging the impact of these kinds of activities was through feedback or evaluation forms, or case studies, some of which highlighted significant changes in people's understandings of particular equalities issues, their organisation's legal obligations under the Equality Act or how they could better meet the needs of particular groups.

In other projects, it was more difficult to measure this, particularly if attitudinal change was not a key objective of the project and was more of an unintended outcome. For example a few projects reported that 'winning people over' to the EDI project had been the greatest (albeit unintended) outcome of their work. In other words, helping other staff, colleagues, partners or employers to understand the relevance of EDI to their daily work, as part of the project, had helped increase their awareness and understanding of how it could improve service delivery and learner/customer engagement. This seemed to be particularly true of projects which had focused on the 'newer', protected characteristics, such as sexual orientation and religion or belief, where some sector stakeholders felt that they had had to work especially hard to convince other colleagues and partners of the relevance of these themes to their daily work. As one stakeholder put it:

'A major success [of EDI projects] has been convincing people that issues of faith and belief are important to their work... that it's not an optional extra but part of the make-up of all individuals and therefore to the services they deliver.'

Although changes in awareness and understanding were often difficult for projects to measure, it is important not to understate the value of such work because it often led to actual changes in practice, delivery, engagement of target groups and the way in which staff approached their work. In some cases, it even resulted in positive attitudinal changes which, as one project put it, *'is almost invaluable'*.

Increased understanding leading to a change on the ground

A project, led by FE Sussex, aimed to address the stereotypical negative awareness of EDI in land-based colleges. By creating a partnership with the Ebony Horse Club, an organisation that aims to use horses to improve the aspirations of disadvantaged young people in Brixton, the project was able to foster good relations between the learners by promoting understanding of difference. This was able to be achieved by using the shared passion of the students - horse riding - while challenging the stereotypes held both by the students from the rural college and from London.

'The visits that they did to the inner city were very good, because the students were able to use the skills they developed in a totally different environment which got them to engage instantly with a type of student they would never normally mix with.'

The impact of this project on the students from the land-based college has been that their perception of equality has changed, their knowledge is broadened and they have an appreciation of life and culture very different from their own.

4.1.2 Improved partnership working

Thirty seven per cent of projects reported that the EDI project had improved partnership working. In most of these cases, this referred to the way in which the Grants had allowed the provider to extend or build up their partnership networks and build new partnerships with organisations they had not worked with before (see sections 3.2 and 5.2.2).

In a few cases, however, this referred to improved partnership working with partners who had previously worked together. In these cases, projects built upon existing relationships and previous collaborations to deliver their EDI project alongside a trusted partner. Through this, many reported strengthened partnerships and a better understanding of the partner's work – in the words of one project *'working with a partner as a partner'*.

In a minority of cases, improved partnership working referred to an improved understanding or approach to partnership working more generally through the experience of delivering an EDI project. For example, one project reported that, through working with community organisations, they were now more willing to do more collaborative work with community organisations, while another project reported that successful partnership working had given them a better appreciation of the kinds of skills and expertise partner organisations could bring to complement their own work.

4.1.3 EDI more strongly grounded in delivery

Thirty six per cent of projects reported that, as a result of the Grants, EDI was more strongly grounded in delivery. This took a number of forms. Some projects described

EDI as now embedded in various key features and tools that were integral to delivery, such as self-assessment tools, staff training sessions or action plans. Other projects grounded their EDI project in their wider network of delivery partners or subcontractors, while others described permanent changes to curriculum design, content or delivery, such as regular tutorials on EDI issues. One project that had a health focus explained:

'[The project has] influenced the sustainability of health and wellbeing... and the embedding of it into everything we do, just as people do with maths and English.'

A number of projects described changes to their processes, such as recruitment or learner engagement as a result of their EDI project; while a smaller number described how EDI had been grounded in their wider systems, such as quality assurance and legal compliance. A smaller number of projects reported that permanent new roles and positions had been created as a result of the project, thus embedding the work in the staff structure of the organisation and giving it more priority and profile.

4.1.4 Increases in confidence, self-esteem and aspirations

Thirty four per cent of projects reported increases in learners' levels of confidence, self-esteem and aspirations as a result of the EDI projects. Among the targeted groups of learners, this sprang from:

- knowing that support was there for them and was a priority within the organisation
- the freedom to talk freely about the issues and express themselves in a 'safe' environment
- a greater understanding of EDI issues amongst themselves and other learners.

Amongst other learners, who were involved in the delivery of the project, but not necessarily the target group for the project (ie champions, mentors), their increased confidence, self-esteem and aspirations came from skills development, such as having to present to other audiences, engage with senior staff at the organisation as part of project delivery, and in having to communicate EDI issues to others.

Quotes from learners engaged on a project run by Hopwood College:

'I now have more confidence with learning and presenting.'

'I enjoyed delivering the workshops as it was good for everyone to get involved and voice their opinion in a safe space.'

'I enjoyed hearing other people's opinions, even when I didn't agree with them all. I liked that everyone got to speak their minds.'

It is interesting to note that a lot of these 'soft' outcomes were not foreseen at the start of many projects. IES analysis from the documentary review, which has compared the anticipated outputs in project application forms to the actual outputs in the projects' final reports shows that many projects anticipated much 'harder' outcomes in their original applications (for example, training or employment outcomes), but actually reported much 'softer' outcomes in their final reports. It is not entirely clear why this was, but some projects have stated that engaging particularly hard-to-reach groups was more resource intensive than they anticipated, which may account for the difference.

4.1.5 Sustainability and 'reach' of projects

A number of projects sustained their EDI project activity beyond the lifespan of the project. Often this took the form of disseminating their outputs more widely, and common examples of such outputs are assessment tools, staff guides and toolkits. Some of these tools were for ongoing use in the organisation – for example an equality and diversity assessment tool – aimed at improving future practices at an FE college. Others were for use amongst other providers in the sector – for example a toolkit for engaging more women in construction, or a staff guide on how to address sexual bullying and gender conflict among young students. The use of social media or technology to produce these tools and host or disseminate them was very effective at reaching a potentially wide audience and ensuring that these outputs could be used for free as a future resource – for example websites hosting EDI information, support or assessment tools, or online guides and DVDs. One project reported that *'use of [online] technology enabled us to spread outputs to large number of employers etc. at no extra cost'*.

A few of these projects applied for additional EDI grants in the next round of funding in order to update these resources or continue to host them for free, but most of these projects did not need additional funds to ensure these resources reached a wider audience. This was particularly true of more self-sustaining resources, such as a web-based toolkit that was hosted for three years with links to expert advice and support, or the creation of social enterprises which continued to generate their own funding after the EDI project had finished.

National Star College's WorkAble project: an example of a self-sustaining social enterprise

National Star College used EDI funding to create the WorkAble website (<http://www.workable.org/>) and workplace quality standard for organisations who wish to demonstrate their confidence in meeting the needs of their disabled employees. The website is accessible to all and contains information, case studies and a self-assessment tool for companies to use prior to an audit by WorkAble. The audits cost organisations £200 and allow WorkAble to continue operating beyond the EDI grants.

A few other projects sustained their activity by integrating their project within the wider infrastructure of the organisation. This was by far the most effective way of sustaining project activity and ensuring project legacy because it ensured that improvements to equality and diversity practice were embedded within wider institutional structures and procedures, and so protected from more volatile changes, such as staff turnover and an end to project funding. Examples include changes to delivery structures, such as integrating equality and diversity considerations into curriculum design, delivery or content, or into governance structures, including learner representation on senior management teams and steering groups. As one sector stakeholder put it, to ensure sustainability, projects must be 'closely aligned with leadership practice, organisational change and development, and most importantly it should not be seen as an HR approach'.

Lewisham College: an example of sustainability

By delivering this project through the existing learner engagement structure of the college (the Student Leadership Team, or SLT), the project's work was embedded and sustained by a wider, institutional infrastructure that could carry it on, beyond the lifespan of the project. In the following academic year, for example, some SLT members were able to act as mentors and buddies for new learners, despite the fact that the Equality Peer Ambassador project had come to an end.

The 'reach' of some projects, therefore, clearly went beyond the boundaries of the project and in many cases, impacted upon the organisation as a whole. In some cases, as illustrated above, it went beyond this to impact upon partners, subcontractor networks and to improve the capacity of other providers to respond to EDI issues. The good practice case studies on the Equalities Toolkit website and on the Excellence Gateway also helped many projects share their good practice more widely.

4.2 Contextualising project outcomes, impacts and sustainability

Thus far, it has been possible to detail the kinds of positive outcomes and impacts that projects have reported, including the extent to which they have managed to sustain their activity and achieve a broader reach into the sector. However, there are a few

caveats to these findings and these are detailed below in order to provide some context in which to understand these achievements:

4.2.1 Self-reporting on outcomes, impacts and sustainability

The first caveat is that many of the outcomes listed in Table 4.1 are self-reported and in a number of cases, it wasn't always clear from the available project documents that these outcomes were actually achieved. These cases were excluded from Table 4.1. In other cases, project responses to questions about outcomes and impact were too vague, or it was not possible to verify whether the project had gone on to have a lasting legacy or wider reach into the sector. For example, many projects, in their final reports, simply stated that project activity would be sustained and/or disseminated through continued partnerships and an ongoing investment in EDI activities. However, no further details were provided, so it was not possible to independently verify these statements in most cases, since the scope and remit of this evaluation does not, in most cases, extend to project performance post funding.⁸ So again, these have been excluded from the analysis in Table 4.1.

These cases do not serve to undermine the achievements of the numerous projects which reported positive outcomes and impacts. As stakeholders and interviewees pointed out on numerous occasions, there is an intrinsic value to improving understanding, awareness and attitudes towards EDI issues that cannot be quantified, because they imply a long-lasting change to the way in which people think about and act upon EDI. The same holds for extending and improving partnership working, grounding EDI in delivery, and improving individuals' confidence and self-esteem. Instead, the purpose of highlighting these cases is merely to demonstrate that not all projects were able to evidence impact as clearly as others were.

4.2.2 Limited reach into the sector amongst most projects

While it is possible to identify some examples of projects that successfully extended their good practice and learning to other providers in the sector, most projects could not demonstrate this. In many cases, this is because this was not the original aim or focus of the project and so it could not be an expected outcome. However, if the EDI Grants are to improve the capacity of the sector to meet its obligations under the

⁸ The exception to this is where there has been a time lag between the end of a project and the write up of a good practice case study, which has allowed a project to account for their longer-term impact and reach.

Equality Act, then it is questionable why this theme was not picked up by more projects.

Looking at how the Grants have progressed over the three years, it is clear that there has been an additional emphasis on disseminating good practice, in order to build the capacity of the sector to deal with the obligations under the Equality Act. This emphasis is in addition to the mandatory dissemination activities that projects have to engage with as a condition of funding. For example, in the 2012-13 prospectus, it is clear that, while innovation was still a key theme, smaller grants *'are offered to providers who have developed excellent initiatives in equality, diversity and inclusion, and want to sustain this activity, expand it, or disseminate and share what they have learned with other providers'*. Of the eight themes which the prospectus says the Agency and LSIS would welcome proposals on, two are based on disseminating or extending good practice:

- leading improvement- providers with the best equality and diversity practices supporting weaker providers to improve
- developing and promoting existing equality and diversity resources from the Excellence Gateway.

There is an evident tension here, in the 2012-13 prospectus, between an ongoing emphasis on innovative projects and the growing emphasis on extending and disseminating good practice which has already been established, in order to develop the capacity of the sector to meet its obligations under the Equality Act. It is not clear whether this caused confusion among potential applicants to the Grants that year, but very few projects in the 2012-13 round of funding focused on extending and disseminating good practice – either with weaker providers in the sector, or through developing existing resources on the Excellence Gateway. This might perhaps indicate that they did not think this kind of activity was as high a priority to the Agency and LSIS as more *'innovative'* or *'sustainable'* equality and diversity work which had been a consistent focus of the Grants since 2009. Most of our survey respondents, for example, reported their rationale for bidding for the Grants as being to develop new/improved understandings of equality and diversity issues, with a much smaller number reporting that they bid in order to share good practice in the sector or improve the sector's capacity to meet its obligations under the Equality Act. While the two are not mutually exclusive – it is possible to disseminate good practice using innovative methods, or have an innovative approach that is then disseminated widely – it would seem that the overall focus among EDI projects across the years has been skewed towards innovation rather than on developing the capacity of the wider sector to better respond to the Equality Act.

5 Innovation

5.1.1 How innovation was defined in the EDI Grants prospectus

The emphasis on innovation is clear in the prospectus for each of the three rounds of EDI Grants, from 2010 to 2013, alongside that of sustainability. Innovation is not strictly defined in these documents but is described as projects which:

- take ‘a novel approach’⁹
- ‘facilitate approaches that would not be funded otherwise’¹⁰
- can build on earlier work, as long as they can ‘set out what has been learnt from the previous project and how it will be built on’.¹¹

Projects have, therefore, had to demonstrate in their applications how their project is innovative in some way, or adding something new to what already exists. Indeed, the vast majority of projects for the 2012-13 round did describe their work, or a particular aspect of their work, as innovative in some way, either in terms of approaches, outputs, partnerships or new ways of working.¹²

5.2 How EDI projects innovated

Innovative activity meant different things to different providers, but most providers understood it to mean new activities, approaches, ways of working, or new partnerships that they had not undertaken before. In some cases, it was the focus of the project and who they were targeting that projects thought was innovative. In other

⁹ LSIS (2010/11) Invitation to Tender. *Equality and Diversity Partnership Project Fund*.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid; Skills Funding Agency and LSIS (2012/13), *Equality and Diversity Partnership Project Fund 2012/13: Prospectus*.

¹² IES analysis of the documentary review.

cases, it was the sustainability of the project over the longer term that providers thought made it innovative.

The ways in which EDI projects innovated over the three years from 2010 to 2013 are described in the table below.

Table 5.1: Innovative activity reported by projects

Type of innovative activity	Projects which undertook this activity (%)
Undertaking a new way of working or type of activity	44
Taking a 'bottom up approach'	21
Partnership working	33
Other approach	17
New target audience	16
Community cohesion and involvement	11
Sustainability	8

IES analysis of the documentary review. Note that some projects did not report any innovative activity, or it was unclear whether their project activity was innovative. These projects have been excluded here.

Undertaking a new way of working or type of activity was the most common example of innovation reported by the EDI projects. This encompassed a wide range of diverse activities but often involved utilising social media or new technology for the first time to promote or support equality and diversity, such as creating interactive flash games, or creating new media.

City College Plymouth: an example of a new type of activity

City College Plymouth led a project where three of their media students produced a training video for the local NHS Trust. The film, 'Anna', engaged with sexual exploitation, aiming to raise awareness of identifying children who have been, or may be at risk of sex trafficking. Research took place with experts in local hospitals as well as the police force. The film was conceived, planned, researched, filmed, directed, acted and produced all by students of the college. It was later picked up by Kent and Essex police forces who also wanted to use it to educate their officers.

'It's innovative to get students to make videos which are going to be used by the NHS, by the church, by the police... as a training video. How many other education establishments can you think of that [have done that]... especially at FE level?'

In a number of cases, innovative activities involved embarking upon ventures that had never been attempted before in that particular setting, such as creating social enterprises or mentoring projects that would be run or staffed by particular disadvantaged groups in order to enhance their skills, employability and confidence. In other projects, innovation took the form of a new type of activity, such as running an event on equality and diversity.

Innovation also involved new ways of collaborative working within the provider organisation, such as working across teams to build understanding of a particular equality theme or engaging a wider range of staff in equality and diversity training. For other projects, innovative activity involved having informal conversations with the target groups in order to engage them more in formal learning. For example, one project identified that formal teaching practices were not successful in engaging with NEETs and so they engaged them in informal chats and conversations instead. Another project trained up a select number of peer ambassadors, who were tasked with encouraging more informal conversations about EDI issues amongst fellow students in order to better identify need among some groups.

5.2.1 Taking a 'bottom up' approach

Taking a 'bottom up' approach encompasses those projects which were innovative in terms of their 'starting points'. These included projects **which consulted the target groups** from the start and used this to shape the project delivery and content – for example a project which was **learner led** in terms of designing and delivering a peer mentoring scheme. Bottom up projects could also be described as those which developed an understanding of, or resources around, equality and diversity issues **based on the experiences, voices and perspectives of the target groups themselves**. A defining feature of these approaches was that they were based on knowledge about what was appropriate for those groups, and not 'top down' approaches which tended to assume what was best for those groups.

Heba - an example of a 'bottom up' approach

Heba wanted to raise the aspirations and self-esteem of the women that attend their centre for ESOL lessons, who are often some of the most vulnerable and isolated in the local community. They decided that to reach this goal, they would take their learners on excursions to places of work, as well as colleges and universities, so that the women could experience first-hand new spaces and lives. Additionally, the women had responsibility for planning their route using the Transport for London website. After first having role models from external organisations visit the women's centre, the group would then visit a role model's place of work or education.

The project staff found that where they stepped back and did not guide the learners, they gained control, confidence and responsibility. In addition, although the experience of different visits was different for each learner, many of the women changed their opinions, including about letting their daughters go to university away from home. The success and innovation stemmed from the entirely learner-centred approach that Heba implemented.

'Approaches to up-skilling women and getting women to access stuff is normally too top down, it's normally "this is where we want people to be so let's start from there". We were looking at it more from "no, let's start from the comfortable classroom in the cosy women's centre that you've been coming to maybe for years, and where you feel like this is part of your personal space, let's start from there" and then it fans out from that.'

5.2.2 Partnership working

Partnership working was an important emphasis of the Grants (see section 3.2) and a number of projects reported that this was an innovative aspect of their work.

For some projects, partnership working was innovative because they were working with new partners, and often on a scale that was unprecedented in their experience.

FE Sussex: an example of working with new partners to jointly improve EDI

FE Sussex established new partnerships with other regional colleges through the Grants. It worked closely with 12 other colleges in Sussex to establish a regional Professional Development Forum which jointly addressed gaps in achievement and retention of individuals with protected characteristics.¹

For other providers, it was the fact that they were collaborating with a range of partners that was innovative. For others still, it was working with new types of partners that was innovative, particularly specialist partners and community organisations that were often brought into the project to help engage marginalised communities, such as isolated women in minority ethnic communities or potential learners in the LGBT community.

5.2.3 Other activities

‘Other activities’ include a range of activities detailed in the project documents which were either too vague (projects described innovative ‘approaches’ or ‘principles’ without much further detail), or too specific to fit into the other categories mentioned in Table 5.1.

5.2.4 Target audience

For around 16 per cent of projects, ‘innovation’ meant focussing their equality and diversity work on a new target audience. Although most projects over the three years targeted learners (see section 2.1.2), for some providers, they were targeting specific groups within this category for the first time, such as learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or learners from a particular religious group. As section 2.1.2 details, there was significant diversification of the target groups among the EDI projects as the Grants progressed, with more projects describing the local community and businesses as their target audience in EDI-2 and 3, than in EDI-1.

'We consider our work with employers to be innovative because we engaged with them purely around equality, diversity and inclusion for the first time and we provided bespoke training to meet their identified organisational needs.'

(FE College, EDI 4)

5.2.5 Community cohesion and involvement

For a smaller number of EDI projects, 'innovation' was a focus on the local community, either in terms of improving cohesion in the community and/or involving the community. Projects which worked to improve community cohesion and/or tackle prejudice and discrimination often involved introducing participants to new situations to challenge stereotypes and open forums for discussion. For example, one project has identified that some of their younger white male students were at risk of joining extremist groups, and took them to visit different places of worship and a Holocaust museum.

Other projects which involved the community were often characterised by new ways of engaging with potential/marginalised learners in the community, either through community intermediaries who could work in an outreach capacity (community champions, peer mentors, community organisations specialist organisations etc.), or by tailoring service delivery to better meet the needs of such groups.

C&K Careers

C&K Careers led a project to both create a more inclusive and welcoming service for customers from the Roma community, and to produce a toolkit to assist advisers in supporting people that they may not have worked with before. Although in some regions of delivery there was not yet a large Roma community, the project staff felt it was important that awareness was raised of the issues facing a particularly marginalised community for all of their advisors:

'That doesn't mean to say that they shouldn't know about it, because things change... communities move around, and we might find one day in our area, another day they might have settled [somewhere else], so we thought it would be a good time and opportunity to spread the word... If you come across anybody, this is what happens, this is what you should do.'

Additionally, they used community contacts to build trusting relationships with the Roma community, which helped to overcome barriers and make sure research could take place.

5.2.6 Sustainability

For a small percentage of projects, sustainability of their activities was described as being innovative. Many of these activities featured the production of various equality and diversity toolkits and resource packs, designed for wider dissemination and use

beyond the lifespan of the project. For nearly all providers, this kind of activity had never been undertaken before and so was considered innovative.

A few other projects sustained their activity by integrating their project within the wider infrastructure of the organisation (see section 4.1.5).

5.3 The value of innovative activity in the EDI Grants

There has been clear value in encouraging innovative activity through the EDI Grants and this is evident in three ways:

1. An emphasis on innovation has **encouraged new activity which would not otherwise have been funded**. In this sense, projects have been able to bid for the Grants on the basis of trying and testing new approaches without necessarily knowing for sure whether they are proven to work. Speaking about the value of the EDI Grants, one stakeholder commented:

'How else is the [FE] sector able to stimulate innovative thinking? In the current economic climate, this is very hard! There is no opportunity to take on innovative work in the sector, especially in this area.'

(Sector stakeholder)

2. An emphasis on innovation has **delivered particularly valuable work in the 'newer' equality strands of religion or belief and sexual orientation**. In these areas, where sector stakeholders felt that there was a smaller body of evidence in relation to what works and best practice (compared to some of the more 'established' equality strands of ethnicity, disability and gender), the EDI Grants were seen as providing an invaluable opportunity for *'people to get their heads round faith and sexuality, how to deal with these issues and spread new ideas'*. In these two areas, sector stakeholders felt that many providers in the sector still would not know what to do in this area, what worked or where they could get support and so the EDI Grants had an important role to play in plugging these gaps and building up an evidence base on good practice.
3. An emphasis on innovation has **encouraged activity that has successfully broken new ground in many provider organisations**. This is reflected in the number of projects which reported new ways of working as a result of the Grants, the formation of new partnerships or 'bottom up' approaches to improving equality and diversity. While these approaches may have been tested elsewhere – either at the national level and/or in other sectors- for many FE providers who bid for the Grants, these approaches had never been 'tried and tested' in their organisation.

Many of these approaches eventually demonstrated greater potential for wider application in the sector. This was particularly true of 'bottom up' approaches,

which drew on the perspectives of the target groups themselves to inform the design and delivery of the project. For many projects, this approach had a more powerful impact in developing people's understandings of, and attitudes towards, equality because it drew on the actual experiences, perspectives and voices of the target communities themselves. However, it also often gave the target groups a sense of ownership and stake in the project, while also developing their confidence levels and skills. Successful projects which were learner-led to a large extent are good examples of these kinds of approaches.

However, innovation itself does not guarantee a project's success and some of the most innovative projects struggled to meet their objectives precisely because they were 'starting from scratch', so to speak, and innovating in almost every area – from project focus to method of delivery. Some of these projects carried with them more risk right from the start and tended to need more time to bed-in and achieve their goals than the project timeframe allowed for. In these cases, other factors proved to be just as important, such as the quality of partnerships and whether the project had any experience working in this area.

6 Conclusions

It is evident from this research that overall, the EDI Grants have delivered value for money in several important respects:

- They have provided an **important source of funding** to support the development of EDI in the FE sector at a time of significant public funding cuts and at a time when some providers may be tempted to cut back on equality and diversity as an organisational/strategic priority.
- Over the course of the three years (2010-2013), the Grants have grown in profile and attracted increasing numbers of applications. Alongside this, the Grants have succeeded in **funding a range of diverse providers** who have been able to test out various approaches and delivery models in settings other than FE colleges. There has been a **diversification in the focus of projects** over the years to include the newer strands of protected characteristics and projects have also **focused on newer target groups**, such as businesses and the local community, and not just on learners.
- Perhaps one of the strongest messages to emerge out of this research has been the value of the Grants in **giving the newer equality strands greater profile and status**. A number of stakeholders reported that this has been important in areas such as sexual orientation and religion/belief, where many providers still struggle to see the relevance of these themes to their work.
- The **support offered to projects (by LSIS) has been critical** to ensuring that projects have stayed on track and in offering projects ongoing support and opportunities to disseminate their findings more widely, to other providers in the sector. This support function is likely to continue to be helpful and necessary, particularly in the context of the Agency's Freedom and Flexibilities Agenda and the fact that Grant funding is currently offered on flexible terms. It will also be necessary if the Grants are to continue to emphasise the capacity of the sector to meet its obligations under the Equality Act, since additional support is required to ensure that the emerging good practice is disseminated and embedded more widely, either through online case studies or national/regional events. All project interviewees noted the value of this support in their work, and given the limited reach many of the EDI projects have had into the sector as a whole, it may be worth considering how these dissemination events can offer more practical support to

building the capacity of the sector to meet its obligations under the Equality Act – for example through including workshops or action research into the format of dissemination events.

- The Grants have **successfully encouraged innovation** in provider organisations, often funding activities that otherwise would not have been funded. This is borne out in the sheer diversity of approaches to addressing EDI amongst projects and the fact that many projects have used the Grants to test out new approaches and/or partnerships. Not all of these approaches have been successful but projects and stakeholders all noted the importance of being given the opportunity to trial and test different approaches.
- In some cases, the Grants have **encouraged projects to contribute good practice and learning to the sector more widely**. This was particularly evident amongst the newer equality strands, where stakeholders felt that many providers still would not know how to address EDI in these areas, or what good practice might look like, or where they might go to get more support on it.

However, our findings also reveal a couple of areas which the Agency might wish to consider developing:

- The first is the **monitoring and reporting system of the Grants**. As noted above, this has largely worked well and offered the projects a key source of support. The systems used by the Agency and LSIS developed over the three years. However, in 2012/13 this system was heavily dependent on accurate self-reporting on the part of the projects. It would be too resource-intensive to independently evaluate every single project. However, simple changes to the reporting structures and templates that many projects have been working to could encourage clearer statements from projects about their stated aims, approaches and outcomes. One such change should be a clearer emphasis in the reporting templates on evidencing statements made in the project interim and final reports. For example, avoiding the use of simplistic scales (1-10) in asking projects about how far they have achieved their objectives, in favour of more open questions which encourage projects to clearly explain how far they have progressed against their initial objectives and to provide evidence for this. A similar emphasis could be worked into dissemination events so that other providers can clearly see the impact of the Grants and the distance travelled since the start of particular projects. Where some project reports are of particularly poor quality, follow-up by the managing agent or critical friend could provide additional support to encourage greater accountability amongst these projects to their stated deliverables. The second is the emphasis of the Grants, which, judging by the prospectuses for 2010-2013, has been heavily weighted towards innovation. As noted above, this emphasis is right and proper, and has delivered considerable value to the sector. However, **the Agency should perhaps**

consider giving more (or equal) emphasis to the need to embed, sustain and extend good practice within the sector as a whole as this is likely to deliver greater value for money and improved equality outcomes in the longer term. These kinds of approaches were distinctly lacking in the 2010-2013 Grants, particularly around leading improvement, where better performing providers could share their work with weaker providers, and around extending good practice already available on the Excellence Gateway. As one sector stakeholder put it 'for equality to be real, it has to be sustained, it has to be embedded'.

- Based on the findings of this research, we would recommend that the overriding aim of the grants be to embed, sustain and extend good practice on EDI in the sector, and that projects should be steered towards this goal by considering innovation, sustainability and partnership working as key themes in guiding their potential activities. This would retain the Grant's emphasis on innovation, sustainability and partnership working but would ground it more strongly within a longer-term vision of a sector that is better equipped to meet its obligations under the Equality Duty.

Appendices: Good practice case studies

Heba: Raising aspirations among BAME women

About the project

Heba is a non-profit training and enterprise organisation for migrant women in East London, a 'first step on the ladder' for many learners. From September 2012 until June 2013, they ran a project named 'Raising aspirations among BAME women', using a grant of £23,710 from the Equality and Diversity Partnership Grants. 'Raising Aspirations' was delivered in partnership with community project Praxis and training and development company, Account 3.

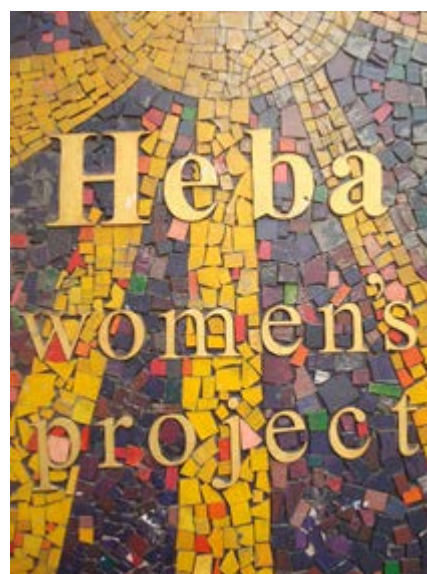
The project supported some of the most vulnerable and isolated women from the local community. They lacked support and confidence and had low levels of English, impacting their access to training or employment. Additionally, learners did not possess information about work or work culture, and did not see any value or relevance in visiting workplaces. Drawing on the advice of a learner group, Heba incorporated work and learning-focused sessions within their pre-existing ESOL provision. Women attending 'Raising Aspirations' would meet working role models – including working mothers – at the centre itself, and then go on excursions to workplaces or education institutions. Gaining ICT proficiency and confidence to travel alone were woven into the project through actions such as asking learners to plan routes using the Transport for London website. When the learners returned from a visit, they would discuss what they had seen, and how their thoughts may have changed. Heba found that in order to convince isolated women to go on an excursion, having a representative of the organisation visit and meet them first was invaluable.

'When we're [taking] people along... they know which faces they're going to see when they get there, and they've already got an interest in what they're going to see... and that interest was inspired in a place where they feel comfortable and secure.'

Key outcomes

Participants gained awareness of facilities and activities in local centres, and insight into how different places of work operate and the roles different employees can play. They subsequently accessed support services and gained confidence in using public transport. The impacts first manifested in focus groups and discussions, with the women perceiving the world of work as less alien and out of reach. Diverse disciplines – from anthropology to management – became new areas that women at Heba began to consider, and some changed their attitudes towards the prospect of their daughters attending university, even away from home. Furthermore, confidence and self-esteem were core outcomes of the project, and frequent phrases in the women’s conversations.

Sustainability has been ensured in several ways. The gains in confidence will persist amongst the women and will encourage others to participate. For example, when one participant began volunteering, others followed suit. In several cases, this has led to paid work. Additionally, the partnership relationships have been preserved, with further collaborations being planned. Discussions about work are now incorporated into Heba’s English programme, as is hosting working role models and going on excursions.



Innovation

'We understood [innovation] as something that to our knowledge wasn't being done anywhere else... looking at a problem from a different angle. We saw that existing approaches to up-skilling isolated and disadvantaged people were very top down, it's normally "this is where we want people to be so let's start from there and see how we can explain to everyone why that's best". We approached it from the angle of the isolated and intimidated woman who is afraid to leave the comfort of the classroom in the cosy women's centre she's been coming to, in some cases for years. We started from the place she feels secure and at home, bringing the outside world in through class visits, and then it fans out from that, safe and familiar at every stage, rather than thinking people can just walk into a college simply because they've been told what the benefits are... often it's just looking at the problem from the other angle.'

Critical factors to project's success

- An in-depth knowledge of need, combined with trust and strong bonds with the female learners.

- Dedicated staff: *'It's a no brainer but you have to know who your key people are in terms of the delivery, and you have to make sure they're on board and they know what the project is.'*

Hopwood College: Equality Peer Ambassadors

About the project

Hopwood College is a further education college based in Rochdale. From November 2011 to May 2012, it ran a project called Equality Peer Ambassadors which was funded by £5,000 from the Equality and Diversity Partnership Grants.

The project used the College's Learner Engagement Structures to identify key individuals (learners at the college, aged 16-18 and 19+) to train as Peer Ambassadors and champion equality and diversity issues relevant to learners and young people in the Borough of Rochdale. So, although the project targeted learners at the college to be Ambassadors, the potential beneficiaries of the project extended to all young people in Rochdale, aged 16+.

The project worked in partnership with RISE 2010 CIC to provide accredited training (Level 1 in Philosophical Enquiry) to Ambassadors so they could identify issues in the local community, including targeted learning on equality laws, legal duties, College policy, protected characteristics and wider inclusion topics, such as extremism, bullying and cohesion. Ambassadors also received tailored training, support and coaching from staff who championed equalities work locally. Equality Peer Ambassadors then went on to provide support, advice, guidance and acted as role models to other learners in the College and some young people in the College, helping to dispel myths, challenge stereotypical attitudes and raise awareness, tolerance and understanding amongst the college community of equality issues. The project culminated in the Annual Voice Conference at the College, which was run by the Ambassadors for that year. Fifty students attended the successful conference to discuss three themes: religion and belief, sexual orientation and sexual exploitation.

The Peer Ambassadors at Hopwood College



Key outcomes

Accredited training: 15 learners/Equality Peer Ambassadors and two members of staff were trained in specific equality specialist areas and in philosophical enquiry methods, exceeding the expectation of recruiting at least 12 learners.

Sustained good practice from this project has been manifest in three ways:

- First, the very design of the project – to train learners to act as Equality Peer Ambassadors to other students – ensured that any benefits of the project extended beyond the 15 learners that were trained as Ambassadors.
- Second, by delivering this project through the existing learner engagement structure of the college (the Student Leadership Team, or SLT), the project's work was embedded and sustained by a wider, institutional infrastructure that could carry it on, beyond the lifespan of the project. In the following academic year, for example, some SLT members were able to act as mentors and buddies for new learners, despite the fact that the Equality Peer Ambassador project had come to an end.
- Third, the College has invested its own resources in ensuring the sustainability of the project's outcomes by providing the same accredited training to 13 learner support staff, who then went on to use this to engage students in conversations

about equality and diversity issues and these tools are used to facilitate tutorials with learners.

Increased skills, confidence and a change in attitudes among learners: The training for Ambassadors equipped them with the skills they needed to promote equality and diversity issues amongst the student population, with one student now a student governor and the student representative for the College's Equality and Diversity Steering Group. For some, the training was also helpful in building their confidence, as many were nervous to present the project at various dissemination events. In a couple of cases, the training helped change the negative attitudes and prejudices of the prospective Ambassadors.

For the wider student population, there have also been positive impacts from the work of the Ambassadors. For example, through the conversations that Ambassadors have facilitated with other students on equality issues, a couple of bullying cases have been brought to the attention of the College and resolved. The Ambassadors have also set up a LGBT group in the college and have since networked with other LGBT groups in the Borough and in Manchester. The project also had positive feedback from the Annual Voice Conference:

Seventy three per cent of learner participants strongly agreed that the event developed their understanding of equality and diversity issues.¹³

Dissemination of good practice to other colleges: The project successfully applied to run a good practice workshop at the Association of Colleges (AoC) Conference for strategic leaders. At this event, they received recognition for their good practice and ran an effective workshop for 16 College principals that was led by the Ambassadors. Feedback from participants was positive, with many crediting the Ambassadors as having a knowledge of, and mature attitude towards, equality and diversity issues.

Critical factors to project's success

- The project was **embedded within the existing institutional infrastructure** of the College (the learner engagement structure, or the SLT), and so the project's work was sustained beyond the lifespan of the project.
- Strong **buy-in from senior staff** facilitated project delivery by allowing training to be scheduled into the timetable, and enabled the college to further invest in the

¹³ Survey of participants' feedback, data provided by Hopwood College.

project after it had finished. Equality and diversity are seen as a priority within the College and this commitment is shared by the Principal and Vice Principal.

'It was absolutely crucial to have the Principal's support who is the chair of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group at the College. Equality and diversity is such a high priority to the college that it wasn't a challenge for us to get senior buy-in and get student engagement or buy-in to the project.'

Head of Student Support and Equality

ProStart: increasing diversity in apprenticeships

About the project

ProStart is a private training provider that provides work-based learning for people aged 16 upwards, in partnership with a range of companies and public sector organisations in and around Nottingham. ProStart had earlier recognised that very few young men were taking up apprenticeships in Business Administration. However, after doing some work to encourage young men to consider this area of employment, analysis of ProStart's equality and diversity statistics revealed that many of the males being interviewed for apprenticeships were not converting into 'starts'. The project therefore builds on the company's earlier work developing young people's skills in applying for posts to help increase their success in application and by providing intensive support post-interview for the young men who are recruited into Business Administration apprenticeships.

In January 2013 ProStart received £4,999 from the Grants and used this money to design and deliver the *Passport to Success* programme to male learners and to make a video which featured young men who had successfully entered apprenticeships in Business Administration talking about their jobs. This was used as a way of attracting more young men into this area of study and work – it lets them see examples of their own peer group.

The *Passport to Success* programme consisted of two sessions delivered by a qualified tutor on a one-to-one basis following their initial assessment results and first contact interview with ProStart. The two sessions developed interview and employability skills and, as part of the programme, all beneficiaries were put forward for a minimum of two interviews, with organisations being contacted afterwards for feedback. The feedback from those interviews was used to provide further skills development for the young men.

'We realised there was a reason why they weren't staying in their jobs. You need to change their attitudes. The schools don't gear them up for jobs.'

The NHS locally had been a key partner which had helped ensure the success of the programme - they had realised that they had a shortfall in young men in their administrative infrastructure so they were willing to give the young men the opportunities. In cases where they might initially have thought that the young person didn't have the right background or qualifications, *'but apart from that they seemed okay'* they were willing to give them a chance because they knew that ProStart would be giving this programme of support. The National College was another key partner who employed some of the male apprentices.

Key outcomes

Having the money had provided a prompt to the company to make a start on addressing a problem they had already recognised:

'It focuses you. Whereas before, we might have just carried on thinking "it's [ie the number of boys] a bit low", it enabled us to think "right, this is what we want to do".'

Following the work the proportion of males in Administration apprenticeships has increased to around 40 per cent. The partners (employers) had also achieved the increase in males which they had wanted as well.

While the main focus of the work was on recruiting more young men to these apprenticeships, the materials are used more widely now, with girls as well.

The initiative has also been fed into ProStart's Quality Improvement Plan, and will be reviewed at the quarterly meetings.

Some of the apprentices produced a video presentation which they presented to their employers, on why a company should take on an apprentice. It's called *'The Dragons Meet the Apprentices'*.

Critical factors to project's success

- Attitude of project staff: *'The tutor we work with because she is not just motivational, she approaches things with 110 per cent commitment.'*
- Getting to know the people the project deals with and get a feeling for them.
- Building good relationships with employers to ensure they trusted the project enough to give a young person a chance.
- The fact that their employers had recognised that they wanted to increase the numbers of males in administration also helped.

Highbury College: An example of sustained support for vulnerable groups

About the project

Highbury College is a large General College of Further Education located in Portsmouth. The Equality and Diversity Partnership-funded project '*Creating Confident Communities*' developed out of their earlier experience with the '*Back on Track*' and '*Five Ways*' projects which supported young people and adults who developed mental health problems while at the College to return to and continue in education. The college received £20,000 to develop the '*Creating Confident Communities*' programme which has run since 2012. The funding enabled the College to build on its earlier work and support a much wider group of vulnerable people, including people recovering from drug addiction, young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), those studying on ESOL programmes, people with a Learning Disability and mature learners on Access programmes, as well as those recovering from mental health problems.

In the '*Creating a Confident Community*' project the College used partnership working to support and inspire the wider community. They worked with the Safer Portsmouth Partnership to identify the groups with which to work and the support that was needed. This partnership includes some social services and police representatives along with a number of voluntary agencies who work with recovering alcoholics and drug addicts: Alcohol and Narcotics Addiction, Solent NHS Trust, Heart2Art Group and Portsmouth City Council's Portsmouth Craft and Manufacturing Industry (PCMI) and Community Learning team. This helped inform and shape the direction and personalisation of the project. Two programmes formed the core of the activity: '*Fresh Futures*' and '*Road to Recovery*'. These focus on life skills, social and economic wellbeing and advocacy. Through these programmes learners were able to develop their communication, teamwork, self-management and employability skills.

The funding enabled employment of a small team of support staff to be trained to deliver the sessions, which are based on the '*Five Ways to Wellbeing*' tool. Altogether the programme has been run with 14 different groups in the past year.

Key outcomes

A key outcome for the college has been the retention of students on a programme who otherwise would have been lost. For students and the community, the programme has contributed to maintenance of their health and wellbeing at higher levels than would have been the case otherwise. Retention statistics show the impact of the programme - they had 100 per cent retention last year and although the current year's figures are not reported yet they are looking good again. The Individual Learner Record enables them to identify students with mental health problems and these figures show that in 2011-12 retention of students with mental health issues was 56 per cent; in 2012-13 following introduction of the programme it was around 85 per cent.

In addition, the students themselves credit the programme with having made a real impact on their lives. There is an increase in their confidence levels and in their approach to their next steps and aspirations. At the end of year awards a number of students had talked about the journey they'd been on, praising the programme and speaking of how it had helped them. The individuals involved in the wellbeing programme reported an improvement in their wellbeing. There was also an increase in staff confidence amongst the support staff involved in delivering the programme.

The team has done presentations to senior management and to staff in the 'all staff' training day. The approach is now being embedded in all personal learning plans and will be piloted next year.

'Health and wellbeing has now been embedded into everything the college does.'

The team is now identifying Ambassadors who will be able to 'sell' this approach to the Clinical Commissioning Groups, with their longer-term aim being to improve the health and wellbeing of Portsmouth as a whole. They are also working with NHS Solent and the Richmond Fellowship to develop and deliver the initiative in partnership with an NHS Recovery College, with the Recovery College using peer workers to provide support within the Solent Recovery College (SRC). Highbury College will also be delivering a presentation on their approach to a number of the land-based colleges at an event designed to look at their particular issues.

Innovation

As far as the College is aware, this is the only example in the UK in which the 'Five Ways' approach has been used in this way or with such a wide range of groups. There are health and wellbeing advisors in other colleges but they do not employ this type of strategy to reach all students in the College.

Critical factors to project's success

- Having the trust of senior management, their backing and their confidence, was key to getting the project up and running.
- It's important too to get the involvement of the right people who will '*go the extra mile*'.
- '*Be incredibly positive to make them feel it will work. Don't give up.*'

C&K Careers: *Enabling Roma* Project

About the project

C&K Careers, based in Huddersfield, delivers the National Careers Service as part of Careers Yorkshire & Humber, the prime contractor for Yorkshire and Humber region. From 2012-2013 they ran a project called *Enabling Roma*, funded by £16,868 from the Equality and Diversity Partnership Fund.

Over the last decade, several Roma communities had formed in the local area. However, a careers service tailored to their specific needs was either unavailable or severely limited, in part due to the fact that advisers lacked familiarity, awareness or practical knowledge. Additionally, project staff were well aware that this particular community faces severe persecution that is not widely addressed. The project drew on the trust that one of their advisers had created with Roma groups, as well as the knowledge and connections of a local group trusted by the community in order to set up focus groups and establish bonds.

'[It was] what the project needed... We identified that it needed to have that solid research behind it before we could produce anything, because we had to actually speak to people... Because we did the research with the groups that gave us some validity with the people.'

Collaborating with the Roma community – and providing a space in which those individuals could voice their experiences – allowed the project to develop resources which could better support careers advisers in delivering an inclusive and appropriate service. An adviser guide was produced and two films, in Slovak and Czech, were uploaded to several websites. The resources contained background about the Roma community, the stigma they face, and the particular needs and things they would like to help them, as well as a contact list of organisations that may be of use. Delivery partners were Aspire-i, a local non-profit organisation and long-term partner of C&K Careers through the National Careers Service contract, and Careers Europe, a new partner. This new relationship was *'a breath of fresh air'* due to the new approach and context that it contributed to the process, which *'complemented what we did, perfectly'*.

Key outcomes

Having produced a new set of resources for an area in which there was a clear need is a key outcome of the project, which ensures that the gained knowledge can continue to be passed onto new advisers. These and existing advisers can benefit from a resource based on in-depth research into the real needs of Roma people. Furthermore, the resources can be checked and updated each year to keep information, such as the names and contact details of appropriate organisations, contemporary. Using the resources, the project could widely disseminate its findings, both nationally across all other National Careers Service prime providers and through the connections of delivery partners: *'we seem to have reached further than just Yorkshire and the Humber, or Halifax and Bradford... we've reached through the country and across into Europe'*.

Additionally, the project allowed solid links to be created between the organisations and local Roma communities due to the efforts to build confidence that Roma clients would be provided with careers advice by people who understood them and would support them.

Innovation

Connecting with the local community through trusted intermediaries brought innovation to this project, as a relationship was brokered between the delivery organisations and Roma communities which transcended barriers to engagement. The project's focus on a 'newer' equality issue which has comparably received less attention also adds to its innovation. Despite the fact that there may not be a large Roma community in every locale, project staff felt it important to raise awareness of the issues facing a particular marginalised community for others to use in the future:

'[It] doesn't mean to say that they shouldn't know about it, because things change... communities move around, and we might find one day in our area, another day they might have settled [somewhere else], so we thought it would be a good time and opportunity to spread the word... If you come across anybody, this is what happens; this is what you should do.'

Critical factors to project's success

- The **experience** of C&K Careers: *'the fact that we're embedded into this community... we've been doing this National Careers Service work for a long time... so, the fact that we're here, that we've got that experience and we're known is a major thing'*.
- The **dedication** of the project team: *'it was out of hours, it was at the heart of the community... if you're involved in information, advice and guidance, and you're working with specific communities, you just do what needs to be done to get the job done'*.

City College Plymouth: Raising awareness of sexual exploitation of women and children in Plymouth

About the project

City College Plymouth is a further education college in the South West. From 2011-2012, media tutors at the college led a project called *'Raising awareness of sexual exploitation of women and children in Plymouth'*, with £19,810.00 from the Equality and Diversity Partnership Project Grants.

Three media students produced a film on request from Plymouth NHS Trust in response to the volume of sexual exploitation in the city. Originally, it was to be shown to learners and in hospitals. The film, *'Anna'*, tells the story of a young girl who is deliberately isolated from her friends and family, becomes trapped in a sexually exploitative and violent



situation, and describes the difficult journey to recovery. Vignettes from interviews with police and relevant hospital staff are interspersed throughout the narrative. It aimed to inform viewers of the signs to look for in young people who may have been or are at risk from exploitation. Although a challenging topic, the work was in line with the 'socially motivated' work students at the colleges are encouraged to work towards. The final piece, acted by fellow students, was made available online and on DVD. A learner-oriented approach was core to this project, and *'apart from the very first meeting, they were in every meeting that happened, with the NHS, with the Partnership group, with the police when we were researching'*. The students had control of the research with police and hospital staff (they designed interview guides and carried out interviews) as well as the aesthetic decisions of the film itself. This included scripting, designing, shooting and editing the final picture.

Key outcomes

The *'sheer number'* of individuals that have viewed the film is the most distinctive impact of this project. The very first dissemination was in a local theatre, where 100 individuals attended the launch event – including interested charities. At this early stage, the project was reported on radio, television and in newspapers, and continues to get picked up today. Essex and Kent police forces became aware of the film, and with the support of the college both began to use it as a training video for their officers. In 2012, the viewing figure stood at more than 67,000 individuals within NHS training schemes, schools, colleges, Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB) and the police. It is reported to have more than doubled since. Furthermore, the partners have been inspired to work on future collaborations, including returning to the subject of *'Anna'* in a form more appropriate for younger learners aged 10 to 13.

'We're really pleased with the impact it's had... I had a meeting about it [over two years afterwards]... one of our governors wants to take it to our local MP and make a sort of follow-up... we never imagined we'd have this sustained impact.'

The reach that *'Anna'* achieved is particularly wide and has undoubtedly increased the film's ability to raise awareness. Although this is incredibly difficult to measure, one project contact explained how consciousness had snowballed: *'lots of people had seen it, and the people who have seen it have come to us and said, we want to use it to teach other people about it, so if it's raised their awareness to the point where they want to use it as well, then presumably it'll raise other people's awareness as well.'* As the film itself remains for posterity, this impact can continue to be sustained.

The impact on the students who produced the film is also important – and also sustainable. Not only did they acquire media production skills, and research skills, but also good time management, confidence and social interaction. Additionally, *'they spent a lot of time at meetings... with people who they would consider old people... being able to sit down... in a room and hold an opinion – and ask intelligent questions – is definitely a skill that they will use in the future.'*

Innovation

'Probably because it was so student led, and yet... and yet something that's going to be used by the wider world... I think it's innovative to get students to make videos which are going to be used by the NHS, by the church, by the police... as a training video. How many other education establishments can you think of that [have done that]... especially at FE level.'

Critical factors to project's success

- Careful planning: *'you had to make sure everything was planned intricately, and that it was really very detailed, but once you'd done all the planning it kind of ran relatively smoothly'*.
- Strong partnership working, where the different parties could combine their skills and expertise, as well as extend the scope of the project's dissemination.
- Putting together a project team that was likely to be very dedicated, but also providing motivation and support when energy was low.

FE Sussex: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Sussex

About the project

FE Sussex is a consortium of 12 member colleges in the South East of England, of which two – Plumpton and Brinsbury - are land-based. From 2011-2012 they led a project named *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Sussex* which aimed to raise students' awareness of equality and diversity, particularly in those land-based colleges. It was supported by £21,730 from the Equality and Diversity Partnership Grants.

It had been noted that students in those land-based colleges could be restricted to their discipline and locality, and not well conversant with very different cultural and social experiences. The project thus aimed to change this and foster good relationships between students. Comparable endeavours were thought to be on-site activities such as cultural awareness days or talks about equality, where the risk was run of students becoming disengaged or feeling they were not hearing something new. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Sussex* therefore chose to remove students from their comfortable environment in order to challenge them and broaden their knowledge.

'We were looking for something which lifted the student out and made them understand that culturally, the country is diverse.'

With this impetus, the project teamed up with the Ebony Horse Trust in Brixton to bring together equine students from inner city London and rural Sussex through the learners' combined passion for horse riding. The Ebony Trust is a community riding centre in South London which aims to improve the education and aspirations of young people through horses. Visits were arranged to both Brixton and Sussex, and learners from both organisations competed in the annual horse show. As both organisations had worked to make riding inclusive for disabled people, they built on experience of using it in an equality context. In this project, horse riding was the vehicle to enhance knowledge and practice in a way that could better engage the students by relating to their interest and experience.

'The students were able to use the skills that they developed in a totally different environment, which got them to engage instantly with a type of student they would never normally mix with.'

Key outcomes

The direct beneficiaries of the project were the students themselves, and on evaluation forms, they indicated how their appreciation of inner city life and culture had been expanded. Following the success of the project, the visits that were piloted in this project were embedded into the equine course at the land-based colleges, now becoming *'part and parcel of the curriculum'*. This **sustainability** of the project's impact has been a notable outcome. Crucially, the principal of Plumpton College took a highly active interest which has helped to ensure that the link between the institutions has been cemented long-term. The college now liaises extensively with the Trust regarding showing opportunities, recruiting students, giving careers and making opportunities available.

An understanding has been formed amongst the colleges that it is possible to successfully work with minority groups outside their normal catchment and operating area. Additionally, full-time equine students from inner city areas have since enrolled at the college which is seen as a direct outcome of the project, and it is firmly believed that they would not be students there had it not been for this project.

The impact was publicised to other students, as well as further afield in the other FE Sussex consortium colleges and to colleagues in both Kent and Sussex. There was, therefore, a:

'...wider appreciation... and the drip feed of ideas in equality and diversity... across the wider Sussex college network.'

Pan-Sussex CPD days were drawn upon as a forum in which greater emphasis and focus could be placed upon the project. Interest was shared between the FE Sussex members, as each was undertaking their own equality and diversity activities and could draw on lessons learned.

Critical factors to project's success

- *It 'comes back round to the commitment of the senior management at the college, because if nobody was interested it would just die a death, but with senior management backing, these things have a habit of happening'.*
- The project activity was one that students were passionate about and so was a successful vehicle for equality and diversity.

Lewisham College, *Linking Lies* project

About the project

Lewisham College (now LeSoCo, following the merger with Southwark College in August 2012) is a further education college based in South London. From November 2010 – May 2011, it ran a project called *Linking Lies* which was funded by £13,249 from the Equality and Diversity Partnership Grants.

The rationale for the project was to develop a resource on gender conflict and sexual bullying which could be of wider use to the sector. At the time, staff could not find any resources on this topic that could be used in the FE sector.

The aim of the project was to produce a resource that could be used as a stimulus to:

- raise young peoples' awareness of sexual bullying and gender conflict
- help prevent sexual bullying and gender conflict from occurring in other colleges, schools and youth settings.

The College worked with learners in the media and drama departments to create a short film to demonstrate an incident of sexual bullying and gender conflict that other young people could relate to and use as a stimulus for discussion. The College also produced a staff resource around the film to support them in addressing sexual bullying and gender conflict with the young people with whom they worked.

The College worked in partnership with the Anti-Bullying Alliance and an independent education consultant for consultation, project management and writing of the resource. The *Linking Lies* DVD and staff guide were launched at an event in May 2011.

Key outcomes

Helping develop the capacity of the FE sector: The *Linking Lies* DVD and resource pack for staff were successfully produced to a high quality and with expert and learner input. The staff resource pack was designed to be accessible and user-friendly for staff in other FE settings, allowing them to use as little or as much of the guide as was

appropriate to their college/work. Crucially, these resources were produced at a time when there were few, or no, resources available on this topic in the FE sector.

The successful dissemination of the resources: The resources were successfully launched at a free event which was well attended by learners as well as representatives from the local authority, youth offending service, senior staff at the college, other colleges and local partners. The event was opened by the college Principal and the resources were then disseminated to every FE college in London.

The development of learners: The involvement of learners from the College in the production of the DVD helped increase their employability through developing their skills, such as presentation skills, listening skills, their ability to take on board constructive criticism and engage with senior college staff. As a result, many students involved in the project developed higher levels of confidence in their abilities and skills.

Sustained good practice: The DVD and staff resource are still being used by the College and they are currently looking into how they can update it, and possibly re-launch it given that sexual bullying and gender conflict has since become a much more prominent issue amongst young people and in the media.

The College also moved to a centralised tutorial model in September 2013 and since then, every 16-18 year old student in the college has completed the *Linking Lies* tutorial as part of this new model.

Critical factors to project's success

- The project benefitted from the **expertise, drive and passion of the project partners** (the education consultant and the representative from the Anti-Bullying Alliance). These individuals also brought to the project their expertise on bullying and how to tackle it.
- The project also benefitted from having **tenacious and committed college staff** involved, who often worked extra hours to keep the project on track.
- **Learner involvement** in the production of the DVD helped give the resource wider relevance, credibility and buy-in amongst the student population of the college, as well as develop the skills of those students directly involved in production.