



Findings from the ESF Convergence Evaluation



22nd September 2015

- Summary of evaluation aims and methodology
- Key findings – programme level
- Key findings – by priority
- Impacts
- Recommendations

- **Main aim: to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the ESF Convergence programme**
 - Review progress against objectives and targets in the context of changes in the external landscape (e.g. policy, economy)
 - Identify most and least effective aspects, considering lessons learned from this to inform future programmes
 - Determine the social and economic impacts of the programme and assessment of the counterfactual

- **Desk-based evaluation of a wide range of secondary data sources combined with in-depth interviews:**
 - Strategic review of programme context identifying baseline position and how this has changed
 - Operational review of programme delivery and progress against targets
 - In-depth telephone interviews with 50 individuals and organisations

Key findings – Programme

- Substantial overachievement against the majority of targets even though not all ESF monies have been spent
- Participants supported (P4+5) **249% against target**

Priority 4		Priority 5	
Unemployed people supported	348%	Gained basic skills	120%
Economically inactive supported	212%	Gained Level 2 qualification	200%
14-19 NEETs supported	341%	Gained Level 3 qualification	435%
In work upon leaving	201%	Gained Level 4 qualification	173%
14-19 NEETs into EET	625%	Gained Level 5 qualification	527%

Programme design

- Informed by effective collaboration, extensive partnership working and use of Labour Market Intelligence
- **Complemented mainstream funding, avoiding duplication**
- Right kinds of activities commissioned in line with local needs
- **In some cases greater flexibility within design could have added more value**

Strategic linkages

- Scope to harness synergies between ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- Clear intent to form strategic linkages between ESF and ERDF
- However structural issues presented barriers:
 - Timescales were not always in alignment
 - Tenders did not explicitly require the two funds to be ‘joined up’
 - EU State Aid rules
- Examples of effective linkages include Fifteen and Newquay Airport

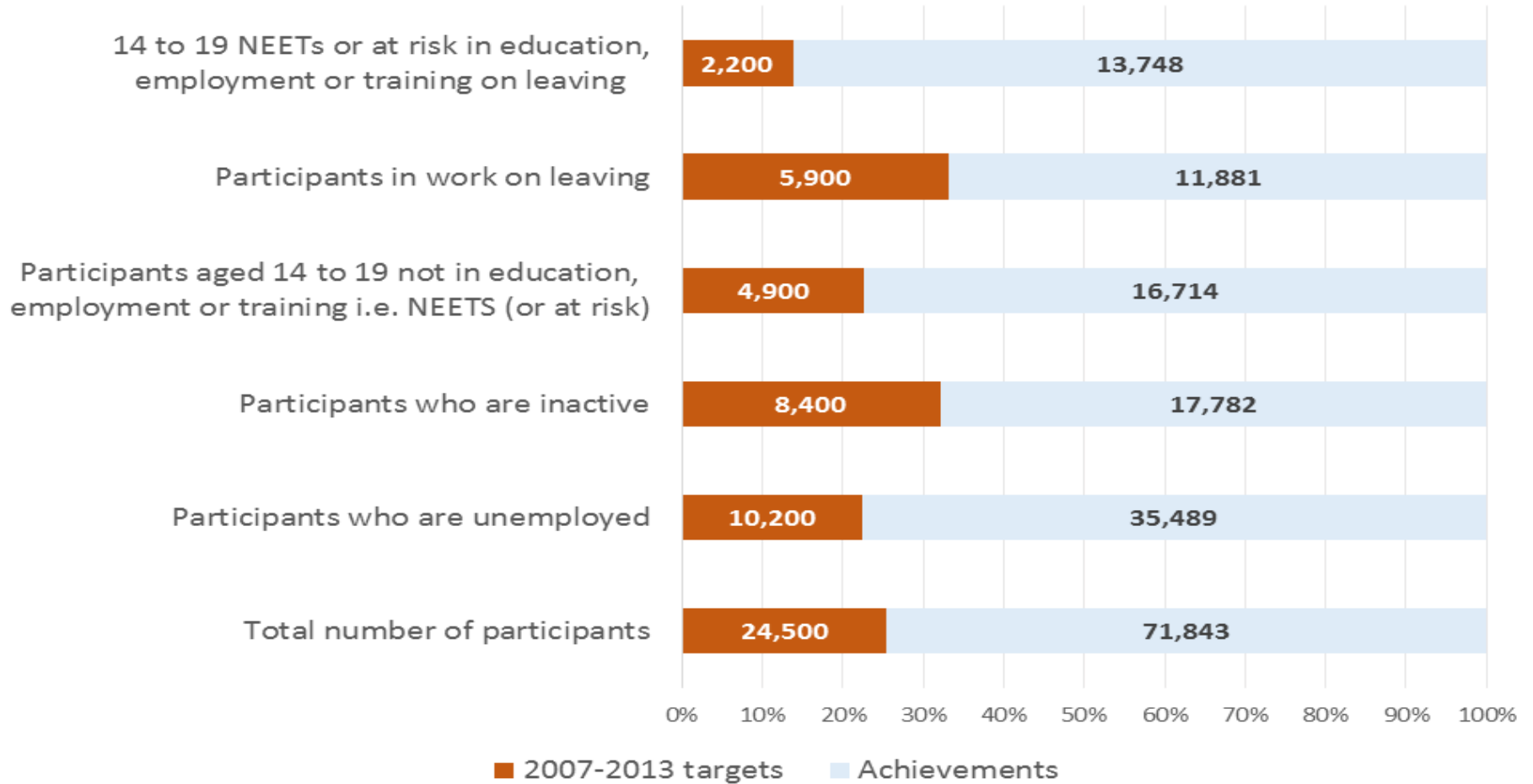
Cross-cutting themes

- Cross-cutting themes: gender inequality & equal opportunities and sustainable development
- **Examples of effectiveness and good practice:**
 - Exceeded target - people with disabilities (P4)
 - Exceeded target - ethnic minorities (P4)
 - Exceeded target - females (P5)
 - Dedicated projects with a particular focus on cross-cutting themes e.g. Cornwall Works for Learning Disabilities
- Not always addressed as explicitly within skills contracts

Changes and impact

- **First half of the programme:**
 - Local Management Committee (LMC) - robust approach to programme governance
 - Responsive and proactive approach of CFO local management
- **Second half of the programme:**
 - Closure of organisations with a role in strategic oversight, SWRDA and GOSW
 - Nationally-led, top-down approach to programme governance and delivery
 - New payment model (DWP) affected smaller providers
 - Coupled with delays to contracting, this reduced time available for delivery

Key findings – Priority 4



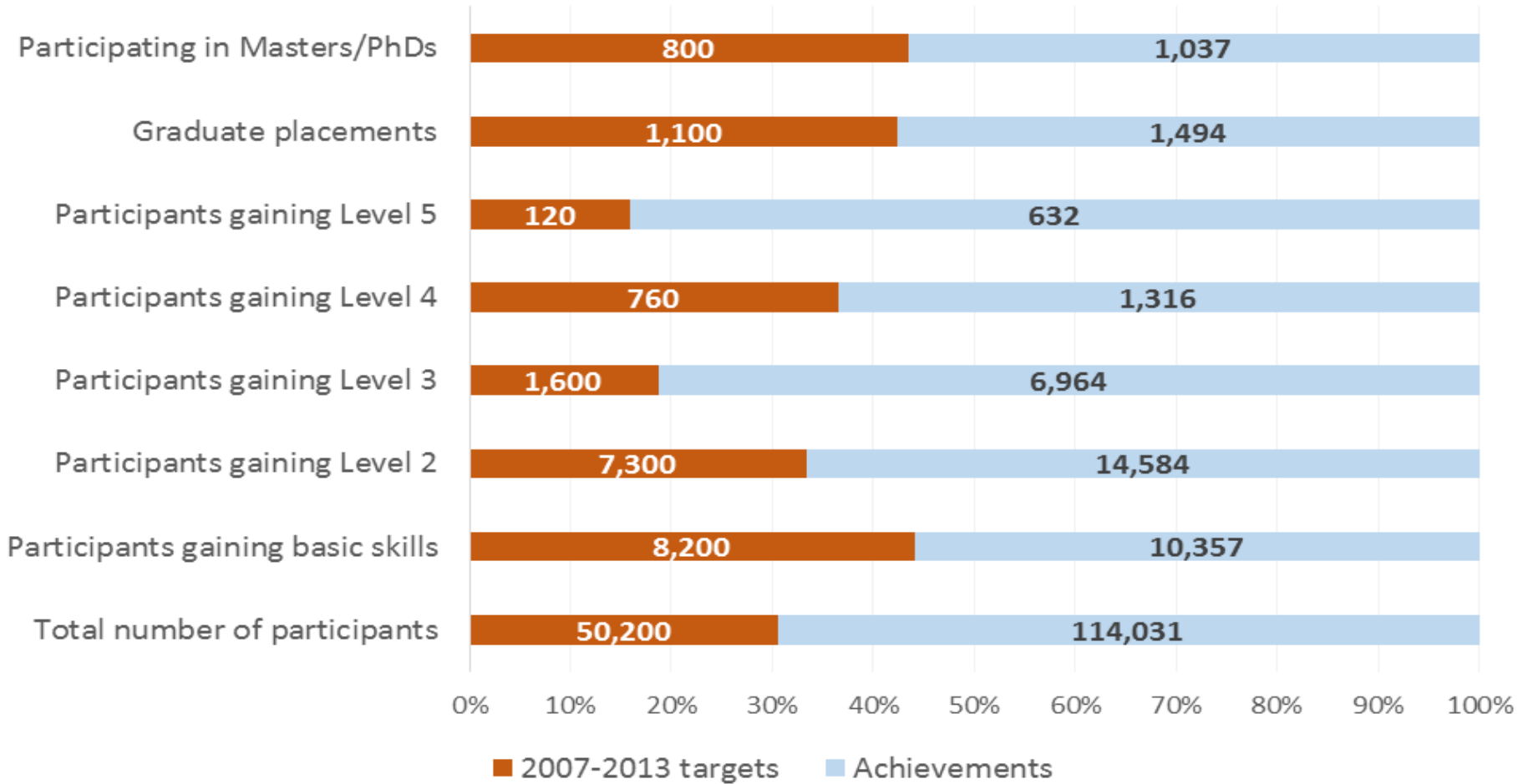
What was most effective?

- Partnership working, building upon existing strong relationships in Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly
- Flexible use of funds enabling tailored support to meet specific needs and bring about sustainable change
- Engagement with the target group among social enterprises and third sector organisations
- Referrals via Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches and Cornwall Works Hub

Barriers for Priority 4

- Number of referrals via Local Authority Children's School and Families pathway diminished
- Perception of “paperwork and bureaucracy” among participants which could be a factor in disengagement from the programme
- Dropouts given participants were often facing multiple barriers
- Transport infrastructure could prevent access to courses/jobs
- Nationally-led changes to funding decisions, notably training for bus drivers could not be funded despite severe shortage

Key findings – Priority 5



What was most effective?

- Partnership working underpinned by a wide range of different providers offering breadth of options for participants
- Innovative approaches to engagement supported by provision of high quality Information, Advice & Guidance
- Development of higher level skills and increased engagement with Higher Education
- Stronger relationships between universities, and the HE community and businesses
- Support for start up companies

Barriers for Priority 5

- Offer for businesses not as flexible to meeting their specific needs as it could have been
 - Full qualifications when in practice only needed certain credits to benefit the organisation
 - Delivery of ESF “at a push not a pull”
- Disengagement among some businesses perceiving access to funds was onerous and hard to understand

Key findings – Priority 6

What was most effective?

- Technical Assistance (P6) funds used to good effect to support programme delivery
- Holistic approach to spending the money, encompassing a range of complementary projects
- Communications kept partners and stakeholders well informed
- Good news stories widely disseminated
- Research outputs used to inform investment decisions for new programme

Opportunities for change

- Opportunity to share valuable research outputs through wider dissemination
- Harder to develop case studies in relation to participants who were ex-offenders and as such less willing to share their stories
- Mid-term review divided ESF and ERDF communications and external marketing, previously under one banner via the Convergence Partnership Office
- General consensus that this function was more effective when the two funds were joined up

Key findings – Impacts

Impacts for individuals

- Progressions into employment
- Achievement of qualifications
- Distance travelled among individual participants e.g.:
 - Greater self-confidence
 - Reduced anxiety
 - Stronger career aspirations
 - Better self-esteem
- Ex-offenders on the programme less likely to re-offend compared with those that had not participated

Impacts for businesses

- Progressions into employment helping to build capacity in businesses including many SMEs
- Capacity building among third sector organisations
- Stronger relationships between HE and industry
- Establishment of new start up “cutting edge” companies, helping to improve GVA
- Increase of 25% in the number of new business start ups in Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly between 2011 and 2013

Impacts on the region

- Higher level skills developed in Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly
- Increase of 14% of people in employment between 2007 and 2014
- Increase of 11% of females in employment between 2007 and 2014
- More people employed expected to contribute to higher Gross Value Added (GVA)
- Decrease in number of people with no qualifications from 10% to 6% between 2007 and 2014
- Decrease in number of NEETs from 5.1% to 4.2% in Cornwall between 2012 and 2014

Recommendations

Programme delivery

- Review of strategic ownership and management of the future programme
- Design of tailored provision building upon success and in alignment with key LEP priorities
- Alignment of ESF and ERDF to best effect
- Maximisation of Technical Assistance funds
- Addressing any gaps in the participant journey

Evaluating impact

- Mid-cycle or rolling evaluation for future programmes
- Participant survey in 2016 to understand extent to which impacts sustained
- Measure success notably in relation to higher skills and wage levels
- Identify which targets and measures contribute to the greatest actual impact for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly

Q & A