

# Update to the Mid-Term Evaluation of the UK-GB EQUAL Community Initiative 2000-6

ESF Division of the Joint International Department of the DWP and the DfES

A final report submitted by GHK

*in association with*

*The Gilfillan Partnership*

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## **Disclaimer**

The views in this report are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Work and Pensions.



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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABSSU	Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CAB	Citizen's Advice Bureaux
CBI	Confederation of British Industries
CIP	Community Initiative Programme
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DP	Development Partnership
DPA	Development Partnership Agreement
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ECDB	European Common Database
ELWa	Education and Learning Wales
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
ESF	European Social Fund
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MPA	Mainstreaming Partnership Agreement
MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
NAP	National Action Plan
NIACE	National Institute for Adult Continuing Education
NOS	National Occupational Standards
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SBS	Small Business Service
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
SSC	Sector Skills Council
TCA	Transnational Co-operation Agreement
TNG	Thematic Network Group
TUC	Trades Union Congress
ULR	Union Learning Rep
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WDA	Welsh Development Agency
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office



# 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the findings from the Update to the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL Community Initiative 2000-2006 in UK-GB, undertaken by GHK in conjunction with the Gilfillan Partnership.

## Introduction

- 1.2 EQUAL is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and aims to develop and test innovative approaches to challenge discrimination and address inequalities in the labour market. It is based around the following principles:

- **Partnership** – being based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs) comprising organisations with shared interests working on a collaborative basis.
- **Innovation** – with new ideas being developed, trialled and mainstreamed.
- **Empowerment** – where disadvantaged and excluded groups play a role in the development and delivery of EQUAL activities.
- **Transnational co-operation** – with activities with partners in other Member States aiming to add value through the exchange and transference of ideas and experience.
- **Mainstreaming** – where the lessons from EQUAL influence policy and practice at the local, national and European levels.
- **Equal opportunities** – with the programme supporting equality and diversity as a cross-cutting principle.

- 1.3 There have been two ‘rounds’ of the programme, structured around three Actions:

- **Action 1 – Development Phase** – lasting for six months in Round 1, extended to nine months in Round 2.
- **Action 2 – Implementation Phase** – lasting for between two and three years in Round 1, and two years in Round 2.
- **Action 3 – Mainstreaming Phase** – running concurrently with Action 2 and for up to six months after its completion.

- 1.4 This study took place between April 2004 and September 2005, and followed a qualitative methodology featuring detailed case studies of DPs and their partners, telephone surveys of Round 1 and Round 2 DPs, and interviews with key programme stakeholders and policy makers receiving information from EQUAL DPs.

## Programme and Process Review

- 1.5 A series of changes were introduced to the implementation of the programme following the Mid-Term Evaluation, including:

- **For Round 1 DPs** – GB- and Wales-administered DPs were given the option to extend their Action 2/implementation phases from May to September 2005 (taken up by 45% of DPs), and to bid for additional funding to undertake additional activities.
  - **For Round 2 DPs** – changes here were more fundamental and included:
    - Following a **single contract approach** for GB DPs (covering all three Actions and with indicative funding) – to make the Action 1 to 2 transition seamless and encourage the securing of match funding and recruitment of staff, although Development Partnership Agreements (DPAs) and Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCAs) of an acceptable standard were still required for Action 2.
    - Changing the **duration of Actions 1 and 2** – with Action 1 being extended from six to nine months (with Action 1 maximum funding also being raised from £60,000 to £250,000) to allow better preparation for Round 2, and Action 2 being reduced from up to three years to two years.
    - Providing **monitoring visits to each DP during Action 1** – to provide closer support and direction to DPs in development.
- 1.6 There were 77 EQUAL DPs selected in Round 1 of the programme, of which 76 progressed into the Action 2 implementation phase. A further 100 DPs were selected in Round 2, of which 98 have progressed into Action 2. Chapter 3 sets out the distribution of these DPs by Theme and coverage (by regional/multi-regional and national). Differences can be identified between DPs in Round 1 and 2, including fewer DPs with a national focus in Round 2, and the average DP budget being greater than Round 1 (although differences exist between DPs in England, Wales and Scotland).
- 1.7 The DPs have continued to face a series of **implementation issues** during their Action 2 and 3 phases, focusing increasingly on delivery and partnership management issues rather than the set-up and developmental work identified in the Mid-Term Evaluation. These new issues included:
- **Delivery issues** – such as difficulties identifying beneficiaries, changing outreach approaches and problems associated with both under- and over-achievement.
  - **Other issues** – such as staffing changes and finding replacements, match funding issues and poor co-ordination structures.

## Partnership

- 1.8 EQUAL has **successfully brought together a diverse range of lead and wider partner organisations**, with one of the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation being that the DP partnerships were in some cases sources of innovation in themselves. As the programme has continued, the DPs have been able to demonstrate that there can be sustainable added value from the EQUAL partnership model.

- 1.9 A change was identified in terms of the **distribution of DPs by lead partner organisation between Rounds 1 and 2**. While Round 1 DPs were most frequently led by local authorities, voluntary and community sector organisations emerged as the most common lead partner type in Round 2. Many of the voluntary and community organisations had previous EQUAL experience, including as lead partners, which combined with their ability to engage with disadvantaged groups may lead to increased DP effectiveness.
- 1.10 The ‘hub and spoke’ and centralised models described in the Mid-Term Evaluation have remained through to the end of Round 1 DP’s Action 2 activities. While changes in membership have continued to take place (39% changing partners in the previous 12 months), these changes were often planned as organisations completed their roles or were introduced for specific purposes. There were also unanticipated changes in the membership of the partnership (or the level of partner engagement), often resulting from changes in staffing, funding issues and changes in the focus of DP workplans.
- 1.11 As Action 2 activities come to an end, and DPs enter their Action 3 phases, partnerships have shown a tendency to either become **more streamlined** (as partners with limited inputs leave with a core group remaining) or evolve into more **‘network’ based models** (where DPs effectively ‘extend’ in terms of partner numbers and form looser networks of organisations).

### Impacts of the Programme to Date

- 1.12 Assessing the impact of the EQUAL programme poses a series of challenges for both evaluators and practitioners, as many will only emerge over time and are inherently difficult to quantify (especially in terms of impacts on policy). In addition, most of the Round 1 DPs were still undertaking their Action 3 activities at the time of study, and so not all will have had the opportunity to communicate all their findings to their potential audiences.
- 1.13 In assessing impacts, the study followed the framework used for the EU-wide evaluation, which classified DP impacts in terms of:
- **Impacts on policy** – including influencing the formation of new policy, adopting new or changing existing measure, or by improving the effectiveness of the policy making process.
  - **Impacts on practice** – classified further into:
    - **Institutional impacts** – such as the development of new mechanisms in the training and education systems, steps to improve access to and the quality of provision, and the development of new provision.
    - **Organisational impacts** – such as the development of new organisational structures and networks, and new mechanisms within existing organisational structures.

- 1.14 Each impact ‘type’ could be classified further in terms of their sphere of influence, namely locally, regionally, nationally and transnationally.
- 1.15 Chapters 5 and 6 examine the impacts of the Round 1 DPs in detail, and show that **the majority (over 90%) of the Round 1 DPs considered that they had already had some form of impact**. A wide range of impacts were reported in terms of nature and policy focus, ranging from improving the potential for employment for people with HIV and AIDS, to influencing the formation of the Carers Act and providing briefings to the Select Committee on gender segregation and the pay gap. Across the DPs:
- 55% described having impacts on practice (institutional) and 73% on practice (organisational)
  - 46% described having impacts on policy. The majority of DPs considered that these impacts had been at the local level (62%), with similar numbers reporting regional and national impacts (38% and 35% respectively).
- 1.16 The DPs were also positive about the **likelihood of future impacts** resulting from their work, with 71% expecting additional benefits to emerge over time and as their dissemination work continued.
- 1.17 The DPs followed a number of different approaches to disseminating their work and generating mainstream effects under Action 3, most commonly through attendance and presentations at conferences, workshops and events (as part of the programme and beyond). Progress to date with dissemination across the DPs overall is encouraging, with the majority of DPs reporting they had successfully engaged with policy influencers as part of their dissemination activities (or maintained links through their involvement as active DP members). The report provides examples of policy influencers’ views on the information received from DPs and the extent to which it has been useful to them.
- 1.18 A number of barriers and challenges to achieving impact were identified, including securing and maintaining the interest of potential policy influencers and DP’s capabilities to draw together the findings from their different activities and provide convincing evidence of their effectiveness to communicate more widely.
- 1.19 The study also examined the operation of, and the issues facing, the infrastructure established to support mainstreaming, specifically the Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs). From initially being structured around the individual EQUAL themes, cross-thematic work has become more common. However, views on the effectiveness of the TNGs varied, and while fewer than one in ten DPs considered them to be an effective forum for supporting policy mainstreaming, more considered that the TNG value lay in facilitating information exchange and establishing links with other DPs.
- 1.20 Both DPs and TNG representatives considered that Round 1 of the programme had provided a range of useful lessons that could be capitalised upon in Round 2. Several suggestions were made to support this, including placing a stronger emphasis on encouraging DP-led collaborative working and building on the increased awareness of the programme across the policy community.

1.21 In addition to areas of practice and policy, the extent to which the DPs had generated impacts across the other EQUAL operational principles were also examined. In summary:

- **Innovation** - Chapter 6 provides examples of DP innovation by theme and category, with DPs most commonly reporting process-based innovations, such as the development of new methods, content and approaches to combat labour market discrimination. These most commonly related to the development of new approaches (including the DP partnerships themselves), new means of engaging and empowering beneficiaries and new forms of mentoring or coaching.
- **Empowerment** - the Round 1 DPs demonstrated a range of mechanisms for empowering beneficiary groups, with 90% of the DPs considering that they had helped empower individuals, 67% organisations and 48% groups through their activities. Approaches followed included:
  - Empowerment through **capacity building** – both through the delivery of services to individuals on a pilot basis (and leading to both hard and soft outcomes for the individuals concerned) as well as work with partners and beneficiary organisations.
  - Empowerment through **involvement in shaping and delivering activities** – around one third of DPs involved beneficiaries in the shaping and delivering project activities, which was perhaps the most effective form of empowerment.
  - Empowerment through **formal DP steering and sub-group activities** – although for a variety of reasons this featured less frequently and was considered less effective by many DPs.
  - Empowerment through the **creation of role models** – this often related to the establishment of beneficiaries as ‘mentors’ or ‘trainers’ within their communities, but which also allowed the transfer of skills and awareness at the local level.
  - Empowerment through **involvement in DP dissemination strategies** - including presenting at conference and events which both empowered the individuals concerned and provided strong evidence/credibility to make the DP’s case more strongly.
- **Equal opportunities** – three quarters of the Round 1 DPs identified successes in influencing equal opportunities policies and practices, **mainly focusing on equal opportunities practice** rather than policy. Areas of practical focus included training and audit activities, awareness raising and the empowerment of communities and groups. DPs less frequently cited influencing equal opportunities policies, and when they did the focus was mainly internal (i.e. on lead and other DP partners’)
- **Transnational impacts** – DPs’ experiences of transnational working under EQUAL varied considerably, in terms of the focus of activities (most commonly focusing on the exchange of information and experience) and the benefits

resulting from them. Many factors influenced the overall effectiveness (and so impact) of transnational collaborations, and in some cases led to frustrations and missed opportunities. However some unexpected benefits were identified, and result in (less commonly) parallel or joint development activities.

## **Continuation and Sustainability**

- 1.22 The extent to which the outcomes of the EQUAL programme (including the partnerships developed under it) are sustained is an important measure of programme success, although it remains too early to provide definitive findings in this regard.
- 1.23 It would appear that there is some evidence of positive developments, in terms of the:
- **Sustainability of EQUAL activities** – with the vast majority of DPs providing evidence that at least some of their activities will be continued beyond the life of the programme. In many cases, sustainability is already being achieved at the local and regional levels, through the continued use of products and services developed under the programme – such as new training provision, support measures and learning materials. Sustainability on a larger scale will in many cases rely on access to additional funding, as well as the DP being attuned to regional and national policy to know where the product or service developed may be most appropriate.
  - **Continuation of EQUAL partnerships and networks** – around a quarter of Round 1 DPs have firm plans to continue their partnerships in their current form, most commonly through the provision of Round 2 EQUAL or other funding. In addition, over half of the DP lead partners also described firm plans for working with new organisations they had first encountered through the programme.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the final report of the *Update to the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL Community Initiative 2000-2006 in UK-GB*. The evaluation was undertaken by GHK in conjunction with the Gilfillan Partnership on behalf of the ESF Evaluation Team, Jobseekers and Crosscutting Division, Information and Analysis Directorate.

### Overview of the EQUAL Programme

- 2.2 The EQUAL Community Initiative is a development programme aimed at challenging discrimination and tackling labour market inequality. EQUAL is funded under the European Social Fund and under the programming period 2000-2006. The programme is based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs) composed of a range of different organisations testing innovative solutions to addressing labour market inequality.

### Programme principles and themes

- 2.3 EQUAL is structured around a series of operational principles:
- **Partnership** – with DPs being established to undertake EQUAL activities, consisting of a range of different actors working collaboratively to develop integrated solutions to a given problem.
  - **Innovation** – where new ideas and approaches are trialled and evaluated for wider dissemination and mainstreaming.
  - **Empowerment** – where disadvantaged and excluded groups take a role in the development and implementation of EQUAL activities.
  - **Transnational co-operation** – where collaborative arrangements with DPs in other Member States aim to add value by sharing experience and transferring delivery lessons.
  - **Mainstreaming** – where the lessons of EQUAL influence policy at the local, national and European levels.
  - **Equal Opportunities** – where the programme supports equality and diversity as a cross-cutting principle.
- 2.4 The programme is also characterised by a **thematic approach**, ‘tackling the problems common to different types of discrimination and inequality, rather than focusing on a specific target group’<sup>1</sup>. There are nine Themes in total, eight of which are being followed in GB. In Round 1, which provides the major focus of this study, the Themes were defined as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> *EQUAL: Community Initiative Programme for Great Britain and Gibraltar 2000-2006* ESF Unit, Department for Education and Employment

- **Employability**
  - Theme A: Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all.
  - Theme B: Providing opportunities to promote potential for ethnic minorities within the world of work.
- **Entrepreneurship**
  - Theme C: Opening up the business creation process to all by providing the tools required for setting up in business and for identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in urban and rural areas.
  - Theme D: Strengthening the social economy (the third sector), in particular the services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs.
- **Adaptability**
  - Theme E: Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market.
  - Theme F: Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies.
- **Equal opportunities**
  - Theme H: Reducing gender gaps and supporting job de-segregation.
- **Asylum seekers**
  - Theme I: Providing assistance to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers.

## Programme structure

- 2.5 EQUAL is being run over the course of two sequential rounds of DP activity. There are 177 DPs in total in GB across the two programme rounds. Each round is structured around the following:
- Action 1 – Development Phase (around six months in length in Round 1, extended to nine months in Round 2)
  - Action 2 – Implementation Phase (two to three years for Round 1 and two years in Round 2)
  - Action 3 – Mainstreaming Phase (running concurrently with Action 2 and for up to six months beyond the Action 2 completion date).



## Summary Methodology

- 2.6 The over-arching aim of the EQUAL evaluation strategy is to assess the extent to which the programme has succeeded in achieving its objective of creating, testing and transferring new ways of delivering employment policies, seeking to reduce labour market discrimination and inequalities faced by disadvantaged groups.
- 2.7 The Mid-Term Evaluation of EQUAL in GB followed the development of the Round 1 DPs from the Action 1 development phase (which started in November 2001) into the early part of the Action 2 implementation phase (which began in May 2002). The Mid-Term Evaluation reported in September 2003.
- 2.8 This Study, the Update to the Mid-Term Evaluation, started in April 2004 and concluded with this report in September 2005. It therefore tracked Round 1 DP activities to the originally scheduled end of Action 2 in May 2005<sup>2</sup>. It also addressed Round 1 mainstreaming activities under Action 3, although this work is continuing in many cases up to November 2005. In addition, the study focused on the development and early implementation of the Round 2 DPs.
- 2.9 Sequentially, the methodology consisted of three stages, as follows:
- Stage 1 – Update of Round 1 DPs (April to September 2004)
  - Stage 2 – Round 2 DPs – Early Plans and Selection/Appraisal Process (October 2004 to March 2005)
  - Stage 3 – Impact and Implementation – Round 1 and 2 DPs (March to September 2005).
- 2.10 The main steps used in each stage were a combination of: in-depth case studies with DPs (including DP staff and partners, policy stakeholders, delivery agents, beneficiaries, and transnational partners) in order to provide qualitative depth, telephone surveys with the Round 1 and 2 DP populations to provide programme coverage; and stakeholder and policy follow-up to provide both a programme overview and to triangulate the value of the ‘EQUAL feed’ for a fuller understanding of impact. *Annex 4* provides a more detailed outline of the methodology.

## Report Structure

- 2.11 The main focus of this report is on the impact of the programme to date. The analysis is structured primarily around each of the EQUAL principles. It also includes an assessment of programme progress. The report is structured around the following sections:
- Chapter 3: Programme and Process Review
  - Chapter 4: **Partnership**
  - Chapter 5: Headline Impacts and the **Mainstreaming** Process

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<sup>2</sup> NB: There was a contingency introduced in GB to extend Action 2 to September 2005 (see *Chapter 3*)

- Chapter 6: **Innovation** and Thematic Impact
- Chapter 7: **Empowerment**
- Chapter 8: **Equal Opportunities**
- Chapter 9: **Transnational Co-operation**
- Chapter 10: Continuation and Sustainability
- Chapter 11: Conclusions and Recommendations

2.12 The report also includes the following annexes: Annex 1: List of Round 1 Thematic Impacts; Annex 2: Round 2 Application Process; Annex 3: Round 2 DP Policy Focus; Annex 4: Evaluation Methodology.

### **3 Programme and Process Review**

- 3.1 This section outlines the main programme developments under EQUAL in GB since the Mid-Term Evaluation, which completed in September 2003. It also provides an overview of the Round 1 and 2 DPs.
- 3.2 It goes on to address DP progress within each of the EQUAL 'Actions', before concluding with an assessment of programme support and administration. The section builds on the key process findings outlined in the Mid-Term Evaluation.
- 3.3 It is important to note that there are separate administration and support functions in each of the GB nations, meaning that DPs can be distinguished in terms of:
- Scotland DPs (i.e. DPs operating exclusively in Scotland and administered by the Scotland Support Unit)
  - Wales DPs (i.e. DPs operating exclusively in Wales and administered by the Wales Support Unit)
  - and GB DPs (DPs operating in England only, DPs operating in England and either Wales/Scotland and DPs operating GB-wide, which are administered by the GB Support Unit).
- 3.4 Note therefore that when the report describes 'GB DPs', it is referring to those DPs administered by the GB Support Unit.

#### **Programme Developments**

- 3.5 Since the Mid-Term Evaluation, the Round 1 DPs have progressed towards completion of Action 2 and started Action 3 work in earnest. Some DPs have completed Action 3. The Round 2 application and selection process has been undertaken and the selected DPs have completed Action 1.

#### **Round 1 programme developments**

- 3.6 The main programme shift for Round 1 has been the option of an extension to the implementation phase (Action 2) from May 2005 to September 2005 for DPs requiring this to complete their work programmes. Additional funding was also offered to Round 1 DPs that wished to undertake additional activities.
- 3.7 The Action 2 extension was available to DPs that could benefit from it. It was not available to DPs administered in Scotland. It appears to have been taken up by just under half (45%) of the Round 1 DPs overall. The extension has mitigated the degree of under-spend in Round 1, with other funds being put forward to Round 2. A similar transfer of under-spend occurred in Scotland without the need for an Action 2 extension.
- 3.8 Of those DPs that received extensions to finish existing activities, it was mostly due to:

- Late start of activities in Action 2
- Match funding issues
- Loss or change of partners
- Internal issues of staffing and capacity.

## Round 2 programme developments

3.9 The main programme change for Round 2 has been the reduction in length of Action 2 from three to two years. Other significant changes at GB-Level include:

- **Following a ‘single contract’ approach in GB and Scotland (not in Wales)** – DPs receive a contract covering all three Actions, and giving an indicative value of funding for Actions 1, 2 and 3. Action 2 and 3 funds are confirmed by variation letter – although DPAs and TCAs of an acceptable standard are still required at the Action 2 stage. The intention was that the transition between Actions 1, 2 and 3 would be seamless, with three year contracts helping in finding match funding and the early recruitment of staff for Actions 2 and 3.
- **Extending Action 1 to up to 9 months** – The extended Action 1 is to enable DPs to be better prepared for Action 2 (perhaps even to start earlier). January to April 2005 was the TCA window. There was also a significant increase in funding for Action 1 – from £60,000 to £250,000 to enable DPs to set up systems (e.g. IT) and recruit staff, which were key brakes on Round 1 implementation.
- **Each DP received a monitoring visit in Action 1** – This was to provide closer support and direction to the DPs in development. DPs were also required to provide a clearer work plan for their Action 1 activities.

3.10 DPs in Wales and Scotland also benefited from the extension to Action 1 and many also received monitoring visits during this period. In Scotland, monitoring visits were targeted at DPs led by organisations not involved in Round 1.

## DP Mapping

### Thematic focus

3.11 There were 177 GB DPs initially selected across the two EQUAL rounds (77 DPs in Round 1 and 100 DPs in Round 2). The vast majority of DPs progressed into the main implementation phase (76 DPs in Round 1 and 98 DPs in Round 2). Table 3.1 below shows that the thematic split of those DPs progressing to Action 2 was fairly similar across the two rounds.

3.12 It is, however, clear that where the policy agenda has shifted in the time elapsing between Rounds 1 and 2, the EQUAL focus has also shifted. In Theme A, for example, there is an even more acute focus on ex-offenders in Round 2 – in line with current discussions on

reform of the prison service/criminal justice system. Policy gaps in Round 1, such as the lack of focus on work-life balance issues under Theme F, have been addressed. There is arguably a stronger focus on specific target groups under Theme C in Round 2 (especially BME groups and young people) and on age discrimination under Theme E. A more detailed overview of the Round 2 policy focus is provided in *Annex 3*.

**Table 3.1 Thematic Distribution of Round 1 and 2 DPs Compared to CIP**

Pillar	Theme	No (and %) of Round 2 DPs	No (and %) of Round 1 DPs	CIP3
Employability	A	29 (30%)	23 (29%)	31%
	B	8 (8%)	9 (11%)	11%
Entrepreneurship	C	13 (13%)	9 (11%)	11%
	D	10 (10%)	8 (10%)	11%
Adaptability	E	15 (15%)	15 (19%)	13%
	F	12 (12%)	5 (6%)	13%
Equal Opportunities	H	7 (7%)	4 (5%)	5%
Asylum Seekers	I	4 (4%)	3 (4%)	5%
Total		98 (100%)	76 (100%)	100%

## DP coverage

- 3.13 One of the defining characteristics of an EQUAL DP is its scale. The partnership model, which has been one of the key programme innovations, operates differently depending on whether the DP has national reach or a more localised focus (as many partnerships in Theme A do, for example).
- 3.14 It has also become increasingly apparent that there are implications related to DP coverage in terms of mainstreaming lessons nationally. It has arguably been more difficult for regional and sub-regional DPs to mainstream vertically by dint of their focus on a specific locality.
- 3.15 In this context it is notable that there is greater regional/sub-regional focus in Round 2 of the programme. The main change from Round 1 has been a reduction of almost two-thirds in the number of National DPs. This undoubtedly reflects the increasing prominence of regional policy, particularly in terms of employment and social inclusion issues and has led to a greater concentration of activity under Theme A in Round 2. Again, the programme is therefore reflecting policy shifts, although there may be implications in terms of Round 2 mainstreaming. Managing the DP model across all regions was shown to be challenging in Round 1, so this shift may actually make DPs more operationally effective.
- 3.16 Three quarters of the Round 2 DPs operate within a single region or devolved administration, which is marginally higher than in Round 1 and is accounted for by an

<sup>3</sup> Less 5% of indicative Technical Assistance budget to give 100%.

increased proportion of devolved administration DPs. In Wales, for example, the number of DPs has risen from 3 to 16. However, the scale of these projects in financial terms is considerably smaller than elsewhere. The average funding of DPs in Wales (total committed funding across all Actions) is £707,762, compared with £3,295,916 in GB. The DPs in Scotland have an average £1,365,768 funding in Round 2. With the smaller DPs it will be important to ensure that they retain the uniqueness and innovative aspects of the EQUAL partnership model (in terms of joint working and scale of ambition), rather than becoming ‘single focus’ projects.

- 3.17 The proportion of single region (or sub-regional) DPs in England has actually fallen (from 53% to 46%) even though the absolute number has increased (from 40 to 46 DPs). Of those 46 DPs, 28 are focusing at the sub-regional or local level.
- 3.18 Table 3.2 below outlines the national and regional coverage of DPs under Round 2 in comparison with Round 1.

**Table 3.2 Geographical Coverage of Round 1 and 2 DPs**

DP Coverage	Rnd 1 DPs – No (and %)	Rnd 2 DPs – No (and %)
<i>Region/Sub-region (England)</i>	40 (53%)	46 (47%)
<i>Scotland Only</i>	8 (11%)	12 (12%)
<i>Wales Only</i>	3 (4%)	15 (15%)
<b>Total Single Region/Administration DPs</b>	<b>51 (67%)</b>	<b>73 (74%)</b>
<i>Multi-Regional (GB Only)</i>	9 (12%)	19 (19%)
<b>Total Multi-Regional DPs</b>	<b>9 (12%)</b>	<b>19 (19%)</b>
<i>GB National</i>	16 (21%)	6 (6%)
<b>Total GB National DPs</b>	<b>16 (21%)</b>	<b>6 (6%)</b>
<b>Total Number of DPs</b>	<b>76 (100%)</b>	<b>98 (100%)</b>

## The partnerships

- 3.19 Both rounds have been successful in attracting a diverse range of lead organisations. One key difference, however, is that while Round 1 had more DPs led by Local Authorities, Round 2 is characterised by voluntary and/or community organisations being the largest lead partner group (30% of all DPs). This is a positive message, as one aspect of the added value from EQUAL is to enable more voluntary/community organisations to develop the capacity to engage with and empower their target groups.
- 3.20 Another positive aspect is that of the 29 voluntary/community DP lead organisations, 19 have previous experience of EQUAL under Round 1. As previous experience of working under ESF is a common success factor across a range of ESF-funded programmes, this suggests that a significant proportion of the Round 2 DP leads have the opportunity to learn from their Round 1 experiences, which may convert into improved effectiveness. It

may also mean that the capacity of the programme to reach out and engage with disadvantaged target groups can be enhanced.

- 3.21 Table 3.3 below maps lead partner by type of organisation for each of the EQUAL rounds.

**Table 3.3 DP Lead Partners by Type of Organisation**

Type of Organisation	Rnd 1 No (and %)	Rnd 2 No (and %)
Voluntary/Community Organisations	14 (18%)	29 (30%)
Local Authorities	20 (26%)	18 (19%)
Higher Education	6 (8%)	11 (11%)
Private Sector	8 (11%)	10 (10%)
Further Education	6 (8%)	8 (8%)
Learning and Skills Councils	3 (4%)	6 (6%)
Business Support Agencies	6 (8%)	5 (5%)
Regional Development Agencies	3 (4%)	4 (4%)
Other	10 <sup>4</sup> (13%)	7 <sup>5</sup> (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>76 (100%)</b>	<b>98 (100%)</b>

## DP Progress

### Round 1 DPs

- 3.22 Three quarters of Round 1 DPs<sup>6</sup> (75%) either completed or will complete all activities in the Action 2 work plan. It is important also not to under-estimate the degree to which work programmes shifted over the course of Action 2 through the significant change procedure, yet this was always inherent in the EQUAL approach. As one of the Theme E DP co-ordinators noted, *‘one of the things that has really added value is being able to re-define things as we’ve progressed’*.
- 3.23 The option for extending has clearly also played a part in enabling DPs to complete their activities, but there are examples where specific DPs faced significant implementation issues earlier in Action 2, but had still managed to catch up over time. Three of the case study DPs described *‘losing up to a year’* of implementation for various organisational reasons<sup>7</sup>, yet in two of the cases the DPs set out to achieve what was planned and in the third there was only a marginal limiting of ambition.

<sup>4</sup> Round 1 ‘Other’ category includes two DPs led by careers services, and DPs led by the TUC, the Prison Service, the Refugee Council, government departments and employer representative organisations

<sup>5</sup> Round 2 ‘Other’ category includes four DPs led by the Prison Service/National Probation Service, and DPs led by the TUC, a Sector Skills Council and a local/regional partnership

<sup>6</sup> Interviewed as part of the case studies and the Round 1 DP survey

<sup>7</sup> Failure to get a management team in place at the start of Action 2; having three co-ordinators over the life of the programme; significant financial challenges emerging during Action 2 regarding eligible spend

## Action 2 completion

- 3.24 The Round 1 DPs are fairly evenly split in terms of Action 2 completion date:
- 22% of DPs finished Action 2 from June to December 2004
  - 34% of DPs finished Action 2 from January to June 2005
  - 40% of DPs finished (or are finishing) Action 2 from June to September 2005.
- 3.25 There was also a small number of DPs (3) where determining the actual end date is difficult, because the work programme finished prematurely or abruptly as a result of partner financial difficulties. These were DPs led by smaller private organisations, where the risks associated with EQUAL funding are greater. What is notable in these cases is that where a lead partner becomes insolvent during Action 2, it is difficult for other partners to continue the work programme in any realistic sense.
- 3.26 Among those DPs who will not be able to complete all activities in the work plan, the following reasons were reported:
- Dropping activities because of cost or potential duplication
  - Less engagement from partners than sought
  - Lack / withdrawal of match funding
  - Capacity issues in delivery organisations made targets unrealistic
  - Change of partners and unrealistic costing
  - Difficulties reaching targets groups (i.e. SMEs).
- 3.27 Most DPs did not feel that this would have implications for achieving their overall objectives. Where there were implications, these tended to be in terms of specific target groups being missed or a smaller scale of activity preventing a full exploration of some methods (e.g. an action planning process).
- 3.28 There were some activities which on reflection proved too ambitious for DPs. This has been a learning point, and one that was particularly relevant where DPs were, for example, trying to pilot activities across numerous regions. One of the Theme A DPs failed to achieve its anticipated target group coverage, because it decided not to include representation from specific groups within the DP structure. This was in order to prevent decision-making becoming unwieldy, but it made it difficult to attract delivery partners to execute parts of the work plan. The challenge for this DP, and for some others in Theme A, was to attempt targeted coverage of numerous discrete groups within the scope of one DP. There were concomitant challenges for many of these DPs in then drawing their sometimes distinct messages together in a coherent fashion.
- 3.29 There are also examples where Action 2 activities did not take place less as result of failure to implement, but as part of a conscious understanding of the shifting policy environment. For example, one Theme A DP was planning to produce training materials for Jobcentre Plus but felt that, given the extent of internal changes that the organisation was undergoing, this '*was not a timely exercise*'. A characteristic of many of the stronger



Round 1 DPs has been reviewing the on-going relevance and practicability of specific parts of the work programme, something that is particularly important in the context of Action 3. A message from the latter part of the Round 1 implementation cycle is the importance of avoiding ‘delivery (or indeed dissemination) for the sake of delivery’.

### Action 3 progress and completion

- 3.30 Table 3.4 below shows that the Round 1 DPs were fairly spread out in terms of when they *effectively*<sup>8</sup> started Action 3. The start date itself is only indicative. At least one DP reported an early start before Action 3 activity tailed off only to recommence towards the end of 2004. Around half of the DPs started Action 3 towards the end of 2004.
- 3.31 The Action 3 completion date is more focused, with around four out of five DPs (83%) saying that they are planning to continue up to November 2005. Given the more staggered start dates this means that Action 3 is of a varying length. It is also clear from DPs that there is significant overlap between the two Actions. There is a mainstreaming component to the Action 2 work, which was the argument used by the small number of DPs that chose not to undertake Action 3. One DP in Theme A, which had been planning to undertake Action 3, subsequently incorporated all of this work into Action 2 because of significant under-spend.
- 3.32 Overall, it is not clear that a curtailed or early end to Action 3 benefits the DP. Many of those finishing the programme relatively early (i.e. in 2004) still had ‘unfinished business’ in terms of mainstreaming their messages, but no resources to effectively support that (unless they were able to build on their work in Round 2). These DPs were typically of smaller scale anyway, so they are not a representative sample, but the lesson is that a significant period to focus exclusively on mainstreaming is essential for maximising impact. The different programme structure (i.e. completing an MPA during Action 1) and added emphasis on considering mainstreaming earlier means that this is less likely to be an issue in Round 2. However, there are indications that the extension of Action 2 activities for many of the Round 1 DPs is likely to be an added distraction from having the requisite mainstreaming focus, although it also relates to individual DP capacity and capability in this area..

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<sup>8</sup> NB: DPs were asked when activities within the MPA started in earnest, as opposed to the development of the MPA or mainstreaming work undertaken within Action 2

**Table 3.4 Action 3 Effective Start Dates**

Start date Action 3	% of DPs <sup>9</sup>
1 <sup>st</sup> August 2003 to 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2004	29%
1 <sup>st</sup> February 2004 to 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2004	8%
1 <sup>st</sup> August 2004 to 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2005	46%
Beyond 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2005	17%

### Round 1 implementation issues

3.33 The Mid-Term Evaluation suggested that early implementation issues centred around procedural aspects, such as delays in receiving clearance for Action 2, problems recruiting staff, problems setting up the partnership and delays in undertaking initial/preparatory research. As the Round 1 DPs have progressed, there are fewer issues relating to programme procedure and more relating to delivery and partnership management (see Table 3.5 below). In all, 61% of the Round 1 DPs described having some kind of implementation issue in the latter stages of Action 2. These were problematic for the DPs, but in around three out of four cases the DP either completed (or will complete) its Action 2 work programme.

**Table 3.5 Action 2 Implementation Issues**

Action 2 Implementation Issues	% of DPs
Partner-related issues (drop, late joining, Commitment, quality of delivery, speed of action, Management, contracting)	26%
Target-related issues (over-achievement, under-achievement, duplication of beneficiary count, change of outreach approach, accessing beneficiaries)	14%
Poor co-ordination structures	7%
Difficulties around the Action 2 closure report	5%
Staffing related issues (including transfer of knowledge and turnover)	5%
Match funding issue at Action 2	5%

3.34 Unsurprisingly, a far greater proportion of DPs (87%) have identified implementation issues relating to Action 3 over the concurrent period. The main areas of concern related to:

- **Organisational / technical issues:** Match funding; resource / capacity issues; partnership (keeping the momentum and maintaining engagement); managing the transition between Actions 2 and 3 (in terms of staffing or the delineation of activity).
- **Policy issues:** Attracting policy maker involvement / getting ‘buy in’; targeting policy makers clearly in the first place.

<sup>9</sup> NB: Only includes DPs undertaking Action 3 and able to answer the question (48).

- 3.35 A degree of technical or organisational implementation issues under Action 3 are inevitable given the scale and complexity of the programme. The policy issues are more challenging to address, because they tend to have required earlier action on the part of the DP.
- 3.36 While the majority of DPs comment on technical challenges to Action 3 (e.g. match funding), just under one in five mention partner engagement or policy targeting issues. This indicates that some DPs are still struggling with the mainstreaming 'concept'. Isolated comments show issues relating to: transforming findings and formulating policy points; defining the remit of dissemination; the clarity of understanding of mainstreaming; and targeting static policy areas (that are difficult to change). A small number of DPs also note challenges in engaging with employers/SMEs to mainstream their products/services.
- 3.37 One DP in Scotland referred to competition between DPs for access to the same policy audience as a barrier to achieving Action 3 objectives (especially in the context of the Scottish Executive, for example). This is, however, something that has been addressed in Round 2 in Scotland by upfront matching and partnering of DPs with potential policy customers.

### **Round 1 evaluation**

- 3.38 There was an apparent lack of clarity in Round 1 about the role and function of evaluation among many DPs. As noted in the Mid-Term Evaluation, there was a significant discrepancy in how much focus different DPs paid to evaluation. One of the Theme A DPs had an evaluation resourced at £3,000 (based around five days per year). Timing was a critical weak point, both in terms of late starting and early finishing (i.e. contracting with an external evaluator only up to the end of Action 2).
- 3.39 A key question for DPs was whether their evaluator should be independent and external or more closely engaged in the partnership. One of the Theme I DPs was disappointed in its external evaluation, feeling that the evaluator had failed to capture the complexity of the DP. With hindsight, it would have preferred to have a formal DP partner with responsibility for evaluation.
- 3.40 Even where a DP had developed tailored monitoring and evaluation tools, delivery could still remain challenging. One of the Theme A DPs developed a paper-based soft outcome tool to capture beneficiary progress. It found that take-up was patchy. The system was designed in consultation with partners and therefore not imposed on them. Those partners using it found little beneficiary resistance, but as the tool needed regular completion, some project workers were reluctant to carry out follow-up for fear of over-burdening beneficiaries. There were effectively different approaches and views about the target group within the partnership. It also shows that a tool may be developed in consultation, but that this does not in itself mean that there is 'buy in'.
- 3.41 A separate study undertaken on behalf of the ESF Division looked specifically at the self-evaluation work undertaken by the Round 1 DPs. It emphasised the significant

differences in time allocated by DPs to their evaluation activities (from five to 101+ days). There were also differences in terms of which component of the DP activities the evaluators were contracted to address. Of 43 evaluator respondents, only 22 were evaluating Action 3 activities, meaning that DP evaluation had a strong focus on process rather than impact and outcomes. The degree to which formative evaluation could be undertaken was limited by the fact that many were contracted only after Action 2 had started. Another key challenge for DP evaluators, given the nature of the programme, was developing indicators to measure impact and added value.

## **DPs involved in Rounds 1 and 2**

3.42 It is difficult to judge the exact extent of organisational commonality between the first and second rounds of EQUAL. In addition to those DPs where the core partnership (or the entire partnership) in Round 2 mirrors that of a Round 1 DP, there are partnerships where a new lead organisation is working with organisations involved in the first round and DPs where the individual co-ordinators or managers have prior experience. Taking all of these options together it seems that the vast majority of Round 2 DPs (89%) have some Round 1 expertise on which to draw. More specifically:

- Just under half of the DPs (48%) are led by organisations that fulfilled the same role in Round 1.
- In a further fifth of cases (22%) the Round 2 lead was a Round 1 partner.
- In two-thirds of cases (64%) other key Round 2 partners were also involved in Round 1.
- Similarly, 42% of lead individuals (e.g. DP co-ordinators) in Round 2 were involved in Round 1.

3.43 This continuity is encouraging because a strong message from the fieldwork (from both DPs and the support/management infrastructure) is the value of having learned lessons from Round 1. The box below highlights some of the key lessons that Round 2 DPs reported to have learned from their earlier experience with the programme.

3.44 However, the organisational overlap between Rounds 1 and 2 has caused a series of management challenges for the DPs. The main challenge relates to the critical period in which DPs have had to manage several Actions concurrently (i.e. Round 1 Actions 2 and 3; the closure of Round 2 Action 1; and Round 2 Action 2). The extension to Action 2 in the first round has increased the pressure on a significant number of DPs. It was the main reason why such an extension was not offered in Scotland, where six out of seven Round 1 partnerships were approved for Round 2.

3.45 Not all DPs have effectively managed this transition, although the main risk associated with it (a compromising of early Action 2 activity) does not seem to have been played out in practice. Instead, it has arguably diminished the focus on mainstreaming the Round 1 work. Given that there is significant variation in terms of effort and quality of activity in Action 3, it is difficult to judge the degree to which this issue is related to Round 1 and 2 overlap. There are also a number of DPs that have suffered in terms of administrative

commitments because the same individuals are carrying the workload for two DPs, although the main consequence of this is short-term delay.

- 3.46 Where a DP has been effectively managed, involvement in both rounds can increase its overall potential. Successful involvement in Round 1 arguably enables DPs to attempt larger-scale impact and innovation in Round 2. The Round 2 selection process did effectively ensure that where Round 2 work builds on that of Round 1 there is a distinct focus and potential added value. There is a case, as one Theme A DP put it, for making the *'transition between the two rounds as seamless as possible'*. This DP has progressed to a Round 2 work programme which is *'a lot larger and focusing on the provision of services for (the target group) – changing the whole infrastructure, which will be more challenging'*.

**Lessons taken forward to Round 2 by those with Round 1 experience**

- 1) Maintaining clear communication flow across the DP and clarity of roles
- 2) Getting staff in place as soon as possible / getting started as soon as possible
- 3) Clear leadership coming from the centre
- 4) A more strategic approach to the DP work and more careful selection of projects
- 5) Maintaining engagement, clear deadlines and tight planning
- 6) Good exchange of knowledge and more cooperation to avoid a set of separate projects emerging
- 7) Be more realistic and less ambitious – focus the effort – be more targeted
- 8) Reinforcing mainstreaming aspects throughout the life of the project
- 9) Ownership across the DP to get cohesion

**Round 2 progress**

- 3.47 There is a greater impetus on Round 2 DPs to make progress towards implementation, given that they have a shorter Action 2. In comparative terms, the Round 2 DPs are indeed further ahead than their Round 1 counterparts were at the equivalent stage. The key indicator is the 'sign off' of the DPA. This extended significantly into the implementation phase for many Round 1 partnerships. Up to July 2005 (the start of Action 2), 70% of DPs participating in the Round 2 survey had achieved DPA 'sign off'. A couple of DPs completed their DPAs as early as March. This progress would partly be expected given the extended Action 1, but it remains a positive sign in terms of moving to implementation.

- 3.48 The single contract approach meant that almost all DPs progressed (or will progress) from Action 1 in to Action 2 (as was the case in Round 1). In Wales, however, where the single contract approach has not been followed, two DPs will not progress to Action 2.
- 3.49 The picture in terms of TCA ‘sign off’ is similar to Round 1. The majority of DPs (78%) had achieved this by July 2005, with a further group (12%) anticipating that it would be complete in August 2005. All of the GB DPs found transnational partners with relatively little difficulty and many have joined up with DPs from the new Member States.
- 3.50 Another area in which Round 2 has made significant progress in comparison with Round 1 is in terms of signing off the MPA. Up to July 2005, 12% of DPs had completed their Action 3 plan. While this is welcome comparative progress, it may have been expected that this figure would be higher given the extended Action 1.

### **Activities during Action 1**

- 3.51 There is more evidence of tangible activity Action 1 in Round 2. Much of the focus, as in Round 1, was on building the DP infrastructure and completing the required documentation (the DPA, TCA and in some cases the MPA). A small number of DPs took the opportunity to refine their policy focus.
- 3.52 As would be expected, the majority of Round 2 DPs have used Action 1 to augment or refine their initial partnership. Nearly two-thirds (64%) reported new members joining during Action 1, while half (51%) reported partners leaving (for similar reasons as identified in Round 1). There has clearly been a ‘replacement effect’ as four out of five DPs losing partners also gained partners. Some examples indicate how bringing in (or attempting to bring in) new partners has added an additional dimension during the development phase:
- A Theme A DP joined up with an umbrella organisation, thereby gaining a pool of 35 members to tap in through one single partner.
  - A handful of DPs indicate that new partners will provide access to beneficiaries and thereby act as the outreach route.
  - A few DPs indicate that new policy-level partners to be DP partners will take on a strategic / advisory / quality control role.
  - One DP is still waiting to see whether 12 local authorities will join after project approval, indicating that additional partners are not always finalised at this stage.
- 3.53 Although many DPs are building on previous work, there has not been widespread engagement in research or stakeholder consultation in Action 1. There are also only a few examples of DPs involving potential mainstreaming partners in Action 1.
- 3.54 However, there is more evidence of empowerment and beneficiary involvement (apparent in 40% of DPs) in Action 1 than in Round 1. Significantly, much of this involved active consultation with beneficiaries to inform and shape implementation. There were other

interesting examples of DPs that had taken advantage of Action 1 to set the conditions for successful implementation, such as the following:

- A DP operating within the prison service context has used part of Action 1 to set up a network with other similar DPs working on the same target groups to broker an agreement on policy targets, so as not to overload policy recipients. This example demonstrates how some DPs have already started to consider mainstreaming.
- Another DP used Action 1 to set up a new company that will allow the DP to provide funded support, advice and guidance to new businesses. The example is potentially important as it shows how Action 1 can be used to put in place the support structures for effective implementation.

3.55 Where DPs are involved in both programme rounds, there has been the potential to use the Round 2 development phase to reinforce the case for action on the basis of earlier EQUAL work. One Theme A DP involved an HE sector partner to undertake research in Action 1 to produce clear messages and a convincing evidence base. Importantly, this research clearly makes use of the DP's Round 1 work to add momentum. One of the lessons from this DP's experience to date was the importance of not *'saving up the research to the end – this time we'll hit people with key findings as we go along'* (DP manager).

### Early implementation

3.56 The final stage of fieldwork took place as the DPs were in transition between Actions 1 and 2 (around July 2005). Only one in ten DPs described themselves as being in active delivery, although many more were on the cusp. Much of the early activity mirrored that in Round 1, focusing on agreeing operational timetables, research frameworks, monitoring systems and contractual agreements.

3.57 There are some areas of concern in terms of the likelihood of DPs being able to progress quickly to implementation. Only just under half of the DPs (46%) have their full complement of staff in place. This is likely to delay the move to effective implementation. It is expected to be a short-term issue, as over three quarters of DPs (78%) expect to have all staff in place by the end of September 2005. This still means that a group of DPs will not be in a position to effectively deliver three months into the shorter Round 2 Action 2 phase. A significant minority of DPs have experienced difficulties recruiting staff with the right skills.

3.58 Less than half (41%) of the DPs have an evaluator in place, although of those that have, the vast majority have already started their work. Given that having an evaluation strategy in place was considered a key factor in being able to evidence impact and capture lessons in Round 1, it is important that the other DPs quickly follow suit.

## **Programme Administration and Support**

- 3.59 The vast majority of Round 1 DPs provided positive feedback about the support they received, which was generally felt to be professional and responsive. The only issue that remained from earlier stages of the evaluation related to queries that could not be answered by the GB Support Unit and had to be referred to DWP. Positive feedback was also received about support in Scotland and Wales.
- 3.60 The Round 2 DPs valued the opportunity to have a support visit during Action 1, which was felt to provide an invaluable chance to discuss progress and raise outstanding questions face-to-face. The visits clearly also served a broader purpose, as an early opportunity for DPs to reflect on their plans. It was felt to be useful to have an objective perspective on what to prioritise, as well as having a dialogue about the progress being made (e.g. interesting achievements to date). The only issue was in the small number of cases where the timing of the visit was out-of-synch, being either too early or too late. This is inevitable given the scale of the programme and the nature of differential DP progress.
- 3.61 The administrative requirements of the programme continue to be highlighted as a challenge by numerous EQUAL actors. In operational terms, most of the Round 1 DPs had reached a point where they could manage administration and monitoring by the latter stages of Action 2. It was, however, raised frequently as an issue when DPs were reflecting on the programme overall.
- 3.62 Over time, the main organisational challenge has related to match funding. Just under half of the Round 1 DPs (46%) report having had significant match funding issues. For around a quarter of DPs this related to difficulties finding match funding for Action 3 specifically. A similar proportion reported issues in the management of match funding, including quantifying staff time, beneficiary claims and managing a range of small matches. The other main challenge, which is unavoidable in a programme such as EQUAL, was where match funding was lost or withdrawn, typically because a partner pulled out or, in some cases, experienced financial difficulties. It is clear that challenges in achieving match funding for Action 2 compounded the pressures on DPs related to match funding for Action 3.
- 3.63 Another financial lesson from the Round 1 DPs has been a realisation, for some, of the need to anticipate under spend in budget earlier so that funds can be effectively redirected within the context of the partnership. The degree to which this was an issue varied immensely and reflected the solidity and quality of the project management within individual DPs.



## 4 Partnership

- 4.1 This section looks in more detail at the EQUAL partnerships, how they have continued to develop and the role partnership has played in successful implementation. Throughout the Mid-Term and Update evaluations the core added value from the EQUAL partnership model has been emphasised. It was one of the main signs of programme innovation.
- 4.2 It is worth reiterating that the way in which EQUAL has enabled different types of organisations to work jointly in a wholly new way has been a paradigm shift for the vast majority of DPs. Even where the DP outcomes are less ambitious or less successful than might have been anticipated up front, DPs have been able to show that there is sustainable added value attached to this sort of partnership working.

### Partnership Changes

- 4.3 In organisational terms the Round 1 partnerships have reached a point where their modes of operation are fairly fixed, according to size and scale. The DP models identified in the Mid-Term Evaluation (on a continuum between centralised and ‘hub and spoke’ DPs) have remained in the latter course of Action 2, although it is clear that for some of the larger DPs, individual ‘spokes’ (or project activities) may have ended prematurely.

### Partnership solidity

- 4.4 The Round 1 partnerships have continued to evolve organically. They have, for the most part, remained very solid, although the critical juncture for many will be what happens at the end of Action 3. It is, however, increasingly clear that partner fluidity continues up to the programme end point. A significant proportion (39%) of the Round 1 DPs reported further changes to the partnership in the previous 12 months. In over half of these cases the changes were planned.
- 4.5 There were, however, partnership changes relating to some organisations ‘losing interest’ in the work of the DP. This is partly linked to the shift in DP focus in Action 3. In the main, however, partnership changes continue to relate to staffing (i.e. an individual within a partner organisation moving roles), funding issues and shifts in DP work plan focus.

### Further evolution of the partnership model

- 4.6 Looking beyond the natural ‘ebb and flow’ of partnerships over time, it is possible to see the partnership model evolving in various ways:
- DPs becoming more streamlined as the focus on mainstreaming increases
  - DPs evolving from a ‘partnership’ to a wider ‘network of actors’.

## Streamlined DPs

- 4.7 The interesting point to note operationally is that as DPs have shifted towards Action 3, partnerships (in the formal sense) have tended to become more streamlined, with the delivery partners that often made up a significant proportion of a number of DPs being either less involved or not directly involved at all. This is not, however, to say that the partnerships have disintegrated. A small proportion of DPs look to have little prospect of sustainable partnership, but most can make a cogent case for how they will continue to work jointly to some degree. The sustainability of the EQUAL partnerships is discussed in more depth in Chapter 10.

## Partnerships evolving into networks

- 4.8 Another potential model for partnership evolution is for them to become larger (but looser) networks. One of the Theme C DPs has seen its partnership grow as it has evolved into a network of organisations with no formal partnership meetings (reducing the partner commitment in terms of time and resources), but with all partners ‘signing up’ to the DP vision. This is supported by bilateral working on specific research and policy projects (much like the typical ‘hub and spoke’ DPs) with sub-groups established to take forward specific DP products and service offers.
- 4.9 This almost ‘virtual partnership’ has enabled the DP to grow to having over 55 ‘partners’. The DP lead partner felt that this was ultimately too large and unwieldy, which is in tune with the findings from other large DPs, but it has proved beneficial in *‘establishing a common voice for lobbying and policy work’*. It also provides an interesting conceptualisation of the partnership model comprising:
- Development partners – i.e. those contributing to the design of products and services and to research projects
  - Communication partners – those primarily concerned with getting the DP messages across to the wider sector and policy stakeholder community
  - Agents – partners that deliver DP products and services into the market place (e.g. FE colleges).
- 4.10 The idea that DPs would be composed of organisations playing different roles (e.g. development; research; delivery; management; policy; lobbying etc) was anticipated by many DPs upfront, but it is only at this point in Round 1 that it becomes clear quite how this can add value. The model of partnerships growing as they evolve (perhaps more informally) is mirrored by some other DPs. One of the Theme B partnerships has grown from five initial partners to around 30, with a good spread across the public, voluntary/community and practitioner standpoints.

## Partnership factors influencing impact

- 4.11 It is important not to be overly-deterministic about which approaches to DP partnership and organisation were most effective. Some DPs with similar characteristics performed

very differently for either individual (i.e. the individuals running the DP) or contextual factors (i.e. the nature of the innovation being tested; policy relevance; the location / infrastructure within which it was being tested).

4.12 However, the following partnership factors and characteristics emerged as being important in determining the likelihood of the DP achieving success:

- Partnership factors supporting successful impact:
  - Ensuring that ESF programme requirements do not detract from delivery
  - The DP being able to speak as a ‘common voice’ on a key policy area
- Partnership factors mitigating successful impact:
  - DP size too small to effectively fulfil the EQUAL principles
  - Contracting out delivery.

### **Partnership factors supporting successful impact**

#### **Ensuring that ESF programme requirements do not detract from delivery**

4.13 There is clearly a balance that each DP needs to strike between ensuring that partners understand and conform to the requirements of ESF, while ensuring that this imperative does not take overall precedence in the implementation phase. One lead partner noted that *‘EQUAL was sold to partners through its capacity building potential, so that offering good support (to partners) has been essential for delivering on that’*.

4.14 The Mid-Term evaluation noted the importance of having strong lead from the centre (i.e. the lead partner and DP co-ordinators) on ensuring compliance with monitoring and a series of innovative ways in which this had been addressed within the EQUAL partnership model (e.g. simplifying forms, ensuring that a DP management committee regularly visits partners, ensuring each partner has a named contact dealing with administration/monitoring, developing an online project management system for partners).

4.15 As the first round DPs have progressed, it has become increasingly clear that not only do robust systems support a focus on implementation, but that they also enable DPs to better harvest the messages and lessons from their work.

4.16 Although in its early stages, the key point for Round 2 is that there is greater potential to use the partnership model efficiently to enable a greater focus on adding value (i.e. increased focus on implementation) and building capacity. This is likely as there is:

- an increased recognition of the importance of internal DP support from the start (partly a function of the programme maturing and partly because specific organisations have been able to carry forward Round 1 learning)

- wider involvement of the voluntary and community sector in delivering Round 2 (which is a programme risk, but, assuming the lessons from Round 1 have been picked up by DPs, actually serves to enhance the potential added value in terms of capacity building).

### **The DP speaking with a ‘common ‘voice’**

- 4.17 The ability for the DP partners to coalesce around a common theme is both a precursor to achieving impact and a successful capacity building outcome in itself. Once again, it is related to the DP partners being able to articulate a specific aspect of labour market inequality (a ‘unique selling point’) with which they are concerned. This has not so far been possible for all DPs, particularly some partnerships in Theme A with very local focus. However, for many other DPs there has been the potential to use EQUAL as a platform to magnify the voices of individual organisations. Both the Positive Futures DP and the Retail Enterprise Network are good examples of how this can work. The former has brought together voluntary organisations working with people living with HIV/Aids, while the latter works with retail SMEs. Both have used EQUAL as a springboard to effectively develop new networks for influencing policy.

### **Partnership factors mitigating successful impact**

#### **Minimum DP size**

- 4.18 It has clearly been more difficult for the smaller DPs (in terms of resources not number of partners) to effectively fulfil the EQUAL principles. Many of these DPs understandably have less scope – but also seem to have less ambition. As such, it is more difficult to see clear examples of innovation, a clear mainstreaming focus or a focus on empowerment or equal opportunities. One Theme F DP, for example, seems to have limited its own scope simply to influencing its own partners. This reinforces the value of the larger partnerships EQUAL has funded, even accounting their increased organisational complexity.

### **Contracting-out delivery**

- 4.19 One DP approach noted in previous evaluation reports was to internally tender for part of the delivery / implementation work programme. It was noted that this raised questions in terms of maintaining the coherence of both the partnership model and the ‘EQUAL ethos’ – as it could be argued that this approach tended towards less joined-up implementation and smaller, less innovative activity. For some of the larger DPs, there was a sense that this enabled the DP to involve a larger number of voluntary and community organisations, thereby helping to support empowerment and capacity building.
- 4.20 Even where there was a coherent approach at DP level, contracting out significant parts of Action 2 carried huge risk. One DP, in Theme E, put out a call for tenders to test a particular lifelong learning approach and subsequently found its delivery significantly hampered by receiving few tenders. The DP’s own evaluation suggested that those

organisations unwilling to tender cited: a lack of budget; a timescale that was too tight; and an unrealistic scope of the project. The result was that most of the pilots being run failed to test a core aspect of the work. In essence, it is possible to make the case that the DP's approach was 'over-ambitious' in terms of its innovation (if, indeed, that is possible within the context of EQUAL). Certainly, contracting out the testing of particularly innovative approaches (where the delivery organisation is likely to require explicit terms of reference) is less suitable than the main partnership model that EQUAL has followed.

#### **Characteristics of an Effective Voluntary / Community-led DP**

The evaluation has highlighted a series of common principles that support successful partnership, notably having clear policy focus and being able to crystallise how the DP will add value. There are, however, a series of characteristics that are particularly pertinent for those partnerships predominated by smaller voluntary and community sector organisations, where the issues are sometimes unique. Among the characteristics identified are:

- having a clear innovative idea that can be simply articulated
- ensuring a strong partnership of like-minded organisations
- having clearly articulated objectives from the start
- ensuring that partners are fully cognisant of the nature of EQUAL and what differentiates it from other ESF programmes (partners exposure to transnational working can aid this)
- undertaking risk analysis upfront, as large-scale programmes put additional pressure on small organisations (workload and cash flow)
- engaging an evaluator early on and ensure their work will offer critical challenge to the partnership and work plan.



## 5 Headline Impacts and the Mainstreaming Process

- 5.1 This section summarises the main programme impacts to date as well as the potential for future impact. It also addresses the mainstreaming process within EQUAL, looking in more detail at Action 3 activities, dissemination and mainstreaming outcomes (i.e. what has happened to the EQUAL messages that have been disseminated to policy makers). It also looks at the programme mainstreaming infrastructure (the TNGs). Chapter 6 then goes on to look in more detail at impact and innovation across each of the themes.

### Headline Impacts

#### Analysing EQUAL impact

- 5.2 An assessment of EQUAL programme impact is challenging for a number of reasons:
- **Round 1 work continues:** Not only were a majority of Round 1 DPs still undertaking Action 3 activity as the Update Evaluation was being completed, but the programme extension meant that a significant number were still engaged in Action 2 activity.
  - **The potential for a ‘Round 2 multiplier effect’:** There are indications that much of the ultimate programme impact will relate to the Round 2 DPs (because EQUAL is more established, it has a clearer profile, there is widespread programme experience). A far truer measure of programme impact should therefore emerge once Round 2 has moved into active implementation.
  - **The nature of likely impact:** The programme at its most distinctive and sophisticated is addressing fundamental forms of labour market inequality. The nature of these impacts can only really be measured (in substantive terms) in the medium- and long-term. Even then, it is characteristic that EQUAL DPs are often working with others to achieve change and innovation. Therefore defining the precise EQUAL contribution to impact is a complex formula.
  - **Programme objectives:** EQUAL, as a demonstration programme, is engaged with testing innovative approaches rather than being focused on delivery. The failure of any DP to successfully execute a pilot or activity is not therefore a measure of programme failure. The inherent nature of the programme (focusing on experimentation and innovation) can be at the expense of measurable, quantifiable delivery success. Paradoxically, this lack of ‘hard evidence’ can also make the ultimate programme objective of mainstreaming more challenging.
- 5.3 While the Round 1 DPs are still completing their work and, as noted above, it is difficult to quantify impact even at this stage, it is possible to build a picture about the likely

mainstreaming potential of Round 1. Using the EU EQUAL Evaluation conception, impacts can be distinguished in terms of:

- **Policy impact:** formation of new policy; adoption of new/change in existing measures; improvements to the policy making process
- **Practice impact:**
  - Institutional – new mechanisms in training/education system to improve access and quality, new provision
  - Organisational – new organisational structures and networks, new mechanisms in existing organisations

5.4 In analytical terms, because of the points noted above, we have also distinguished between ‘actual’ and ‘potential’ impact. It is also true that impact occurs at different levels (e.g. locally, regionally, nationally, transnationally).

### **Round 1 Impact**

5.5 The likely overall impact of Round 1 can possibly best be characterised in terms of a small proportion of the DPs producing outcomes that are true innovations corresponding to the prevailing policy priorities that will be (or have already) been mainstreamed. The majority of DPs are likely to achieve small-scale or piecemeal impact, a lot of which will relate to partner organisations.

5.6 However, the variety of impacts is potentially considerable, occurring on multiple levels and in various forms. Examples of significant policy and institutional impact where EQUAL has played a critical role include<sup>10</sup>:

- **New mechanisms to influence:** A JIVE DP (Theme H) consortium won the DTI contract to act as the national resource centre for Women In Science Engineering and Technology. It has given their work under EQUAL more national prominence than would otherwise have been the case and has helped the process of dissemination. For example, they have been briefing ministers and have reported at the Trade and Industry Select Committee on gender segregation and the pay gap.
- **Workplace rights:** The input that the ACE DP (Theme A) had on the formation of the Carer’s Act, which extended the right to request flexible working, means that every local authority has to provide an assessment of carers’ needs and provide services to carers, significantly supporting their employment potential.
- **Capacity building and empowerment:** The Positive Futures DP (Theme A) has shown that a partnership based around small, voluntary and community sector organisations can have policy influence if it is positioned at the forefront of employment policy developments (in this case, the increasing employment potential of people living with HIV). The DP has ‘added weight’ to this debate

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<sup>10</sup> This is a sample of example impacts



and contributed to the push to include recognition of HIV / AIDS as a disability in the context of the new Disability and Discrimination Act. Some of the DPs work is evidence of greater willingness to bring voluntary and community organisations into the mainstream welfare to work agenda.

- **Access to employment:** Building London, Creating Futures DP (Theme E) developed a workplace co-ordinator scheme in the construction sector in which EQUAL funding supported the employment of mentors in companies. A key success of the scheme has been the high level of private sector buy-in. Three major developers have chosen to retain and fund workplace coordinators on their sites. As one private developer delivering the scheme commented *'it's a good idea that is being effectively delivered in partnership with the private sector. It's not seen as a government-led initiative which is a refreshing change for us and because workplace coordinators are part of our organisation, the scheme is taken seriously... it's our reputation on the line'*. At least one London borough has firm plans in place to allocate 'Section 106' monies<sup>11</sup> towards supporting the scheme's continuance. Substantial RDA and ESF has already been secured for Jobcentre Plus clients to receive training through the programme.
- **Access to learning:** The BOWL DP (Theme E) has used Union Learning Reps (ULRs) as an effective means to enable disadvantaged groups in employment to receive learning. ULRs provide outreach to disengaged learners, increasing the employability of workers, matching providers directly to individual needs. A series of sectoral pilots has led to new workplace agreements being signed that establish the ULR brokering function (e.g. 21 workplace learning agreements achieved in the retail sector, including national agreements with major retailers and the supply chain).
- **Technology and infrastructure:** New technology can empower individuals and support access to employment and development opportunities. The Mobile Learning Initiative (MOLI) was part of the Work-Life Adaptability Partnership (WAP) DP (Theme F) that promoted the introduction of broadband technology across urban and rural Scotland by helping to achieve the requisite number of signatories for installation. Referenced in the Scottish parliament, the initiative has led to 90% of Scotland currently having broadband access, which is expected to rise to 100% by the end of 2005.

5.7 These are important illustrative examples, showing the breadth and potential of the programme. However, the true picture of impact is more diffuse. Table 5.1 shows that almost all of the Round 1 DPs (90%) could identify areas in which they had already had an 'impact'. However, it should be noted that many of these impacts are small-scale and that there is also a tendency to exaggerate impact and the EQUAL DPs' part in it.

5.8 To date there has been far greater impact on practice than policy. Table 5.2 shows that the majority of DPs have impacted at a local level, although there is felt to be potential

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<sup>11</sup> raised from private developers through planning approvals

for more vertical mainstreaming over time. Annex 1 provides an overview of impact to date across each of the thematic areas.

**Table 5.1 Type of Round 1 DP Impacts**

	% of DPs reporting impact to date	% of DPs reporting future potential impact
Institutional	55%	45%
Organisational	73%	23%
Policy	46%	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>71%</b>

**Table 5.2 Level of Round 1 Impacts**

	% of DPs reporting impact to date	% of DPs reporting future potential impact
Local	62%	30%
Regional	38%	32%
National	35%	46%
European	3%	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>65%</b>

### Likely future impacts

- 5.9 The nature of EQUAL impact is such that the full value of the DP work in Round 1 is unlikely to be evident until long after the DPs have completed their activities. Only then will it be possible to get a clear sense of what the lasting programme legacy has been. As noted in Table 5.1 above, just under three quarters of the DPs anticipate future impact. What is not clear is the mechanism by which this will be achieved.
- 5.10 There is some early evidence from those DPs completing their Action 2 and 3 work in 2004 that once the DP infrastructure ends, the ‘mainstreaming push’ also ends. That is not, however, a representative sample and certainly in some cases, it follows that those completing their work early are typically DPs with smaller-scale ambitions.
- 5.11 In terms of the majority of DPs, there is at least the anticipation that practice impacts may evolve from the organisational to the institutional level (through wider take-up usually).
- 5.12 Interestingly, there are some fairly solid ambitions in terms of future policy impacts also, including:
- Hoping to feed lessons into Committee paper / Acts / strategy provisions / local government strategies / forthcoming Green Papers
  - Feeding lessons into the new Equality Commissions
  - Imminent new policy at regional level (e.g. through the RDAs) that should build on DP findings.

## **Barriers to achieving impact**

- 5.13 There is a disparateness between the Round 1 DPs. A significant proportion have treated the programme as a series of ‘projects’ and have not been able to fully embrace the programme ethos. Consequently, key messages have not coalesced, which has in turn contributed to a lack of awareness among policy makers and compounded difficulties in policy engagement (and, arguably, too many individual DPs making approaches without credibility).
- 5.14 There are a significant number of DPs that describe attendance at events or the dissemination of materials to policy as mainstreaming impacts. There are other areas in which DPs claim partial credit for shifts in the wider ‘policy ether’ that are difficult to square with the DP input. This is a complicated area because even the most powerful examples of Round 1 policy impact are often the result of the DP working in tandem with others on the policy agenda. Some of the described impacts are simply unambitious or unhelpfully vague (e.g. claiming an unsubstantiated ‘better awareness’ of a policy issue).
- 5.15 The difficulty for the programme has been that two key messages recur from DPs and stakeholders in terms of maximising the mainstreaming potential:
- Some DP organisations lack the capacity for mainstreaming policy engagement (e.g. they cannot see their work in the wider context; or they begin with very limited mainstreaming ambitions).
  - There is a need at programme level for an individual or organisation to draw the various EQUAL strands together and set out the EQUAL vision and ‘offer’.
- 5.16 The former challenge really lies with individual DPs. One positive message is that the learning from Round 1 in terms of having a policy focus seems to have permeated to the partnerships. The more structural challenge is where DPs, typically because of having a localised focus, lack the ambition for wider policy engagement. This is more difficult to address and could be a more significant issue in Round 2 given the shift in DP make-up between Rounds 1 and 2.
- 5.17 In terms of the second challenge, the Round 1 experience has shown that there is a limit to what can be achieved by agents external to the DPs (e.g. the TNGs; the support infrastructure) in acting as a conduit for programme messages. The situation of the TNGs is discussed more fully below, but there is a sense that they were set up to achieve something that was almost impossible given the limited programme profile initially and the limits to what can be achieved through meetings and strategies alone. Again, it is clear that the value of a structure such as the TNGs is dependent on each DP having the strategic focus to capitalise on it. Paradoxically, those Round 1 DPs with that potential were some of the most ardent critics of the TNGs – largely because they did not require the basic policy introduction offered.

## The Mainstreaming Process

- 5.18 Over time it has become clear that DPs are attempting to mainstream quite distinct activities, approaches and ideas. Those that have been most successful have arguably been those with ambitious policy potential (and the experience / credibility to follow through on that). There have also been some locally tested approaches, such as the mentoring programme trialled by the Building London, Creating Futures DP, that have been shown to work within a region and taken off as a result.
- 5.19 Unsurprisingly, it has proven more difficult to mainstream the more piecemeal intervention of many DPs. Partly this is because what the DPs were working on either had a very targeted ambition or was not ultimately particularly innovative (i.e. innovative on a scale that would have made wider mainstreaming a realistic prospect). These DPs typically have a strong practice or delivery focus.
- 5.20 However, it is important not to over-play the distinction between policy and practice focus in terms of the potential for mainstreaming. There are a couple of examples of DPs in the Adaptability themes that have produced (or are close to having produced) some high-quality, genuinely innovative tools that should reasonably find a wide application. However, it remains unclear where these DPs will achieve their mainstreaming potential, because the focus has largely been on developing these tools (in conjunction with employers and beneficiaries) rather than considering what the mainstreaming and sustainability strategy should be. In one of the cases, the DP failed to measure how effective the tool was in practice by not monitoring take-up.

## Round 1 Action 3 activities

- 5.21 The activities undertaken in Action 3 follow a fairly generic formula, typically based around conferences, seminars and presentations. In addition to attending and running events, numerous DPs are producing documentary evidence of their work, including user guides, publications, toolkits and website material.
- 5.22 There are examples of high-quality dissemination materials that effectively draw together the DP lessons. One of the Theme B DPs has produced an eye-catching booklet and CD ROM illustrating all the work undertaken, beneficiary testimonies and impact on the EQUAL principles of transnational work, empowerment, and equality / diversity. It is an effective dissemination tool because it provides content and substance to illustrate the DP's innovation and empowerment ethos in a simple and effective way. It also draws together a series of discrete interventions into a coherent partnership summation. This is something that many DPs have struggled to do. Policy partners / beneficiaries agreed on the value of the document which *'hits the mark'* and *'provides clear evidence of the DP's work'*. The use of beneficiary testimonies in dissemination materials has been harnessed powerfully by a number of DPs.
- 5.23 Another component to Action 3 activity is based around embedding the DP's work, typically within a region or sub-region. This encompasses both the cementing of EQUAL-inspired partnerships and practical capacity-building activities (e.g. train the

trainer). Looking at these activities it is possible to see how the distinction between Actions 2 and 3 can become blurred.

- 5.24 Table 5.3 below gives an indicative overview of where the Round 1 DPs said that they were focusing Action 3 efforts. The activities themselves do not give the fullest sense of the process. They provide the basis for dissemination, but do not in themselves explain how DPs are using these events and materials to support mainstreaming. Only 16% of DPs explicitly made reference to engaging policy makers at targeted meetings and lobbying activities.
- 5.25 On the other hand, some DPs show interesting policy maker engagement. Individual examples include:
- Delegation to Ministers and individual engagement with MPs.
  - Submission on specific policy to government.
  - Involvement of a lead partner in an All-Party Parliamentary Group feeding back results from Action 2.
  - Lead partner sitting on Sector Skills Council strategy group feeding into the Sector Skills Agreement process.

**Table 5.3 Action 3 Activities**

Type of Action 3 activities	% of DPs
<i><b>Communication / event based activities</b></i>	
<i>Conferences</i>	62%
<i>Workshops / seminars, showcasing</i>	35%
<i>Using ICT / media (websites, magazines, newsletters, leaflets, media, TV)</i>	30%
<i>Presentations</i>	20%
<i>Sharing good practice, awareness raising</i>	17%
<i><b>Product based activities</b></i>	
<i>Producing user guides, manuals, case studies</i>	17%
<i>Various publications</i>	16%
<i>Producing evaluation reports, assessing approaches and methodologies</i>	16%
<i>Undertaking further research</i>	14%
<i>Producing Toolkits and web/IT tools</i>	13%
<i><b>Action based activities</b></i>	
<i>Networking, building/cementing local/regional/thematic partnerships</i>	23%
<i>Train the trainer, mentoring, individual and organisational capacity building</i>	9%

### Policy involvement in mainstreaming

- 5.26 The Mid-Term Evaluation indicated that most DPs made some early in-roads into engaging with policy makers, although in many cases this was limited to passive

awareness raising. As the programme has progressed, the relevance and practicability of these policy links has become more pertinent. Just under three quarters (70%) of Round 1 DPs claim to have engaged with policy stakeholders as part of their mainstreaming activities. In terms of the spread of organisations, Table 5.4 shows that this partly mirrors the composition of key DP partners with the added prevalence of government departments and agencies and MPs, MEPs and MSPs. Some DPs have engaged with a variety of agencies, although interestingly these tend to fall within the same overall category (engaging Jobcentre Plus and the LSC, for example).

- 5.27 The main mode of engagement is active outreach to the policy community, although a small proportion of DPs either had policy influencers as active DP members (16%) or as observers within the DP structure, for example through the steering group (6%). Having the policy influencer as a formal partner seems to have been the more successful approach.
- 5.28 Again, some examples show that DPs in devolved administrations benefit from a certain ‘proximity’ to their policy influencers, where greater contribution of policy influencers is apparent. DPs having actively engaged with relevant government departments throughout the programme (more effectively by having them as partners) are more likely to have better partnership working at the stage of mainstreaming and dissemination. The Scottish context is illuminating, wherein those DPs that engaged with the Scottish Executive early on in the programme were far more likely to receive tangible mainstreaming support in the form of Action 3 match funding. Table 5.5 gives an overview of the nature of the policy contribution to mainstreaming.

**Table 5.4 Policy Influencers Engaged by Round 1 DPs**

<b>Policy influencers</b>	<b>DPs (n=69)</b>
<i>Government Departments and their Regional Agencies</i>	17
<i>Business Support Agencies</i>	7
<i>Scottish Executive / Welsh Assembly</i>	6
<i>MPs / MEPs / MSPs</i>	5
<i>Local Authorities</i>	4
<i>Regional Development Agencies</i>	4
<i>National Charities</i>	2
<i>Regional Partnerships</i>	2
<i>Sector Skills Councils</i>	2
<i>Trade Unions</i>	1
<i>Chamber of Commerce</i>	1

**Table 5.5 Policy Contribution to DP Mainstreaming**

<b>Policy influencers contribution</b>	<b>DPs (n=69)</b>
<i>Active Involvement</i>	
<i>Engaging DP in the context of integrating DP lessons in aspects of policy</i>	9
<i>Active support to DP efforts of lobbying, dissemination, mainstreaming</i>	8
<i>Active dialogue in advance of receiving DP dissemination</i>	6
<i>Provider of match funding</i>	7
<i>Continued involvement in shaping activities, content, delivery</i>	3
<i>Giving profile to dissemination events</i>	2
<i>Passive Involvement</i>	
<i>Recipient of dissemination activities only</i>	6
<i>No defined contribution</i>	10

### Feedback from policy recipients on DP messages

- 5.29 In order to fully appreciate the value of the mainstreaming feed from the Round 1 DPs, it is important to reflect on how policy recipients characterise the EQUAL ‘results’, how relevant they are to policy and what the outcome of DP dissemination has been (and is likely to be in the future).
- 5.30 As part of the final fieldwork stage, in addition to making contact with policy recipients for the 27 case studies, follow-up was undertaken with a cross-thematic sample of a further 20 policy makers and practice recipients identified in the Round 1 DP survey. The breakdown of interviewees was as follows: national government department (4 interviewees); government agency (6); local arm of government agency (1); local authority (3); RDA (3); regional government (2); FE college (1). The interviewees included 14 representatives based in England, five based in Scotland and one based in Wales.
- 5.31 The method of exchange by which these policy recipients received the mainstreaming feed was primarily through:
- Documentation (16 out of 20 interviewees)
  - Presentation / meeting (10)
  - Steering group attendance (8)
  - Events / conference (5)
  - Transnational visits (2).
- 5.32 The vast majority of interviewees felt that the quality of information received was good (17 out of 20) and that the information was relevant to the recipient (18 out of 20). While the information was relevant in broad policy terms, the direct relevance was less clear in a number of cases. Only one recipient thought that the feed was of poor quality.

Interestingly, two interviewees could not recall the DP's dissemination activities. This highlights the problem of passive dissemination, through which the production of materials is equated to having an impact.

- 5.33 As a result of the lack of direct policy relevance, much of the mainstreaming feed has only had a limited impact to date. Tables 5.6 and 5.7 outline in more detail how some of the policy recipients responded to the DP lessons. This is only an indicative sample of the breadth of EQUAL impact, but it gives an effective sense of the variable scale of impact. Interestingly, a number of the recipients were actual DP partners, which shows a degree of 'internal mainstreaming'. By association it highlights the difficulties of mainstreaming outside of the DP, although there are examples of how individuals and organisations were drawn into close working with DPs over time.
- 5.34 Unsurprisingly much of impact remains potential at this point. Where there had been an organisational impact this tends to have been internally (i.e. within a partner organisation). Much of the remaining potential relates to institutional impact – and there are several examples with potentially wide-ranging implications.

**Table 5.6 Policy Recipient Reflections on EQUAL Policy Contribution**

DP	Policy Impact
Theme D	Recipient is a DP partner working for a national agency that has committed significant Action 3 funding. The DP's timing was very pertinent. It had a significant input into a national strategy, including the creation of new organisational structures and networks (although there was slight over-emphasis on practical detail rather than strategic objectives).
Theme A	National government recipient lobbied extensively by DP lead partner, which was a very effective representative for the sector and helped to shape the provisions within new legislation to support a community sector. Note that the recipient did not see the contribution as being that of EQUAL or a DP, but that of the lead partner.
Theme H	National government recipient felt that the DP's research had added to the policy knowledge on the subject. Work by a key DP partner influenced a new action plan being taken forward nationally.



**Table 5.7 Policy Recipient Reflections on EQUAL Practice Contribution**

Practice Impact
<b>Institutional Impacts</b>
<b>Theme E:</b> A new qualification developed by the DP (focusing on enterprise) which includes soft and business skills was timely for the relevant qualifications authority (also a DP partner), which had been looking at ways to respond to the employability and entrepreneurship agenda. This has been mainstreamed through schools and colleges, although its success will be monitored over time. The respondent selectively engaged with the DP's wide portfolio, although new links with other public agencies through the DP have had spin-off benefits.
<b>Theme A (contribution to impact):</b> The DP lead informally influenced a government office policy recipient in terms of its parallel thinking on a new body for refugees and asylum seekers within the region. The main influence was in terms of advice on relevant funding streams (capacity building).
<b>Theme E (potential impact):</b> The DP provided its RDA policy recipient with powerful range of information and good practice on addressing social exclusion and improving workforce development at sector level. The DP's model has influenced employers in the region and there are current discussions with three local authorities to sustain the model and the possibility of significant RDA funding as well.
<b>Theme H (potential impact):</b> An example of a DP being successfully engaged with policy, this local LSC respondent became actively involved towards the end of Action 2. The LSC has match funded Action 3 and influenced project development and the design of training resources. The value for the LSC has been the development of products (diversity training resources) based around a solid evidence base, making it straightforward to 'sell' the product to the LSC nationally. The DP's work has also been flagged up as an example of good practice in the EOC's investigation of gender segregation in the apprenticeship programme.
<b>Theme E (potential impact):</b> National government recipient of DP dissemination materials (which were 'easy to understand, upbeat, inspirational and good quality') felt that the DP's approach to community regeneration and cohesion by tapping into the skills of older people was both 'simple' and 'innovative'. It has yet to be mainstreamed more widely but the local project has (on the back of the EQUAL work) received additional funding to further develop the approach.
<b>Theme B (potential impact):</b> Local authority recipient whose colleagues have been leading the DP and therefore had a lot of on-going informal dialogue. It is too early to tell what the mainstreaming influence will be. A good practice sharing information portal on recruitment, employment and equal opportunities was had widespread take-up locally. Impact is yet to move beyond local delivery, although the local authority is in discussion with the relevant national authorities about mainstreaming the DP's business support model more widely.
<b>Theme C (potential impact):</b> RDA policy recipient became involved with the DP following a project launch and has since been impressed by the evidence and marketing materials produced by the DP. The recipient is acting as conduit for DP messages to the RDA more widely. An imminent review of business start-up policy (drawing on the DP's outreach approaches) means that there may be future institutional or policy impact.
<b>Organisational Impact</b>
<b>Theme F:</b> A small-scale practice-focused beneficiary within an FE college (DP partner), able to show how the DP's work has enabled the college to diversify its IT offer and sustain a new outreach model to increase take-up of college provision in rural areas.
<b>Theme E:</b> Practice recipient is a resettlement manager benefiting from DP's inter-agency

protocol to share information about (ex-) offenders. The DP's work was very timely in policy terms, coinciding with reports on the poor reintegration of ex-offenders and the create of NOMS. It has led to changes in prison policy in terms of: a new employment strategy for offenders, improved and advice and guidance, a shift in staff engagement with offenders and their families, changes in how other organisations (e.g. prisons and local authorities) are engaged (through individual resettlement teams), and raising some of the systems barriers to information exchange.

**Theme C:** Local authority recipient (working alongside DP lead partner within the same organisation) supported the development of capacity on social enterprise and a more thorough strand of enterprise support activities. The creation of a new umbrella organisation out of the work of the DP will impact on the authority's delivery of community-based business advice and job brokerage. It will also feed into a bid to the Treasury for LEGI (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative) funding.

### **Barriers to achieving policy impact**

- 5.38 Within a demonstration programme such as EQUAL it would not be expected that all DP policy messages will have the anticipated impact or indeed an immediate impact. The most common reason given by policy customers for not actively using the DP material they had received was its lack of direct relevance to their current priorities (i.e. the timing was wrong).
- 5.39 In some cases, the barrier of timing is directly related to the DP attempting to achieve something 'new' and, as such, a function of an innovative programme. For example, an RDA policy recipient felt that one DP's work on a specific skills area is relevant ('moving in the right direction'), but wider buy-in is required before it can influence regional policy. It is hoped that a subsequent project that the RDA is involved with will be able to draw on the lessons in future.
- 5.40 In other cases, inappropriate timing or a lack of direct policy relevance was related to the DP failing to make early policy links and keep updated with current policy developments. For example, a recipient in a government department felt that one DP's work was not applicable in the context of the development of a major new policy. The approach to working with a beneficiary group tested by the DP did not provide the integration of information that the new national system required.
- 5.41 Where policy recipients could not recall the DP's activities, the lesson was once again a need for early engagement. There were also comments relating to the intrinsic difficulty in mainstreaming from a delivery-based project to wider policy. One policy customer described that he would have been more likely to engage if invited for a meeting and involved in inputting policy priorities to the DP at an earlier stage ('communication about test-bed approaches that aren't part of the mainstream need to be very slick in order to register, as the odds are stacked against them').

### **Thematic Networking Groups**

- 5.42 One of the programme innovations in support of DP networking, dissemination and mainstreaming has been the use of Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs) to bring DPs

together with policy representatives. These have undoubtedly helped to put the mainstreaming focus at the centre of the programme, although it has been an operationally and strategically ambitious undertaking.

- 5.43 Each TNG is chaired by a policy expert operating in the relevant thematic fields. One of the roles of the TNGs in Round 1 was helping to co-ordinate the development of the Thematic Mainstreaming Plans as part of the Action 3 planning process.
- 5.44 The TNGs were initially structured around each of the EQUAL themes although, over time, there has been a shift towards holding cross-thematic events addressing either a key policy development (such as Skills for Life) or the transversal EQUAL principles.

### Lessons from the Round 1 TNGs

- 5.45 Numerous lessons have been learned during Round 1 in terms of how a TNG-type structure should best work. It is clear that many DPs were confused about what the TNG objectives were. The TNGs were valued by DPs as a platform for exchange and an opportunity to link up with other DPs, yet the overall response from DPs were negative. Only 8% of Round 1 partnerships found the TNGs to be a helpful or very helpful forum<sup>12</sup>. This was mirrored across all of the EQUAL themes.
- 5.46 There are two clear points from the Round 1 TNG experience:
- There was an issue in terms of DP expectations as to what the TNGs would be and what they could achieve. It took a lot of time to shift from a mindset in which DPs were simply 'TNG customers' arriving at meetings in which a panoply of policy representatives would be lined up to pull out DP learning, to the conception that the DPs were TNG members that could actively contribute to the success of the forum. When asked to elaborate on why the TNGs had been unsuccessful, there were common responses in terms of a lack of widespread policy involvement and confusion around the focus of early TNG meetings. This has clearly coloured DP perceptions of the TNGs and relates, once again, to a lack of clarity about their role and purpose.
  - The second and more fundamental point is in terms of: *what can a forum such as the TNG realistically achieve?* The idea, inherent in some DP comments, that it should have been a mainstreaming panacea goes against the prevailing programme experience. It is a weakness that some key policy audiences have not engaged with the TNG – but this is not a reflection on the TNG as a model, rather the challenges that EQUAL has faced in terms of getting the attention of policy makers with limited time and resources. In practice, Round 1 shows that there is value in a forum that can signpost DPs in terms of where their policy messages might best be positioned. This lack of strategic thinking early on was evident in numerous Round 1 DPs and, arguably, this should be the ambition of the TNG.

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<sup>12</sup> Answering four or five on a five-point scale where 1=no help at all and 5 = very helpful

- 5.47 There were numerous references made to the value added by the TNG Chairs in some themes, and as has been noted in previous evaluation reports, that role is pivotal. Conversely, a strong TNG lead has in some cases been synonymous with providing a policy focus that made the forum seem less relevant. There were also examples of DPs which simply did not share the policy focus of their compatriots and found TNG meetings less relevant as a result. The other TNG weakness was where the TNG Chair changed (e.g. in Themes B and H), which was felt to detract from the focus of the work.

### **Focusing Thematic Networking**

- 5.48 There is reason to believe that the TNGs could add greater value in Round 2. The move towards cross thematic events, albeit on a less regular basis than previous TNG meetings has been broadly welcomed. Although looser in configuration, these events have enabled DPs from across thematic areas and rounds to share practice and operational lessons together with giving TNG Chairs the chance pitch policy messages to a wider DP audience. Particular importance has been placed on the opportunity to flag up where and when DPs can make a timely feed into policy cycles and to hone in on the need for Round 2 DPs to make early provision for mainstreaming.
- 5.49 Moving thematic events beyond a debating ground for the administrative aspects of the programme has been a challenge. Yet there are indications of a renewed focus on using TNGs for mainstreaming purposes. The less formal TNG structure is allowing different models of joint working specific to individual themes to emerge. It is clear that a larger number of TNG Chairs now play a forward facing and more formative role in steering thematic working and it is expected that these efforts will be enhanced by the additional resource of 'thematic experts' to work alongside Chairs. At this stage, the emphasis is clearly on 'getting it right' with Round 2 DPs, however as the examples in box show, positively, the range of planned activity spans both EQUAL rounds.

#### **Focusing Thematic Working - recent and planned thematic activity**

**Adaptability Conference (September 2005)** – The event will bring DPs from Round 1 and 2 together with policy representatives from across central, regional and local government. The conference has been initiated by the Chair of Theme F in partnership with several Round 1 DPs and will be hosted by Manchester University. The event intends to provide a platform for Round 1 DPs to showcase their activity and outcomes and give Round 2 DPs early exposure to key policy audiences.

**EU Presidency Events** – TNG Chairs of Themes H (DTI's Women and Equality Unit) and F (UFI / Learndirect) have plans to link EQUAL DPs into Presidency Events being hosted by their own organisations.

**Mobilising additional resource for joint thematic working** – Theme D hosts, the DTI's Social Enterprise Unit, are funding the Social Enterprise Coalition to enhance support for mainstreaming to DPs from within the theme.

**Utilising Thematic Experts** – Although TNG Chairs in the main are still exploring how best to utilise this additional resource, early work in several themes has already commenced with Thematic Experts contracted to produce good practice guides detailing the experience of Round 1 DPs in Themes D and F.

**Mapping DP Activity Against Mainstream Policy and Research Initiatives** – This has been identified as an important task by organisations that are newly hosting EQUAL thematic Chairmanship and where the responsibility has shifted to new individuals. Such activity has already commenced by the Chair of Theme B.

- 5.50 It is encouraging to find a renewed commitment and enthusiasm for thematic working articulated in concrete plans. A number of key factors emerged as having contributed to this. It is apparent that Chairs now feel more comfortable with the programme and clearer about their potential contribution and the benefits that can be gained from providing a steer to an EU programme operating GB wide. A key development is the increasing synergy between EQUAL's objectives, the direction of national policy and timing of policy cycles. This is particularly the case is policy relating to the skills agenda, education and employment and benefits reform. Consequently, EQUAL is increasingly recognised as an asset to the mainstream that crucially provides a fully-funded test-bed for innovative measures that, if proven to work, can deliver mainstream policy objectives and re-orientate mainstream delivery.
- 5.51 Several Chairs also commented on the value of their organisational involvement in EQUAL as DP partners, and the linkages this provides into key delivery organisations within the voluntary and community sector, for example. There is also evidence of awareness and involvement with EQUAL widening beyond the role played by individual Chairs. ABSSU (Chairing Theme E) continues to provide a strong example of this, however there are now more examples of organisations adopting a support function for individual DPs and signposting DPs and policy colleagues to each other where potential complementarity of work agendas exist.

### Prospects for Mainstreaming through the TNGs

- 5.52 Although the programme conceptually has a strong identity, it was apparent from interviews with TNG Chairs that Round 1 DPs in certain thematic areas have not successfully differentiated their activity from that delivered by the mainstream. An interesting proposition put forward is that in some policy areas, the mainstream has 'caught up' with the innovation being trialled and tested under EQUAL. However, even taking this into account, there was a view that DPs overall could be doing more to fully exploit the flexibility afforded by EQUAL to, as one TNG Chair put it: *'try something different that could offer a challenge to policy direction'*. Having said this, Chairs also suggested that there have been some striking examples of innovation that have succeeded in generating ideas and activity that otherwise would not have taken place. This has however, been limited to the work undertaken by a small number of memorable DPs that have *'raised their head above the precipice'* and been noted by policy makers across themes.

- 5.53 The corollary to this is that mainstreaming is largely perceived as one of the weaker elements of Round 1. TNG Chairs commonly held the view that innovation and demonstrated tangible impact have remained localised as many DPs gave insufficient consideration to their mainstreaming audiences at an early stage and planned activity to affect their engagement.
- 5.54 The situation facing Round 1 DPs was arguably more challenging than that currently being encountered by Round 2 DPs as they were required to ‘path find’ and forge relationships in policy areas where ‘strategic fit’ was less certain than is now the case. As one TNG Chair succinctly pointed out, ‘it was clear that DPs had valuable policy ideas, but many didn’t know how to get these into the policy development chain’.
- 5.55 TNG Chairs were fairly upbeat about the mainstreaming prospects for Round 2 DPs, which were described as a ‘high calibre’ group. There is evidence of greater integration between EQUAL and the mainstream in a number of areas. Underpinning this is the fact that the focus of intended policy intervention is clear in core policy areas that are pertinent to EQUAL. Consequently, Chairs have been in a stronger position to point out to DPs at an early stage, areas of potential synergy with their own streams of work, for example, around PSA targets (in occupational segregation and closing the employment gap for BME businesses and individuals).
- 5.56 Round 2 DPs are clearly ‘striking a cord’ with policy makers leading thematic areas, however this also presents a challenge, as TNG Chairs, along with other policy audiences will be looking for credible evidence of tested innovation that can tangibly enhance mainstream provision and therefore support the attainment of targets. Positively, early impressions suggest that lessons have been learnt, particularly amongst organisations continuing their involvement with EQUAL from Round 1. While there are indications that organisations new to EQUAL are also benefiting, Round 2 DPs are required to keep focused on embedding operational processes and partnership working quickly, in order that attention can turn towards making a credible case for mainstreaming at an early stage. TNG Chairs are clearly willing to act as DP champions, however as one Chair commented *‘DP’s mustn’t presume that their project warrants government attention, they must be able say why and show why it is such a good idea’*.

## 6 Innovation & Thematic Impact

- 6.1 This section looks in more detail at the impact of the Round 1 DPs by focusing on areas of programme innovation, the nature of that innovation and the level at which DPs have been able to innovate (locally, regionally, nationally, transnationally). It goes on to address innovation within each thematic field.

### Main Areas of Innovation

- 6.2 Following the conceptual distinction used throughout the Mid-Term and Update Evaluations, it is possible to look at innovation in terms of the categories outlined in Table 6.1 below (process, context and goal innovation). The table also shows that process innovation has continued to be the most prevalent EQUAL outcome. An overview of the main ‘types’ of innovation illustrates that the methods, approaches and tools developed are not in themselves, particularly new, but that their precise application adds value.
- 6.3 There was fairly clear consensus from Round 1 actors that irrespective of whether the outcomes matched the potential of the programme, it had provided a unique opportunity to work in a different way. As a partner in one of the Theme A DPs put it, *‘serendipitous things were allowed to happen under EQUAL’*. This was not exclusively positive for those engaged in delivering the programme. A DP manager in Theme E reported that *‘although EQUAL supports innovative approaches – the experience of trying something innovative which didn’t work, while trying to deliver the required outputs and keep the domestic and transnational partnerships together has been stressful’*.

**Table 6.1 Main Type of Innovation**

Type of Innovation	% of DPs <sup>13</sup>
Process-oriented innovation (e.g new methods, content, approaches)	54%
Context-orientated innovation (e.g new networks, frameworks for dissemination)	26%
Goal-orientated innovation (e.g. new approaches to working with target groups, new qualifications, opening up new areas of employment)	28%

### Process innovation

- 6.4 Among the process innovations are ‘methods’ such as new research methods (especially in relation to a specific target group), new brokerage services in the workplace (to facilitate learning or increase diversity) and new services (e.g. accessible skills audit services for SMEs). The innovation is found in the degree of tailoring or the specificity of what is offered.

<sup>13</sup> NB: A small number of DPs had a main innovation that cut across types of innovation (typically being both process and goal-oriented).

- 6.5 There are also examples of new ‘content’ in the form of tailored training modules (to suit the needs of a specific target group). There are numerous Round 1 examples that seem to have some evidence of success in terms of up-skilling, beneficiary satisfaction or as an engagement / progression route. The difficulty with this type of content innovation is not so much mainstreaming it at an organisational level (typically an educational or training institution has been actively involved in development and delivery), but to achieve an institutional impact. In terms of innovation, much of the new content shares common principles in terms of accessibility and support.
- 6.6 There is also a preponderance of new content in the form of toolkits and interactive materials (in most cases CD ROMs). Here the innovation lies either in the scale of dissemination of best practices and case studies, or in the product being particularly ‘fit for purpose’ for the use across a sector. The idea of an innovative ‘approach’ is fairly prevalent in EQUAL, largely because it covers the actual Development Partnership. *Diversity* of partners is the key innovative finding here.

### **Context innovation**

- 6.7 Much of the context-innovation relates to the formation of new networks, many of which will be sustained beyond the end of the programme. In some cases, these innovations were ‘unplanned’, which highlights the evolutionary nature of EQUAL. Examples of context-orientated innovation from Round 1 includes:
- Supporting and reinforcing social enterprise support networks, for which one DP is developing a public sector procurement framework and the streamlining of services.
  - Innovating within existing networks in terms of involving new actors or widening the network’s remit.
  - The development of an individually tailored and sustainable local childcare fund, which is innovative in the way it provides support and funding.
  - The creation of an All Party Lobbying Group in Westminster.

### **Goal-orientated innovation**

- 6.8 The goal-orientated innovation in Round 1 tended to relate to new ways of working with specific target groups. Much of the activity is support-related, for example, producing work placement packs, a new flexible model of ‘holistic support’, or support for re-engagement. It is not always clear, however, how sustainable these new approaches are – even though many can produce qualitative evidence of success. The most effective innovations are where the new approach has been effectively embedded (e.g. the development of interagency protocols to the provision of employment-related training).
- 6.9 A small number of DPs have managed to open new areas of employment to specific target groups, including:



- The provision of an interface between providers and employers: getting employers to look differently at employment for the specific target group, thereby potentially contributing to opening new areas of employment for individuals.
- A training programme with very strong industry support to get young people into creative industries.
- The creation of the first social franchise in the UK by encouraging social entrepreneurs to replicate their businesses through franchising.

### **Unanticipated innovation**

- 6.10 The degree to which the innovations outlined above were planned as opposed to ‘spin off’ benefits is difficult to judge. However, one of the areas where the programme – given its whole architecture and ethos – has added value is in providing a framework for what might be termed ‘unanticipated innovation’.
- 6.11 Some innovation appears at the interface between a particular method or approach and a given target group. What the EQUAL focus in particular seems to have added is the ability to focus on disadvantaged groups in a sophisticated manner, recognising that beneficiary groups are not experiencing inequality in silos – but that there may be a complex interplay of factors that need to be addressed.
- 6.12 For example, the Positive Futures DP has provided innovative support for people living with HIV (providing an employment support offer that is genuinely new). Yet it has also been able to provide a targeted offer for groups where the incidence of HIV is growing and groups that face multiple barriers to labour market entry (e.g. refugee communities, some minority ethnic groups). In a completely different context, the BOWL DP in Theme E found that, in trialling its ULR model, its retail sector pilot innovated out of local circumstance to develop the concept of a Mobile ULR, which magnifies the reach of each ‘Rep’ and could be replicated in other sectors.

### **Thematic Innovation**

- 6.13 It is possible to look in more depth at each of the EQUAL themes in order to understand how innovation and impact has related to the various policy fields. There are many cross-thematic similarities in how the DPs sought to innovate, reflecting the over-arching programme objectives and principles. Yet there is also a degree of thematic distinctiveness.

### **Theme A**

- 6.14 Theme A covers a wide-range of DP activity and numerous policy areas. A crude distinction can be made between those partnerships with a focus on employability within a given region or locality and those focusing on a specific target group.

- 6.15 The former group has quite a distinctive feel within the context of EQUAL because of the level of the targeted intervention and the fact that numerous, smaller partners are often involved. It is more difficult for these DPs to be innovative because of the small-scale targeted nature of many of the actions. They tend to be generic and, in some cases, come close to replicating mainstream delivery. They are, however, potentially very empowering DPs and where an effective partnership model has been followed, there are numerous examples of increased capacity among the voluntary and community sectors.
- 6.16 Previous evaluation reports have noted that Theme A showcases much of EQUAL's partnership added value. As such, the main long-term impact of those DPs with a local/regional focus is to cement new ways of working with disadvantaged communities.
- 6.17 One of the partnerships that has completed its activities gives an early sense of how this may work in practice: 'it's only now that we're seeing the main impact from our work and that's down to the whole dynamic of the partnership. The contacts established through EQUAL have meant that further downstream, smaller voluntary and community organisations have access to funding'. The key factors are that the partnership is cross-sectoral and remains mobilised as a body. Another DP described the EQUAL legacy in terms of 'regional partnerships being challenged for the first time to properly address equality issues'.
- 6.18 The Theme A DPs focusing on specific target groups have concrete potential for innovation and mainstreaming. They are more likely than many of the other DPs across the programme to be able to articulate key policy messages. Round 1 has seen EQUAL-inspired innovation in relation to groups as diverse as carers, ex offenders and people living with HIV and AIDS. For example, the Learning for Living on-line learning resource for carers developed by the ACE DP represents the first qualification in the EU for un-paid carers and on-line learning for this target group. It is designed to support personal development and draw up realistic plans for further education, training or employment. All the material developed was done so specifically with the needs of the target group in mind and the on-line learning content was based on carers' real life experiences and based around flexible delivery. What sets this intervention apart, though, is the way its future mainstreaming is supported by new legislation. There already 30 approved centres set up, but the Carer's Act has made on-going funding through local authorities a more realistic proposition.

### **Theme B**

- 6.19 The focus of Theme B has been the provision of various types of support to BME communities. Given the range groups targeted by the DPs it is difficult to talk in general terms about innovation. A number of the partnerships have developed frameworks and methods to support entry to employment (e.g. for refugees, or for BME communities within a sub-region), although it is not clear whether these will have any sustainable impact.
- 6.20 There has also been a core of activity around the creative industries and with an entrepreneurship focus, some which has produced impressive results in terms of

individual outcomes. The Working Broadband DP, for example, has made headway in how major television companies produce diverse programming (engaging the talents of BME communities). The DP also made use of broadband technology to provide a platform for BME groups wanting to enter the media. The ici Partnership was working in a similar area, but from a different standpoint. It has developed industry standard panels for the provision of business support, learning and marketing of cultural and creative products created by BME artists.

## **Theme C**

- 6.21 On one level, the impact of the Theme C DPs can be seen in their success in supporting business creation. One DP has trained 4,500 mentors and 5,000 clients. Another DP had an outreach programme that led to almost 2,500 women entering self-employment. This is not, however, to say that the DPs have simply focused on delivery. Much of the primary focus has been on the provision of support, advice and training.
- 6.22 There has been a lot of work (although some of it fairly small-scale) to target business creation support at specific groups. New qualifications/standards relating to business and mentoring and entrepreneurship have been developed by a couple of DPs, with varying degrees of success (although accreditation for a new business mentoring qualification is one anticipated outcome).
- 6.23 There has been innovation around the promotion of social franchising. There has also been capacity building to support small businesses through targeted, practical networks. The Retail Review Panel developed by the Retail Enterprise Network DP, for example, aims to encourage small retailers to adopt processes that will support business viability, adopt strong recruitment practices and invest in skills development of their staff. It has adopted a process from industry which places consultation activities at strategic points in the product development cycle. Local retailers are brought together to advise on product development and pilot products.

## **Theme D**

- 6.24 Theme D has mainly focused on developing and testing different social entrepreneurship models. The DPs have been well-placed in policy terms in relation to the DTI's social enterprise strategy.
- 6.25 The real innovation is in the degree to which DP tools, networks and approaches help to cement the conditions for social enterprise to thrive. In that sense, like Theme C, there is also has a distinctive delivery focus, in terms of the sometimes significant number of new social enterprises resulting from DP activities.
- 6.26 In practical terms, there has been material produced to support social enterprises (e.g. procurement guides) and there have been innovations in terms of the following:
- Development of good practice models on support for social enterprises
  - New local work experience placements with community development training

- New national occupational standard for social enterprise managers and advisers
  - Testing a catalyst entrepreneur model in social enterprise.
- 6.27 There have also been achievements in relation to new networks. For example, the Strengthening the Scottish Social Economy DP developed a ‘social economy zone’ model that has facilitated the building of a new partnership of agencies working together. It includes the promotion of community businesses through a public sector procurement plan and the streamlining of services to the sector. The initiative has been taken up by the Scottish Executive and mainstreamed through the Future Builders Fund.
- 6.28 The way in which some of the DPs are tied in with the RDAs in particular has meant that there is also a likely degree of sustainability in relation to the networks developed (see Chapter 10). However, at least one DP has struggled with the concept of where social enterprise fits as a meaningful employment offer (especially for those in disadvantaged groups). The sense that social enterprise can be a tool to support regeneration is not contested, but whether within the context of EQUAL it can offer enough sustainable employment (without considerable risk) is questioned.

### **Theme E**

- 6.29 In Theme E there is innovation around training provision and employer engagement. One of the main areas of emphasis has been on the provision of support (e.g. through mentoring and coaching). These approaches, while not necessarily innovative, have the advantage of a potential snowball effect in that the outcome is often an increased training capacity within an organisation or area. There has also been a lot of related work in developing new courses, progression routes and, in some cases, accreditation.
- 6.30 The added value here tends to be in the targeted nature of the provision, typically in terms of addressing basic skills issues. In this field there is mainstreaming potential through an alignment with national policy (in terms of Skills for Life or, more specifically, the Level 2 entitlement) and through bodies such as the LSC. There are examples of intensive training courses for unemployed people that combine personal development and job search activities, as well as approaches that use bite size modules to support progression. Again, the innovation is largely in the approach used and that way in which it is tailored to the needs of specific groups.
- 6.31 Engaging employers has also been a key component of Theme E. There is little in the way of actual innovation, although there has been a degree of success in the short-term:
- Two DPs have successfully engaged with SMEs through the provision of tailored services to improve learning and training or strategic thinking around recruitment and retention, often where capacity is lacking at SME level.
  - Three DPs report on building brokerage services at workplace level to improve investment in equal opportunities and learning opportunities.
- 6.32 It is questionable how sustainable much of the employer-related work will be (e.g. tools and approaches to support equal opportunities). Two notable exceptions are the Building

London, Creating Futures DP, where the mentoring approach was developed around strong employer need in the construction sector and the BOWL DP, which uses trade union ULRs as the driver to support workplace learning.

## **Theme F**

- 6.33 It is difficult to talk in overall terms about innovation in Theme F, given the distinctiveness of each of the five Round 1 DPs. Some of the partnerships have, however, tended to benefit from having a targeted focus that was not necessarily well-represented across the other DPs (e.g. on people with disabilities or rural areas).
- 6.34 Much of the main innovation has been technology-related. There are some powerful messages from these DPs in terms of using technology to access services, training and ultimately employment. The Portland Partnership, for example, has developed tools (in the form of the virtual learning environment and switch technology) to support people with severe disabilities that could have potentially wide-ranging application and impact. The innovation is in the simplicity (and therefore accessibility) afforded by technology. The WAP DP in Scotland has also used the virtual learning environment approach effectively to create a 'community of learning' among people working in the geriatric care sector.
- 6.35 The challenge for some of the ICT-based innovation, particularly where it takes the form of products and tools, is to translate it into substantive strategic impact. This also applies to DPs in other themes with a similar ICT-focus. The lead time for technological development can, in practice, distract from the need to focus on how the output will be mainstreamed. A particularly diverse skill set is also required by these DPs in order to ensure that the innovation has its maximum impact.

## **Theme H**

- 6.36 The challenge for innovation under Theme H is that the DPs are tackling systemically entrenched inequalities in terms of gender pay and occupational segregation. The value added by EQUAL to a crowded policy field has been in the form of DPs that encompassed well-connected partnerships (e.g. JIVE or Close the Gap) or had a strong, coherent employer focus (e.g. Fuirich Transport).
- 6.37 In terms of achievements, the following examples emerge:
- Building a hub infrastructure (four regional and one sectoral) to promote integrated action on gender desegregation by linking in with national and regional policy makers, through advisory groups and teams of trainers/change agents operating in each hub, all but one of which have proven sustainable.
  - Developing a high-quality training resource; building an IT training tool (through the transnational partnership).
  - Developing a information guides on training and equal pay.

- 6.38 Much of the reported achievement has been around raising awareness. It is likely that some of this work will have little long-term impact (and certainly no substantive impact that could be traced back to the input of an EQUAL DP). However, the innovation is evident in approaches that have the potential to actively make a difference. The tools and training (e.g. an apprenticeship module) developed by Fuirich Transport, for example, have benefited from strong employer involvement in the partnership. Conversely, on more of a policy level there are examples where a DP's work has fed into national policy (Close The Gap through having the Scottish EOC and Scottish Executive Equalities Unit on board as partners from Action 1). Potentially wide-ranging impact is also evident in the JIVE DP's establishment (through DTI) of the UK National Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology.

## Theme I

- 6.39 Theme I has been one of the most innovative Round 1 themes. Main of the activities are fairly generic (ESOL training, skills audits, work shadowing), but innovative in the context of the asylum seeker target group. Uniquely, the DPs operating in this theme have had to work within a policy framework wherein the target group is not eligible for employment. In theory, this puts the DPs at odds with the overall programme objectives, although paradoxically, it has meant that DPs were typically working against a backdrop of limited existing provision and extensive support needs. Some fairly simple tools, such as a welcome handbook for refugees and asylum seekers, take on a more innovative quality precisely because they can be made more 'fit for purpose' within the EQUAL development and implementation cycle. The composition of at least two of the three partnerships was diverse enough to provide real potential for added value.
- 6.40 What has been particularly innovative about the Theme I work is the way in which has provided opportunities for the target group to develop and integrate, while critically also making a *real* contribution. The volunteering work through a Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) in Glasgow, developed by ATLAS, not only benefited participants, but also the CAB service in terms of:
- Increased capacity within the CAB (up by 30% since the introduction of the training programme)
  - Increased number of languages spoken by volunteers and better service provision for BME communities
  - Reliable volunteers (with retention rates for volunteer asylum seekers higher than that of the host community).
- 6.41 The project has subsequently received funding from the Scottish Executive to continue and be rolled-out to other CAB offices. Elsewhere there have been extensive barriers to mainstreaming the Theme I innovations (usually related to the wider policy climate), but approaches such as ASSET UK's work of skills audits has long-term potential as well as a degree of existing take up (nationally and transnationally).

## 7 Empowerment

- 7.1 This section looks at the focus of DP empowerment activities. Empowerment has arguably been the most difficult principle for DPs to deliver on. It was an area where the Round 1 DPs struggled initially, particularly in terms of a lack of target group involvement in shaping DP activities during Action 1. Over time, however, significant progress has been made, to the extent that almost all DPs could identify a clear empowerment focus. As Action 2 has progressed there have been greater, more practical ways in which effective empowerment could be undertaken.

### Focus of Round 1 DP Empowerment Activities

- 7.2 Part of the complexity relating to empowerment is that it can occur on a variety of levels, all of which are readily apparent across the Round 1 DPs. EQUAL can enable individuals to be empowered through their involvement with the DP. It can enable entire groups to be empowered through the introduction and mainstreaming of approaches that support accessibility. It can also enable organisations to be empowered through their involvement or engagement with a DP, typically through capacity building for smaller voluntary and community organisations.
- 7.3 There is a high degree of overlap in terms of each level of empowerment (i.e. individuals or groups), with DPs often having multiple impacts. Overall, the following breakdown is apparent across the Round 1 partnerships:
- Empowerment of individuals (90% of DPs)
  - Empowerment of organisations (67% of DPs)
  - Empowerment of groups (48% of DPs)
- 7.4 Much of the empowerment has taken place through some form of capacity building. There has also been significant involvement of beneficiaries in the shaping / delivery of activities. Significantly, DPs could provide examples of *how* beneficiary involvement had helped to shape a specific pilot or activity. Of course, that involvement in itself does not mean that the approach will be mainstreamed. As the previous section showed, there are many external factors that impinge on the likelihood of a mainstreaming outcome. However, it is clear that the strong empowerment component is what sets many of the EQUAL approaches apart and that this is an area DPs should focus on in terms of ‘selling’ their ideas and outcomes.
- 7.5 It is possible to look at each of the following approaches to empowerment in turn:
- **Core empowerment activities:** capacity building / ownership; involvement in shaping and delivering activities.
  - **Secondary empowerment activities:** involvement in DP infrastructure (e.g. steering groups); empowerment through role models; involvement in dissemination; informal involvement.

### Empowerment through capacity building/ownership

- 7.6 Capacity building in Round 1 has been evident in relation to individuals, groups and organisations. The latter is perhaps the most tangible and reliable form of empowerment from the programme.
- 7.7 In terms of individuals, much of the empowerment has centred around targeting soft outcomes which potentially lead to further hard outcomes. There are examples of individuals taking ownership of their own learning or being given incentives to choose which learning to engage in. There are numerous examples where individuals have received coaching (e.g. to become volunteers and gain volunteering qualifications) or tailored training (e.g. to set up a new business), although little evidence that this is necessarily sustainable. Other DPs worked on building confidence for individuals either through individual counselling or group-based workshops. An interesting example indicates how projects can also concentrate on developing tools to build capacity on a wider scale, where a DP has developed pre-basic tools to trigger the propensity to learn.
- 7.8 Much of the most effective capacity building has centred on partners, smaller organisations and/or target group organisations. Among the numerous examples, some interesting cases include:
- **For partners:** Giving partners greater ownership of their own projects; capacity building of smaller partners through financial management support; smaller partners working for first time on EU programme (and empowered through the project to continue by applying for co-financing post-EQUAL); empowering partner organisations to act on research findings and find their own ways to change practice; capacity building of smaller organisations to input into the partnership.
  - **For beneficiary/smaller organisations:** Empowering community organisations to more directly engage with the community and/or become better (business) advisers for the community; helping community groups to set up business plans to deliver new specific services to the community; providing audit and services for SMEs to be empowered to produce strategic HR strategies so they can move away from compliance to longer-term thinking; community-based organisations working in partnership with mainstream organisations to deliver DP interventions – putting them on equal footing.

### Empowerment through involvement in shaping and delivery of activities

- 7.9 Just under a third (30%) of Round 1 DPs have empowered beneficiaries through some form of involvement in shaping and delivering project activities. It is probably the most effective form of participatory empowerment. While empowerment through capacity building has largely centred on organisations and partners, empowerment through beneficiary involvement in the design/delivery of activities has mainly revolved around individuals, including:
- Beneficiaries developing their own methodology and approaches for research



- Beneficiary involvement in planning of feedback workshops on training and the feedback sessions to national bodies
- Employees' involvement in reviewing/creating equal opportunities policies for their employer
- Individuals empowered to build new support structures for wider community support and being in charge of empowering local communities
- Empowerment of staff in partner organisations to be action researchers and have input in decision-making within their organisations.

### **Empowerment through formal steering and sub group structures**

- 7.10 Involving beneficiaries in steering and sub-groups was not an effective approach for many of the DPs. The nature of many of the target groups made this kind of involvement either challenging or impractical (especially when dealing with individuals at extended distance from the labour market). Unsurprisingly it has not been an approach that grew in popularity over the course of Round 1 either.
- 7.11 One of the Theme A DPs, which had a fairly typical experience in this area, attempted to involve beneficiaries in its steering group but reported that they were *'baffled and bewildered by discussions on MPAs and match funding – as most people would be'*. The lesson was that involvement was much more practically driven through project and sub-groups that had a more tangible focus. In practice, empowerment through involvement in DP decision-making tended to be through representative organisations. The partnership model certainly supported this type of involvement. However, while the involvement of widespread constituencies and representative bodies was very evident, the degree to which that translated into effective 'bottom up decision making' was more mixed.

### **Empowerment through creation of role models**

- 7.12 Empowerment through the creation of role models carries aspects of self-empowerment for individuals while potentially being an effective vehicle to raise awareness as 'mentors' or 'trainers' often represent the community they are targeting. As the examples below demonstrate, the approaches mostly depend on preliminary training provision and capacity building:
- Training beneficiaries to become mentors and thereby open up new opportunities and provide greater support for entrepreneurship amongst the target group
  - Training for individuals to build their capacity to then raise awareness of target groups needs and showcase potential solutions
  - Empower individuals to become mentors for individuals in disadvantaged sectors to engage in learning
  - Train staff in SMEs to become mentors for other staff for greater capacity building

- SME staff empowered to take training back into their business and transfer knowledge to colleagues as a cost effective way to build business knowledge for companies who do not have sufficient training budgets.

### Involvement in dissemination

- 7.13 As the Round 1 DPs have progressed, it has been common to involve beneficiaries as part of the dissemination strategy. This typically takes the form of involvement in DP conferences and events, something that is rightly seen as empowering in itself as well as adding a contextual richness to the DP message. It is important, however, that DPs manage this involvement effectively and sensitively. Partly this is about avoiding tokenism. However, where a DP is trying to convey a particular message to a targeted policy audience, the way in which that message is presented through individual experience is critical. One DP described holding a parliamentary reception in which a beneficiary speaker shared his experiences of receiving poor public services, which may have helped to make the case for better provision but was a different line to what the DP was trying to push (*'messages should be presented to policy makers with a certain amount of objectivity and dispassion – you have to play the game'*).

### Empowerment through less formal communication/engagement structures

- 7.14 There has also been a degree of informal engagement. This is a less participatory approach to empowerment and much of it appears to have been a mechanism of 'quality control' for DPs in developing services and products and defining degrees of innovation. Around 20% of DPs have chosen more informal routes to empowering beneficiaries, through workshops activities, feedback structures, consultation exercises, action research and setting up of informal forums for feedback on services.

### Empowering Outcomes

- 7.15 Each of the approaches outlined above can vary in the degree to which beneficiaries (or groups) are actively involved. Some of the approaches could be defined as passive. However, the more important question is not how active the 'empowerment process' was, but whether activity has led to an 'empowering outcome'. The two areas are not directly linked.
- 7.16 Some of the most 'active' processes, such as beneficiary involvement in steering groups, has led to little tangible outcome. In practice, the clearest outcomes to date in terms of empowerment tend to relate to capacity building (especially where it has led to the provision of new services or new networks being sustained). There have been real innovations in terms of beneficiary involvement to shape tools and approaches, but by their very nature it is often still too early to see how effectively these will be mainstreamed over time.
- 7.17 In the few areas that EQUAL has been tackling genuinely 'new' policy areas, the development of new services can have a powerful empowerment quality. The Positive

Futures DP in Theme A has looked at the evolving situation of people living with HIV, where advances in medicine mean that employment is a real option. The DP has developed a holistic service ('Routes into Work') to support the target group. The method itself is not particularly new as it has been trialled with other beneficiary groups, but its application in this context is innovative. Beneficiaries reported how empowering it is to have this new service, which includes specific issues such as disclosure of HIV status at work and confidence to return to work.

- 7.18 Here, the empowerment not only rests in the EQUAL outcome (a new service for the target group), but in the way in which the offer was shaped by beneficiary involvement. The Routes into Work model was redesigned in its second year on the basis of feedback from beneficiary users so that several service offers were drawn together to provide a one-stop shop 'personal adviser' model.
- 7.19 An innovation from the Women into Work DP in Theme A was a peer research programme that involved and was delivered by the target group. Two of the pilot projects employed ex-offenders who were working alongside prison officers. Relating to them in that way was incredibly positive, and securing buy-in to the practice of acceptance of ex-offenders back into prisons to work has broken new ground and set a precedent. The intervention has significant potential for replication as the employment of women ex-offenders to work with other women exiting custody provides a seamless and extremely appropriate support.



## 8 Equal Opportunities

- 8.1 The over-arching nature of equal opportunities as a programme principle has paradoxically made it difficult for the Round 1 DPs to isolate and mainstream this component of the work. Earlier evaluation reports identified that for many, equal opportunities was inherent in the DP approach. This tended to mean, however, that outside of Theme H (and some isolated DPs in other themes) the potential equal opportunities impact of the DPs was underplayed. It became, in effect, ‘everything and nothing’ in the EQUAL approach.
- 8.2 One of the challenges in terms of equal opportunities has centred on the distinction between equal opportunities policies (i.e. ensuring the DP’s internal procedures and policies support equal opportunities across the partnership) and equal opportunities practice (how the DP activities and lessons support equal opportunities for the target group).
- 8.3 It has been an area where a significant degree of additional support has been provided to DPs, effectively to encourage partnerships to emphasise how their work is contributing to equality of opportunity. This has meant that as the programme has progressed, a clearer articulation of the tangible equal opportunities benefits of the DP work programme has become apparent. However, it still remains an amorphous area in terms of DP impact. For example, one of the case study DPs noted that its ‘formal’ attempts to support equal opportunities (i.e. through the development of tools and procedures) were largely unsuccessful, but that it had, through one partner’s extensive work with employers, encouraged those employers to rethink their recruitment practices for a specific target group (and as a result, with a wider equal opportunities dimension).

### The Nature of Equal Opportunities Interventions

- 8.4 Just under three quarters of the Round 1 DPs could identify success influencing equal opportunities policies and practice. This was primarily focused on adding value to equal opportunities practice (49%) rather than policies (25%). Regardless of success, the main areas of practical focus have been on:
- Training/audit activities (tailoring employer HR recruitment and retention practices – especially within the Adaptability and Equal Opportunities themes; influencing practices at partner level).
  - Awareness raising (influencing employer attitudes towards the target group).
  - Empowerment of communities and groups (especially within the Entrepreneurship themes).
- 8.5 Furthermore, much of the influence on equal opportunities practices or policies has taken place at partner level, with around 30% of DPs falling into this category. Many of these cases relate to capacity building of partners or inter-partner assistance to improving equal opportunities practices.

- 8.6 More isolated examples and potentially powerful influences include:
- Establishing a common protocol across a target sector.
  - Opening up new and more opportunities for target groups at local level by influencing support structures.
  - Inter-DP Transfer of knowledge on equality training.
- 8.7 Using technology to promote equal opportunities practices (primarily through easy access to information) has been an area where the programme's development focus has at least enabled good quality tools to be developed. The Equal Opportunities Toolkit developed by the ACORN DP is a user-friendly tool targeted at employers, which provides an interactive resource with diagnostic tools to review current policies and procedures, forms for equality monitoring, case studies and information on legislation. The tool is robust and practically-focused, although it is not clear how widespread take-up has been.
- 8.8 A similar approach undertaken by a small number of DPs, such as EQUIPE in Theme D, has been the introduction of equality audits, which have helped organisations focus on the implementation of equal opportunities policies. A key factor for EQUIPE was bringing in an equalities expert to support development and implementation. The challenge with this approach often lies in the accessibility of the tool. One DP noted that it developed an equal opportunities self-assessment tool to focus on the content of partner activities. However, the tool itself was '*tedious and long-winded*' and partners were therefore reluctant to use it a second time.
- 8.9 Equal opportunities as a process of mutual adaptation
- 8.10 Like many other DPs, the ATLAS DP in Theme I felt that the concept of equal opportunities was integral to everything it did, seeing the process as one of mutual adaptation. Through its work, a range of organisations have changed their policies and practices – often adjusting and readjusting - in order to get the model right for the diversity of new asylum seeker communities as they arrive. The examples cited include teachers adapting curricula, Glasgow citizens becoming advocates, businesses enabling asylum seekers to work shadow and learning and becoming more aware themselves from the process.

### **Equal opportunities policies**

- 8.11 All of the DPs had to ensure that they had an adequate equal opportunities policy, although this, in itself, was more of a contractual obligation than a useful tool. Where it added value was when it was taken in conjunction with particular DP operations and activities to challenge assumptions about ways of working. For example, one of the few DPs to make effective use of beneficiary involvement in its 'action groups' reported that it made the partnership '*take a step back and think about what we're doing. (The beneficiary) made us think about the equal opportunities issues for the women that we've employed and the assumptions that we make - like start times of meetings*' (Theme A DP partner).

### **Areas where equal opportunities influence was lacking**

- 8.12 Where DPs have not influenced equal opportunities practices and policies, there is little evidence to suggest that attempts have been made and consequently not succeeded (this is true of only a couple of Round 1 DPs). In some cases impacts/results are yet to materialise. There are a significant number of DPs where impacts have not been measured, making it difficult to identify the difference made by the DP. This shows that while progress was made over the course of Round 1 in promoting an emphasis on equal opportunities as a transversal theme, the success was not universal. Rightly or wrongly, it was simply not an explicit priority for some DPs. As one co-ordinator noted: *'the sector has already great focus on the issue so there was little to influence'*.





## **9 Transnational Co-operation**

- 9.1 This section looks at the transnational component to EQUAL. It looks at the degree to which partnership with DPs in other Member States has added value to the work of the GB DPs (and vice versa). It also further investigates the challenges and barriers to transnational working.

### **The Role of Transnational Co-operation in Practice**

- 9.2 Previous reports in the Mid-Term and Update Evaluations described a pattern in terms of transnational partnership wherein there tended to be a lot of early progress (often in comparison with national implementation) but that this slowed over time. Logistical challenges sometimes led to an effective de-prioritisation of the transnational component and an ultimate scaling down of transnational ambition. It became increasingly common over time for DPs work bilaterally with one or two transnational partners, both for reasons of practicality and the relevance of the work programme.

### **The nature of engagement**

- 9.3 On the whole, DPs were pragmatic about transnational engagement. Some DPs were reactive to the emerging dynamic of their transnational partnership. Others, particularly those with a lot of previous experience, tried to take a strong lead in making the partnership more effective when they encountered logistical barriers. As the GB DPs tended to be relatively large (in resource terms), they were well-placed to offer additional support and momentum to the process (e.g. providing an informal secretariat function). Irrespective of how proactive the GB DP was, most could still identify some benefit from the work.
- 9.4 The other key point in terms of engagement is that, in practical terms, transnational co-operation is viewed by most (but not all) DPs as an adjunct to the national work. Most DPs tracked throughout the evaluation fieldwork retained a commitment to transnational working, but it clearly took second place to the main national work programme. This is increasingly true over the course of time. For example, only a small proportion of DPs (12%) mention transnational co-operation within the context of their Action 3 plans. Another significant practical issue that has unbalanced and certainly detracted from the transnational programme is that DPs within the same partnership were completing the work programme at significantly different times.

### **How the GB partnerships benefited**

- 9.5 What is clear over the course of Round 1 is that the DP experience has varied immensely. Those DPs that have benefited the most from transnational working were not necessarily those showing an early commitment to this part of EQUAL (although that remains a key success factor for transnational co-operation). In practice, the nature of transnational working is such that it is difficult to plan for success. Certain principles contribute to the

chances of it adding value, such as ensuring both the transnational partnership and the work programme are not too ambitious in scale.

- 9.6 However, there is also an unpredictability to transnational co-operation. Some transnational partnerships that looked potentially effective in the early stages of the programme lost momentum because of external factors (implementation issues faced by other DP partners) or because it was difficult to translate that early commonality into a coherent, workable programme of transnational activity. It was not uncommon for the needs of transnational consensus to limit the ambition of the programme. There was also a general feeling that transnational exchange (meetings in particular) often descended to a lowest common denominator, which limited the degree of likely added value. This was a source of on-going frustration for GB DPs (and possibly also for their partners).
- 9.7 By the same token, there are GB DPs that can report interesting – but unexpected – transnational benefits from their work. This is ultimately where the value of the transnational component to EQUAL seems to lie. In a minority of cases it is possible for a small number of like-minded DPs to plan an effective programme of joint or parallel development that is directly relevant to and informs the national perspective. For most DPs, however, the lessons and understanding garnered through transnational working are, by their very nature, not planned in advance. The value is in exposure to other systems and ways of working.

## **Typology of Transnational Benefits**

- 9.8 The positive finding is that the vast majority of DPs (94%) could identify some form of benefit from transnational partnership, even if this was limited. The main focus of transnational co-operation has been the exchange of information, although a quarter of DPs could identify undertaking parallel or joint development. The overall breakdown was as follows:
- Exchange of information / experiences for 55% of DPs
  - Import, export or adoption of new approaches for 13% of DPs
  - Parallel development of new approaches for 15 % of DPs
  - Joint development for 10% of DPs
  - No benefit for 6% of DPs.

## **Exchange of Information**

- 9.9 Where the main value in transnational co-operation has been exchange of information, much of it has related to the GB DP providing the partners with its expertise in a policy field. In terms of how the GB partnerships have benefited from exchange, the main value has been ‘exposure’. In practical terms the impact is fairly limited, usually encompassing lessons that were ‘*nice to know*’ or enabling greater reflection on the GB work. Identified benefits included:

- **Experiential learning:** The chance to actually gain experience in transnational working (even where the experience was of limited substantive value this was a key benefit for many DP partners) and generally feeling '*more European*'.
- **Contextual learning to add depth to the national work:** Realisation where GB stands in comparison with other Member States on particular policy areas or being challenged about domestic approaches. There were also insights into '*good partnership working*'.
- **Networking:** For example, gaining a transnational partner for Round 2.

9.10 There was clearly a degree of benefit from transnational exchange for the individuals involved, even though it is difficult to see how this has impacted more widely. However, given that the main benefits relate to the individuals directly involved, there were two key areas where the wider benefits are clearer to see: the involvement of beneficiaries/representative bodies and policy partners. In terms of the former, numerous DPs capitalised of the transnational partnership as an opportunity to give groups of beneficiaries a new experience, with DPs reporting particular value in involving groups of young beneficiaries. The latter group is also interesting as several policy makers reported value in attending transnational events and listening to DPs from other Member States. Where the transnational partnership has a coherent policy focus, it can therefore act as a 'hook' for engaging policy makers in the work of the domestic DP.

9.11 Exchange involving multiple transnational partnerships

9.12 The ASSET UK partners focusing on skills audits worked closely with the Danish Red Cross over 2-3 years to exchange information on the process and mechanics of skills audits. The skills audit work has further developed at EU level through joint work with four other transnational partnerships. This network of transnational partnerships was profiled at the EQUAL conference in Warsaw in March 2005. The DP's national skills audit work has been influenced by transnational working and has contributed to the transnational partners' work in this area. Consequently, it has benefited from a higher profile than it would have achieved working domestically.

### Importing, Exporting and Adopting New Approaches

9.13 The main area in which the transnational component to EQUAL seems to have benefited both the GB partnerships and their counterparts in other Member States has been the opportunity for DPs working on similar policy areas to import methods and approaches from each other. The weight of this exchange has continued to be more towards the export of GB approaches than the import of other ideas, but there are countless examples (sometimes small) where the GB partner has been able to identify and incorporate partner methods and approaches.

9.14 In particular, it is important to identify how DPs have shared experience on the best way to engage a particular stakeholder group (e.g. employers, national government etc) to support mainstreaming. This is interesting because one of the previously identified barriers to transnational working was that the national contexts were so different that

exchange could not work. However, it seems that precisely because of different national contexts there are lessons that DPs can successfully import and export. Among the key methods for engagement that have been imported and exported are the following:

- ***Imported methods:***
  - Theme A DP's exposure to a French partner's work with Trade Unions (in particular how to engage them) influenced its work and forms a strong component of its Round 2 EQUAL approach.
- ***Exported methods:***
  - A number of transnational partners have emphasised that the 'lobbying approach' followed by some GB partnerships has been a learning point, especially in Member States where the advocacy role is not traditionally undertaken by the voluntary and community sector.
  - Taking a strategic approach to employer engagement, targeting potentially 'warm' employers (e.g. those with a track record on corporate social responsibility) and engaging them through employer-led events.
  - Supporting the ESOL provision of a transnational partner by involving GB partners in the delivery of classes in another Member State.

## **Parallel and Joint Development**

9.15 There are relatively few examples of parallel and joint development in Round 1. Some DPs made interesting comments around potentially adopting a transnational partner methodology. However, there is little evidence about the potential impact of these products on the domestic DPs and future work. Of the more interesting examples, the added value has been in terms of:

- Learning from a country more advanced than the UK on a specific issue
- Providing mutual grounds for testing measures to justify potential EU level impact
- Undertaking cross-partnership transnational beneficiary training
- Access to networks and potential for future collaboration.

9.16 On reflection, much of the value in parallel and joint development took place earlier in the programme, especially where DPs could co-ordinate research or piloting to pool findings at a transnational level. There is little evidence in terms of where this co-ordinated work has led, which may reflect the complexities of policy influence at the European level.

## **Measuring Transnational Impact**

9.17 The nature of transnational working is such that its impact is best measured in terms of how partners in different Member States have learned from each other. It is less the case

that DPs and transnational partnership can impact directly on European policy than there being examples of DPs feeding into debates and policy development. The precise role of the DP – in mainstreaming terms – is therefore a complex one. For example, the growing European Carer's Group has employment as a pivotal theme and it is likely that the work of the ACE DP has supported the growing awareness of carers as a target group at European policy level. There is a suggestion that the situation of carers has greater prominence in the work of Round 2 DPs across Member States and, again, it is possible that the work of the ACE DP has blazed a trail here.

- 9.18 The evidence suggests that the majority of DPs have found transnational working to be challenging. However, for those DPs that have found relevant transnational partners, there were clear benefits. The main good practice message was to partner with other DPs that shared the same target group focus. While that is clearly a sensible approach, there have been spin-off transnational benefits as long as *'there's complementarity in ethos and approach it does not matter if you're working with different target groups'* (Theme A DP). This can build the capacity of partner organisations. One partner organisation of this Theme A DP, which has a focus on women and employment, picked up approaches from a Dutch partner (focusing on male prisoners) to the extent that it has been able to join a Round 2 partnership focusing on women ex-offenders.



## 10 Continuation and sustainability

- 10.1 An important measure of the success of the EQUAL programme lies in the extent to which its outcomes are sustained beyond the initial funding period. In practice there are likely to be two components to sustainability:
- The mainstreaming of specific activities and interventions from the DP work programme.
  - The continuation of the partnership in either a tangible form or as a new network for the future.

### Sustainability of EQUAL Interventions

- 10.2 The vast majority of Round 1 DPs (86%) could provide evidence of parts of their activity being sustained beyond the life of EQUAL. Given the difficulties associated with mainstreaming and the various barriers to influencing policy, this is, in itself, a positive outcome. It may well be that a DP's over-arching ambition is not sustainable, but one of the benefits of the EQUAL model is that it encourages a multitude of activities to be trialled (either with a different focus, with different organisations, or in different areas).
- 10.3 Much of what has been sustained already relates to approaches incorporated at a local or regional level. The main strategy for sustaining activities on a local level has been through the partner organisations themselves. Given the representation of agencies such as local authorities and educational institutions it is easy to see how this process has worked. A range of tailored EQUAL approaches and products can be sustained: access courses, support measures, learning materials etc. Promotional tools, such as websites, are very difficult to sustain in practice, which somewhat questions their value in all but the most innovative cases.
- 10.4 The evidence from those DPs already completing their activities is, however, somewhat mixed. As noted earlier, it is questionable how representative this group is, but what it shows is that even where a DP has an evidence base to support a successful intervention this may not be enough to sustain an approach. The true picture is actually very complicated. For example, one of the DPs that has completed its activity did not manage to effectively sustain its main output (a toolkit), but has achieved some sustainable success changing job descriptions of partner organisations to embed the provision of a new offer in terms of customer support.
- 10.5 Larger-scale sustainability depends either on the ability to find additional funding or to achieve a national policy change. The former is a realistic proposition in the medium term. It is effectively the translation of an organisational impact into an institutional impact, as discussed in Chapter 5. The increasing involvement of funding organisations such as the LSC and the widespread DP expertise in capitalising on funding streams provides ample opportunity. The challenge with the latter is to ensure that funding is not simply an 'extension' of activity and marks a strategic embedding of a particular process.

- 10.6 Either way, the approach to sustainability largely depends on the nature of the actors involved in the partnership. Even DPs were initially looking to sustain an approach through an outside agency, they tend to have brought that agency on board as an effective partner organisation in order to make that happen. Some DPs are also better-placed than others to sustain interventions on a national level. The BOWL DP, for example, is sustaining a lot of its EQUAL work (e.g. trade union sector hub, IAG provision, the ULR training programme and role developed through EQUAL) but largely because organisations such as the TUC and Learndirect were key partners and the activities linked in with (although clearly added value to) an on-going work programme.
- 10.7 It also depends how attuned the DP approach is to national policy. Much of the work around support for ex-offenders has been at a politically opportune time. This means that the DPs have often been able to attract interest, although it also means that it is a crowded policy field and that the organisations likely to sustain the EQUAL work are themselves undergoing change.
- 10.8 The other key factor supporting sustainable intervention is the development of an approach that is genuinely 'new'. In most policy areas this is almost impossible to practically achieve, but there are some cases, such as in relation to asylum seekers, where EQUAL DPs have pushed the boundaries in terms of provision. This is highlighted in the sustainability of the ATLAS DP's work-shadowing scheme, which has grown into the formation of a new group (New Roots Scotland) that includes an impressive array of trustees and secured mainstream funding.

## **Continuation of EQUAL Partnerships and Networks**

- 10.9 Around a quarter (28%) of DPs have firm plans to continue the DP in its current form. This is largely through the provision of EQUAL or other funding. The prospect of a second round has clearly been an important step for DPs to take their work forward. In a sense, it has enabled some DPs to postpone the need to effectively build sustainable outcomes from their work. This is largely no bad thing. There seems to be clear added value in the follow-on work in Round 2 and a strong sense that those DPs with Round 1 experience will be able to produce exponentially better results from being able to draw on their earlier experiences and, in some examples, push a good idea even further.
- 10.10 The Entrepreneurship themes have shown the specific potential of EQUAL for supporting new networks and capacity building. The Support for the Social Economy in the Eastern Region DP in Theme D has established the Social Enterprise East of England Network, which is both a DP output and the vehicle for taking the work forward. Similarly, EQUAL funding provided crucial resource to support the establishment of Social Enterprise East Midlands (eventual lead partner in the SEEM DP). In both cases there is a solid legacy from EQUAL which goes beyond some of the more informal and fluid networks that are likely to take the work forward in other themes. These examples were supported by a favourable policy climate from the start of EQUAL (evidenced in the DTI's *Social Enterprise: Success for All* Strategy in 2002), but the DPs can evidence how the EQUAL funding enabled the infrastructure to grow more quickly, more



systematically and innovatively and involving a wider range of organisations than would otherwise have been possible.

- 10.11 There is at least one example of a Theme A DP where the second round partnership provides evidence of strong commitment to support from mainstream agencies. These agencies were not similarly involved in the Round 1 work of the DP, suggesting that there has been some success in terms of getting the DP's model and work into the mainstream arena. Indeed, it is possible to surmise that much of the dialogue with mainstream partners took place as part of the negotiations around the Round 2 bid.. The Round 2 application process has therefore acted as a tool for mainstreaming as well as sustainability.
- 10.12 Significantly, half of the DP lead partners (51%) have firms plans to continue working with new organisations that they first encountered formally through EQUAL. Given that a proportion of DPs were effectively based around existing partnerships, this gives a strong sense of how the partnership principle is likely to be one of the most prevalent sustainable outcomes.



# 11 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 11.1 This section outlines the main conclusions and recommendations from the final stage of the Update Evaluation.

## Progress with the programme

- 11.2 The EQUAL programme has continued to progress solidly. Round 1 is close to completion, with the vast majority of DPs successfully completing all or most of their planned activities. Round 2 has been established with significant potential for future innovation capitalising on the earlier programme learning.
- 11.3 The greater involvement of voluntary and community organisations in Round 2 is likely to increase programme impact in terms of capacity building and empowerment. The operational changes for Round 2 have largely been positive, in particular the single contract in GB. The shorter Action 2 puts pressure on the Round 2 DPs in terms of management, although the Round 1 experience suggests that it should be possible to complete a significant work programme in that period. There is less margin for operational error in Round 2, yet there is much higher programme knowledge in the second round and the whole 'EQUAL approach' is more established.
- 11.4 Round 2 DPs: The urgent priorities for some Round 2 DPs has to be ensuring that a full complement of staff are in place and that they are positioned to be able to capture their lessons and evidence base further down the line, notably through evaluation.
- 11.5 Support Units: The fact that there are some particularly small DPs (Wales especially) should mean that a watching brief and some additional support is required to ensure that these DPs fulfil the programme objectives and principles.
- 11.6 Managing Authority: It may be worth reassessing whether the support infrastructure is adequately resourced to manage Round 2 in Wales and Scotland, given the far greater number of DPs (in the case of Wales in particular).

## The key principles

- 11.7 Clear progress has been made over time in relation to some aspects of the programme. The way in which the Round 1 DPs have addressed empowerment and equal opportunities has strengthened as Action 2 has progressed. In both cases additional support and the reinforcing of key programme principles has made a significant difference.
- 11.8 Empowerment in all forms – but especially in terms of capacity building and the development of 'beneficiary appropriate' tools and approaches – has emerged as one of the aspects that sets EQUAL apart from any equivalent programme. It is an area DPs should focus on in terms of 'selling' their ideas and outcomes. Some have already made

powerful use of their qualitative evidence (e.g. using beneficiary testimonies). Partnership has remained a key programme strength. However, partnership sustainability remains an area in which DPs could take a more systematic approach.

- 11.9 Round 1 and 2 DPs: It is worth many of the DPs emphasising in their marketing and dialogue with policy makers the degree to which beneficiary involvement underpins EQUAL activity.
- 11.10 Round 2 DPs: DPs should focus on earlier and more strategic planning in terms of partnership sustainability.

### Round 1 impact

- 11.11 Round 1 has shown that EQUAL can make a significant difference, if the partnership has the right mix of skills and a clear policy focus. The overall impact of Round 1 looks likely to be characterised by a small proportion of DPs producing significant mainstreamed innovation, while the majority of DPs will have smaller-scale influence.
- 11.12 There has been significant success relating to the full gamut of labour market issues, from infrastructure and legislation through to capacity building and accessibility. Unsurprisingly, there is likely to be far greater impact on practice than on policy. Clearly, there are key lessons to be taken forward by **Round 2 DPs**:
- *Successful Round 1 DPs have demonstrated knowledge of current policy that is relevant to their own work and the linkages into other policy areas and been appreciative of processes underpinning policy formation and the context in which policy makers work.*
  - *They have been able to provide a ‘quick overview’ of their activity, and evidence of their interventions working in multiple areas with numerous beneficiaries, which importantly provides a perspective on scale which is needed by policy makers in order to assess mainstreaming potential.*
- 11.13 It might have been expected that a larger number of DPs would have had strategic influence. There is, however, a disparateness between the Round 1 DPs. A significant proportion have treated the programme as a series of ‘projects’ and have not been able to fully embrace the programme ethos. Consequently, key messages have not coalesced, which has in turn contributed to a lack of awareness among policy makers and compounded difficulties in policy engagement.
- 11.14 For any given DP, though, it may well be that while the over-arching ambition is not sustainable, one of the benefits of the EQUAL model is that it encourages a multitude of activities to be trialled (either with a different focus, with different organisations, or in different areas). Therefore it can be expected that most DPs will leave some kind of legacy.
- 11.15 It also remains difficult to quantify the precise Round 1 legacy, given the systemic nature of the interventions. Many DPs still anticipate future impact, although it is not clear what mechanism will support this in many cases. Looking at the experience of the early Round

1 completers, there is a danger that when a DP ends, there is no 'push' left for components with mainstreaming potential.

### **Mainstreaming**

- 11.16 The primary challenge, particularly in relation to Round 2, remains mainstreaming. DPs that actively engaged with relevant policy partners throughout the project (especially integrating them as partners) are more likely to be effective at the mainstreaming stage.
- 11.17 There were issues relating the effectiveness of the TNGs in Round 1, although many of these related to a lack of clarity about role and purpose. Given the critical position of mainstreaming within the programme, there remains an important function that the TNGs can fulfil.
- 11.18 DP also have to ensure that they have the mainstreaming capacity to maximise the benefits from their work. Numerous references made by the Round 2 DPs to the need to make early engagement with future policy customers suggests that the message is getting through. The key challenge in the next few months will be DPs actioning those words.
- 11.19 Round 2 DPs: The ability of Round 2 DPs to identify and engage policy makers in dialogue at an early stage is likely to be the key factor determining ultimate potential to influence.
- 11.20 TNGs (Chairs): Chairs need to focus on emphasising when DPs can make a timely feed into the policy cycle and the importance on making early provision for mainstreaming.
- 11.21 TNGs (DPs): DPs should place stronger emphasis on using the TNG forum as an opportunity for DP-led collaborative working.
- 11.22 Support Units /TNGs/ Managing Authority: All actors have a role in re-emphasising the need for DPs to be able to draw together the strands of their work programmes and emphasise a coherent policy contribution. There is also a need for someone at programme level to draw the EQUAL strands together and set out the EQUAL vision and 'offer'.



## 12 Annex 1: List of Thematic Impacts

### Theme A

Most influential impacts to date	Level
<b><i>Practice - Institutional</i></b>	
<i>Increased access to training and support through tailored support services</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>More integrated support systems and employer links (for example through transparent multi agency systems)</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Mainstreamed recommendations through SSC system on improving access to learning</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Stronger/coherent partnerships of voluntary community organisations across the sector</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Mainstreaming/standardising of training/learning materials developed by DP into FE/HE</i>	<i>Local</i>
<b><i>Practice - Organisational</i></b>	
<i>Influenced more holistic/equal approaches/thinking among employers with regards to target groups</i>	<i>Local / Regional / National</i>
<i>Impact on sustainability of networks and practices within networks/partnerships</i>	<i>Local / Regional</i>
<i>DP influenced decisions on the creation of new/sister bodies/organisations around the specific target groups</i>	<i>Local / EU Level</i>
<i>Greater allocation of funds for social enterprises at local level as a result of DP influence over local economic strategy</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Effective delivery of new ways of learning and empowerment methods with good progress tracking – strong impacts on beneficiaries</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Influenced changes in delivery of services and employer attitudes towards target groups</i>	<i>Local</i>
<b><i>Policy</i></b>	
<i>Reinforcing the importance of tackling target group issue within the wider policy agenda (ex-offenders)</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>DP in Wales invited by the Assembly to contribute to a policy Development on discrimination</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Informing existing policy measures – integrated DP lessons in Scottish Employability Framework through DP Steering Group members</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>DP lobbying for the integrated provisions into a Community Act; DP shaping of national acts through Equal work</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>DP reinforcing body of knowledge/case law that informs policy, including invitations to pre-policy making consultations</i>	<i>National</i>

## Theme B

Most influential impacts to date	Level
<b><i>Practice - Institutional</i></b>	
<i>Creation of sustainable vehicles/ platform for building beneficiary capacity – strong empowerment impacts through institutional changes</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<b><i>Practice - Organisational</i></b>	
<i>Evidence of positive increases in target group beneficiaries receiving placements across organisations</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Effective capacity building of local organisations building relationships with mainstream organisations</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Established intermediary organisations services with positive support for beneficiaries in a professional sector</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>New employer networks investing in target groups recruitment and skills issues</i>	<i>Local</i>
<b><i>Policy</i></b>	
<i>DP partner sitting on national level policy group – informed aspects of 2 relevant national level strategies</i>	<i>National</i>

## Theme C

Most influential impacts to date	Level
<b><i>Practice - Institutional</i></b>	
<i>Widening of scale and scope of mentoring activities – large networks and beneficiary impacts</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>New credit based training units for the sector –LSC, mapped into NOS, Mapped into new framework for achievements</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Mainstreamed DP-driven service organisation through SSC</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Mainstreamed DP tool through mainstream business support organisation</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Changes to WDA contract with business support providers</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<b><i>Practice - Organisational</i></b>	
<i>Creation and mainstreaming of a new franchise system for target group organisations</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>DP support leading to creation of new businesses – ranging between 100 and 750</i>	<i>Local/ Regional</i>
<i>Growing networks of support through DP collaboration frameworks</i>	<i>Local</i>
<b><i>Policy</i></b>	
<i>DP contributed to re-writing SBS publication on franchising</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>DP cited in policy documents as good practice</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>DP actively worked with policy makers on the preparation of a strategic framework</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Changes of business support policy at WDA</i>	<i>Regional</i>



## Theme D

Most influential impacts to date	Level
<b><i>Practice - Institutional</i></b>	
<i>DP now representing 20% of NVQs in Community Development</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Development of accredited NOS in the process of being taken up by training providers</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Transfer of good practice to another sub-region on the basis of success evidence</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Adoption of DP social economy model by a devolved administration and integration of partnerships as part of a wider regional programme</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Procurement guide taken up by devolved administration</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<b><i>Practice - Organisational</i></b>	
<i>Impact on widening/strengthening networks and social enterprise</i>	<i>Regional / Local</i>
<i>Growth of entrepreneurship within social enterprises across local networks</i>	<i>Local</i>
<b><i>Policy</i></b>	
<i>Integrated social economy in other areas of regulations (cross-agenda impact)</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>DP findings informed evidence base on which recent legislative changes are based</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>DP impact on integration of social enterprise policy support in local strategy</i>	<i>Local</i>

## Theme E

Most influential impacts to date	Level
<b><i>Practice - Institutional</i></b>	
<i>Mainstreaming in FE of courses developed by the DP</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Mainstreaming new forms of community involvement across the sector</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Integration of DP-led progression routes / curriculum into HE</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Integrated diversity training frameworks across a sector</i>	<i>Local</i>
<b><i>Practice - Organisational</i></b>	
<i>Sector-wide impacts on workplace learning through brokerage services</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Improved HR related recruitment and retention practices at business and sector level</i>	<i>Regional / Local</i>
<i>Improved inter-agency / cross-sector working through new DP-driven frameworks and protocols</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Improved working/provision across a sector benefiting beneficiaries (widening provision/changing practices)</i>	<i>Local/</i>

	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Established new cross-sector networks, self sustained post equal, sectorally important features (ie Regional and employer led; mix vol/coms and mainstream organisations)</i>	<i>Local/ Regional</i>
<b>Policy</b>	
<i>Informing Sector Skills Agreements with regards to workplace level engagement with workers to increase access to learning</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>DP influenced embedding of Skills for Life Training in local authority businesses strategy</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>DP informed methodological principles and good practice on widening access to learning through sector services as part of a new sector framework for learning</i>	<i>National</i>

## Theme F

<b>Most influential impacts to date</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Practice - Institutional</b>	
<i>Changes to the delivery of training within FE/HE – greater built-in flexibility; increased levels of outreach and ICT use in delivery</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>DP helped devolved administration to reach scale of targets on ICT use – further implementation funded by administration</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>DP product horizontally mainstreamed within ICT work initiatives across regional colleges</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<b>Practice - Organisational</b>	
<i>Impact on rural industry communication infrastructures and creation of new communities</i>	<i>Local</i>
<b>Policy</b>	
<i>DP influence in regional Telecommunications policy demonstrated relevance of approach and need for mainstreaming</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>SSC showing interest in DP-driven training for micro-businesses</i>	<i>National</i>

## Theme H

<b>Most influential impacts to date</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Practice - Institutional</b>	
<i>New resource centre on gender and employment</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Diversity training guide rolled-out nationally</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>New apprenticeship training module</i>	<i>National</i>
<b>Practice - Organisational</b>	
<i>New network (hub) to support action on gender desegregation</i>	<i>Regional / national</i>

**Theme I**

<i>Most influential impacts to date</i>	<i>Level</i>
<i><b>Practice - Institutional</b></i>	
<i>New education and employer networks</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Skills audits</i>	<i>National</i>
<i><b>Practice - Organisational</b></i>	
<i>Citizen's Advice Bureau volunteering programme</i>	<i>Local</i>
<i>Work shadowing</i>	<i>Local</i>



## **13 Annex 2: Summary of the Round 2 Application Process**

### **The GB application process**

#### **Awareness Raising and Guidance**

- 13.1 Prior to the Round 2 launch, a series of awareness raising days were held in each of the Government Office regions between October 2003 and January 2004, which were attended by Round 1 DPs to add their perspective and experience of the programme. The events were attended by a total of around 500 individuals.
- 13.2 Round 2 guidance materials were available on the Equal website from mid-February 2004, with a National launch event in London on 30 March. Subsequently, a series of 10 information days were held in April and May, which included one-to-one clinics for potential applicants. The Support Unit managed a Round 2 helpline service, and commented on applicants' initial ideas, throughout the bidding period.

#### **Selection Criteria**

- 13.3 The Round 2 selection criteria were more weighted toward mainstreaming, which remained a gateway question alongside equal opportunities. All applications are treated similarly irrespective of Round 1 involvement/experience. There was, however, an additional comment under the innovation box asking existing DPs to benchmark their activities and allow added value to be assessed.

#### **Bid Appraisal**

- 13.4 The Support Unit was responsible for the application and appraisal process, but not the final DP selection. Staff from the GB, Scotland and Wales support structures were trained to agreed standards through appraisal workshops.
- 13.5 Each application was reviewed against set criteria by two people – the first reviewing the application in detail, the second taking more of an overview. Their scores were compared, and where the variance between them was considerable a third person reviewed the application in detail. The applications were scored and ranked within themes.
- 13.6 Summaries of all eligible applications, i.e. those achieving at least the minimum score in all 'gateway' questions, were presented to the respective TNG Chairs and members for review in terms of 'policy fit'. Government Offices were also asked to comment on the mainstreaming and innovation aspects of any regional and sub-regional applications submitted in their regions. A final meeting of TNG Chairs to agree the final listings and take a strategic overview of all themes was held at the beginning of September 2004.

## **Wales**

- 13.7 Wales follows the GB timetable for application, but followed a different approach to appraisal. All bids for Welsh DPs (i.e. those operating in Wales only) were submitted to WEFO for initial eligibility/validation checks. An appraisal panel made up of representatives of the Welsh Management Committee assessed the bids using the tools developed by the GB Support Unit and following training from them to ensure consistency. The results were then presented to the Welsh Management Committee for approval.

## **Scotland**

- 13.8 The Round 2 bidding process in Scotland is a mixture of GB partner formation (i.e. organic), but with a degree of matching and facilitation from the Support Unit. Five awareness-raising events were held in early 2004 after the call for bids was made. In mid-March 2004, prospective bidders were required to submit expressions of interest consisting of single page summaries with a brief outline of costs. While some applicants were told to continue to develop their applications, others were advised to consider 'joining' another DP in their chosen Theme and attend a series of thematic meetings held in April 2004 to encourage partnership formation. Some applicants that were proposing more mainstream ideas were encouraged/signposted towards the Objective 3 programme, and meetings with the appropriate Objective 3 managers were arranged by the Support Unit.
- 13.9 Bid appraisal was undertaken by the Scotland Management Committee. This was resource-intensive for Committee members, much in the way the GB Round 1 process was for TNG members. Each bid was scored by two Committee members, and the results fed back to the entire Management Committee. All Committee members are able to comment on all of the bids.

## 14 Annex 3: Round 2 DP Policy Focus

### Theme A

- 14.1 Theme A is distinct as it shows a relatively broad policy remit, with a diverse policy mix encompassing, for example, very specific target groups such as (ex)-offenders and broader classifications such as ‘disadvantaged groups’. This is similar to Round 1 of the Programme.
- 14.2 Ex-offenders, health, employability and improving existing service provision appear to be the policy issues receiving the greatest attention in Round 2, which fit well with current discussions around reform in the prison service/criminal justice system and other public sector agencies.
- 14.3 There is an interesting diversity in approaches, even amongst DPs working with the same target groups. For example, two DPs looking at the employability of offenders and ex-offenders are taking very different approaches to achieving the same outcome, with one taking an external perspective by focusing on employers and the other taking a prison service perspective by looking at increasing prisoner skills prior to release.

### Key Policy Issues – Theme A

Overriding Policy Issues	DPs
<i>Influencing and addressing gaps in the Health and Employability agendas (including HIV, mental and physical disabilities)</i>	8
<i>Increasing employability of offenders and ex-offenders (community based and prison service based)</i>	7
<i>Improving employment service provision/providers (inc Local authorities, Jobcentres and Housing Associations)</i>	6
<i>Tackling employment issues over young people and care leavers</i>	3
<i>Promoting and addressing equal opportunities across SMEs and specific industries</i>	3
<i>Increasing and promoting employability of black and ethnic minority communities</i>	2
<i>Tackling age discrimination</i>	2
<i>Increasing refugee employability</i>	1
<i>Addressing women and employment</i>	1
<i>Carers and improving the social care services to increase employment well-being</i>	1

**Main Approaches – Theme A**

<b>Action driven</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Improving relationships/capacities between different types of service providers and their agendas to create new pathways to employment</i></li><li>- <i>Supported employment, job placement</i></li><li>- <i>Motivation and empowerment, targeting beneficiaries</i></li></ul>
<b>Research based and awareness raising activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Awareness raising amongst target group and employers</i></li><li>- <i>Mapping provisions, identifying gaps, working with employment/employability services</i></li><li>- <i>Research / case study work</i></li><li>- <i>Organising policy events</i></li></ul>
<b>Product development activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Developing skills provision activities/routes</i></li><li>- <i>Use of IT to promote partnership approaches</i></li></ul>

**Theme B**

- 14.4 Theme B, which targets racism and discrimination amongst minority communities, provides a more straightforward policy picture and concentrates on increasing the integration of Black and Ethnic Minorities. Here diversity amongst Theme B DPs lies less in the policy issue the DPs seek to address, and more in terms of the level or sector within which they are addressed.
- 14.5 The overriding policy focus is the integration and widening participation of BME communities and refugees in employment, with the main differences between DPs lying in the degree to which they are taking targeted (e.g. focusing on a specific sector) or a more broad policy focus. The former are more likely to be developing a specific product or testing a new approach, while the latter tend to be research-based or engaged in awareness raising/IAG activities.
- 14.6 Overall, approaches are coherent with what DPs are trying to achieve and tackle, however with varying degrees of clarity between them. While some only indicate their broad intentions, others clearly establish what outcomes they expect to see in the future. Arguably the DP with the clearest and most target driven approach so far was found to be working on a project new to the UK while showing no prior EQUAL experience either.



## Key Policy Issues – Theme B

Key Policy Issues	
<i>DPs with a targeted approach (63%)</i>	
<i>Increasing the number of BME workers in the housing sector</i>	
<i>Workforce diversity in import/export and international activities</i>	
<i>Providing free ESOL classes and improving language skills in the NHS</i>	
<i>Equal opportunities for offenders and ex-offenders</i>	
<i>Testing and disseminating innovative ways for training and development for refugee professionals inc health education and engineering</i>	
<i>DPs with broader policy focus (37%)</i>	
<i>Widening participation of BME communities in employment</i>	
<i>Improving employability and overcoming barriers to employment for BME communities</i>	
<i>Employability of BME communities - promoting diversity and equal opportunities across employers</i>	
<b>Total DPs</b>	<b>8 (100%)</b>

## Theme C

- 14.7 Theme C focuses on entrepreneurship and business creation, with a tendency towards developing larger and stronger entrepreneurial networks and boosting SME ownership among under-represented groups. The DPs are therefore tackling similar policy issues to their Round 1 counterparts, although there is a suggestion of a stronger focus on more specific target groups (especially BME groups, women and young people) in Round 2. For the three DPs located in Wales and Scotland, much of the focus is on contextualising UK-wide policy.
- 14.8 Around 39% of the Theme C DPs will be undertaking impact assessment and gap identification work on the under-representation of certain groups in entrepreneurial activities, while 30% are aiming to build/strengthen entrepreneurial and local networks. Roughly 30% again are looking to provide support in entrepreneurship to under-represented groups either via employers or directly through beneficiaries in communities.
- 14.9 There is also a different sectoral/business focus emerging in Round 2 compared to Round 1, which has the potential to add considerable value. For example, the Theme C DPs in Round 2 include those focusing on business creation in different sectors, including the audiovisual industries; licensing, franchising and distribution; retail; and community festivals.
- 14.10 The approaches proposed by the Theme C DPs are characterised by a particularly practical focus in comparison with, say, those under Theme B. There is a good mix of research and action-driven methodologies, with a strong emphasis on business support tools, business plans and network building, which are mostly product and/or action driven methodologies. Around 77% of Theme C DPs are developing approaches along these lines, with 40% of them officially undertaking an impact assessment/research study initially. In total, 54% of DPs are undertaking impact assessment/identifying gaps

studies, while only 23% of DPs are following a research study/good practice dissemination exercise throughout the length of their project.

## Theme D

- 14.11 Theme D, the social economy entrepreneurship theme, has a particularly strong organisational focus. Developments so far indicate that around 30% of Theme D DPs are focusing on building capacity within the social economy sector by the development of organisations and/or people. These DPs tend to apply action–research models, which feature the identification of both potential and gaps, consultation exercises, and local partnership building – one DP, for example, intends to apply private sector quality assurance models to the social economy.
- 14.12 Apart from these more dominant policy issues, the other DPs present a rather diverse policy picture, where matching public spending and social objectives is another key aspect (in 20% of DPs). Further individual DPs look at employment opportunities for specific groups in the social economy (such as people with disabilities, women and BME communities), work around social enterprise in deprived areas and on economic regeneration. These projects also present coherent approaches that focus on network strengthening, action planning and impact assessment.
- 14.13 Two DPs however stand out in this theme - one because of its policy remit, the other because of the scale of its geographical aspirations:
- The first seeks to develop new qualifications for the social economy sector, and includes a promising partnership with the RDA and an interesting focus on the built environment and health/social care sectors.
  - The other stands out due to the lead partner’s aspirations to build their internal capacity to become a European R&D social enterprise network. This aspiration shows the DP sees itself in transnational dimensions, although the challenges faced in terms of ensuring policy impact at this level are considerable.

## Theme E

- 14.14 Theme E is the second largest after Theme A, and covers issues including lifelong learning, discrimination and inequalities in the labour market. Here the policy issues covered are particularly diverse, ranging from tackling barriers to lifelong learning to targeting specific groups and providing employment opportunities to wider excluded groups.
- 14.15 There is a strong target group focus (and age discrimination in particular). Two of the DPs in Scotland are focusing on rural issues, a critical policy area in terms of access to learning, while others are tackling wider lifelong learning issues. Some of these have strong mainstreaming potential (such as the LSC-led DP looking to develop an ‘Investors in Health’ Standard).

- 14.16 In general, approaches to policy issues under Theme E appear well considered, with a number of rather ambitious projects and apparently strong partnerships (for example, including LearnDirect, LSCs, the Scottish Executive, RDAs and JobcentrePlus).
- 14.17 As most Theme E approaches rely on employer engagement, an early positive observation is that DPs are considering how best to engage with SMEs from the outset and commonly refer to them as central to their local and regional operations. Given the strong delivery focus in much of this work (e.g. developing support services and tools), a key challenge for Theme E DPs will be to address how these delivery models (if effective) can be sustained and mainstreamed.

### Key Policy Issues – Theme E

Overriding Policy Issues	DPs
<i>Wider lifelong learning issues</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Equality in access to employment</i>	2
<i>Accreditation of informal learning to those excluded from formal learning</i>	1
<i>New approaches to engaging excluded groups in lifelong learning</i>	1
<i>IAG focus/delivery – partnership working/building between existing initiatives</i>	1
<b>Target Group Focus</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Age and employment/Age and unemployment</i>	3
<i>Mental Health and lifelong learning agendas combined</i>	2
<i>Barriers to employment for refugees and other migrants</i>	1
<b>Sectoral/Area-Based Focus</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Tackle rural perspective to lifelong learning and boosting self development</i>	2
<i>Provision of skills to excluded people for employment in creative industries</i>	1
<i>Shorter routes to employment in the construction industries for (ex-)offenders and people aged 50+</i>	1
<b>Total DPs</b>	<b>14</b>

### Theme F

- 14.18 Theme F explores issues associated with adaptability to economic change and, in particular, the use of ICT. In Round 1 DPs within this Theme were relatively distinct, which arguably made it difficult for them to work across the Theme. To some extent this distinctiveness has remained in Round 2, although it is possible to see a common ICT thread running between DPs clustered around other issues such as supporting SMEs (30% of the Theme F DPs) and ageing in employment (15%).
- 14.19 Work-life balance was an under-represented area in Round 1, so it is positive to see a stronger focus on this issue in Round 2. Two DPs are taking different approaches to the work-life balance agenda, both of which comprise a coherent ‘policy offer’:
- One is looking at broadening the agenda for work-life balance to include people of all ages, labour market difficulties, disabilities, religions and gender, and is based on a piece of research undertaken for the DTI.

- The other takes a more product-driven approach to addressing work-life balance issues, and tap into a pool of under-utilised people. The approach here is to implement a diversity policy and develop innovative toolkits for companies to use, and the DP hope to involve both DfES and LearnDirect in their work.

14.20 The ICT-focus within Theme F means that many of the DPs are focused on developing specific ICT-related tools. Although early in Round 2 of the programme, the potential for mainstreaming the products and services planned appears to be considerable. As many of the tools seek to target specific needs (for example, a tool to identify competences for older workers; IT-learning tools for disabled people in employment; and work-based skills development pathways) they have the potential to have a wider practical influence.

## Theme H

14.21 Amongst the DPs operating under Theme H, the following key policy issues were identified, and there appears to be an overall stronger focus on job desegregation than on gender pay gaps:

4. Women returners:
  - Strengthening a network of childcare agencies
  - Careers support for local women linked to family Health Centres
5. Gender desegregation:
  - Over an individual's lifetime
  - By occupation (Science, Technology and Engineering)
6. Specific issues relating to women ex-offenders.

14.22 Most DPs approaches consist of identifying gaps in provision and research, undertaking impact assessment studies and developing processes and support services to respond to the gaps identified. This is particularly the case for DPs looking at gender segregation, and which aim to provide policy makers with a picture of the current state of play and to inform policy development or revision. Apart from the childcare agencies DPs, the other DPs are following relevant approaches that are action-driven in the delivery and strengthening of IAG and careers support services, and/or the delivery of conferences and other awareness raising/dissemination activities about under-represented women in employment.

## Theme I

14.23 Theme I DPs are to some extent governed in terms of the activities they can undertake by the legislation relating to asylum seekers and employment. It is not therefore surprising to see similar approaches to the Round 1 DPs (e.g. ESOL training; volunteering etc), although there does seem to be a more targeted approach – with the Round 2 DPs focusing on more specific groups of asylum seekers.

- 14.24 Two of the four Theme I DPs are looking at increasing, developing or utilising the skills of asylum seekers by integrating them through community-based and voluntary activities, thus taking a capacity-building approach through the provision of active learning activities. Both DPs are following more of an action driven, product development approach to supporting asylum seeker integration.
- 14.25 The other two DPs are addressing the integration of asylum seekers from a slightly wider perspective, and are examining issues of local orientation, the delivery of service/activities, and support links with education. These DPs are planning to work with different target groups – with one focusing on asylum seekers, unaccompanied young seekers and trafficked women; and the other on people suffering from HIV and AIDS. Both DPs are therefore concentrating on strengthening existing support services and networks, based on a comprehensive analysis of needs.



## 15 Annex 4: Evaluation Methodology

15.1 The evaluation consisted of three main stages, each of which concluded with an interim or final report:

- Stage 1 – Update of Round 1 DPs (April to September 2004)
- Stage 2 – Round 2 DPs – Early Plans and Selection/Appraisal Process (October 2004 to March 2005)
- Stage 3 – Impact and Implementation – Round 1 and 2 DPs (March to September 2005).

15.2 The study methodology featured the following activities:

7. Work with **Round 1 DPs** including an update on progress and key dates through a telephone survey, followed by the more detailed review of implementation and impact through two rounds of case study visits with 20 DPs (in Stage 1) and 27 DPs (in Stage 3). The impact of the DPs, actual and potential given the timing of the study, on mainstreaming at the national policy level received particular attention.
8. Work with **Round 2 DPs** based around two telephone surveys, the first looking at the application process, identifying Action 1 plans, progress and ambitions for the future (Stage 2); the second providing an update on Action 1 activity and the move towards implementation (Stage 3).
9. Work to examine the **implementation and management of the programme** including the analysis of programme monitoring data, review of Round 2 applications and the effectiveness of the application process, and a range of interviews with TNG representatives and the wider EQUAL policy ‘audience’. In addition, the evaluation considered the changes made to the delivery of the programme since the mid-term review, and identify as far as possible if these changes are having their desired effects.

15.3 The components of each stage of the evaluation are described below.

### Stage 1 – Update of Round 1 DPs

15.4 The main steps within the first stage of the update were as follows:

10. **Stakeholder Interviews:** In order to provide a programme update and to capture early examples of policy impact and mainstreaming a number of stakeholder interviews were undertaken in Spring/early Summer 2004. These included the following: representatives of the ESF Division; representatives of the National Support Structures, including the GB Support Unit, the Welsh European Funding Office and the Objective 3 Office in Scotland; the Chairs of all eight Thematic Network Groups.

11. **Telephone Survey of Round 1 DPs:** A telephone survey of all 76 Round 1 DPs was undertaken in Spring-early Summer 2004. Interviews were achieved with 74 DPs in total - one Theme A DP would not participate in the Study, and another DP in Theme B could not participate as the lead partner was in liquidation.
12. **DP Case Study Visits (Round 1 DPs):** On the basis of this telephone survey a sample of 20 Round 1 case study DPs was developed – 11 of which featured in the mid-term evaluation (to allow a longitudinal assessment to be made) and nine of which were ‘new’ selections. Case Study visits took place from June-August 2004. The main components of the case studies were:
  - Face to face interviews with project managers, key staff, and non-delivery/strategic partners;
  - The review of two specific interventions – featuring interviews with key delivery partners (mix of face to face and telephone as most practical), horizontal stakeholders and ‘beneficiaries’/service users;
  - Policy maker interviews – where they feature on DP steering groups/DP partners, or where they have received information from the DP, probably undertaken by telephone;
  - Interviews with transnational partners.

## Stage 2 – Round 2 DPs

- 15.5 Stage 2 of the evaluation covered the initial starting phase in Action 1 of successful Round 2 DPs from October 2004 to mid-January 2005. It therefore looks at early priorities for action within the development phase and assesses progress in developing national partnerships. It further addressed early developments against key principles of the EQUAL programme.
- 15.6 The main steps within the second stage were as follows:
  - **Telephone Survey of Round 2 DPs:** A telephone survey of all 100 Round 1 DPs was undertaken in Autumn 2004 – Winter 2004/05 - Interviews were achieved with 97 DPs in total - one Theme E DP in England, one Theme F DP in Scotland and one Theme A DP in Wales could not be reached before the end of the interview period.
  - **Telephone Survey of Round 2 Unsuccessful Bidders:** A telephone survey was also undertaken across 10 unsuccessful bidders to probe why their bids were unsuccessful and identify their perceptions of the selection process.
  - **Stakeholder Interview:** Interviews with 12 stakeholders involved in the bid assessment, including TNG Chairs and regional (e.g. Government Office) representatives.
  - **Review of a Sample of Applications:** Reviewing a sample of 20 successful bids selected at random, yet providing coverage across Theme and geography.



### Stage 3 – Impact and implementation

15.7 Stage 3 was primarily focused on the emerging impact of the Round 1 DPs, identifying impacts in terms of influence on policy and practice, as well as other benefits such as the development of partnerships, the application of lessons in other areas etc. The main components of the third stage of the evaluation were as follows:

- Case studies with a representative sample of 27 Round 1 DPs (including a mix of DPs that had been tracked throughout the Mid-Term and Update Evaluations to provide a longitudinal component and ‘new’ case studies to provide breadth of detailed DP knowledge).
  - Interviews with project managers, key staff, partners and steering group members and transnational partners. The case studies also included follow-up work with ‘beneficiaries’/service users, to enable clear links to be drawn between their perceptions and the characteristics of their involvement.
  - Assessment of impact – based on the expectations set out in their Action 3 plans, DP’s were questioned on examples of horizontal and vertical mainstreaming, focusing on 3 to 4 key interventions.
  - Verifying impact - where examples of potential impact are identified, making contact with individuals receiving information from the DP as follows:
    - a) For examples of vertical mainstreaming – contacting policy beneficiaries to identify its use (actual and potential), relevance/appropriateness, and overall quality.
    - b) For examples of horizontal mainstreaming – here individual recipients, partners and local/regional/sectoral organisations considered to have ‘benefited’ from the interventions trialled were interviewed, and benefits and perceptions of value assessed.
- A telephone survey of the remaining 49 Round 1 DPs in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of the first round. Four DPs could not be interviewed, largely because the lead partner organisation was not still in operation.
- From the Round 1 telephone survey, we followed-up with a sample of 20 policy makers identified by the DPs themselves as recipients of the DP lessons. This was in order to substantiate and triangulate the picture of impact as widely as possible.
- A telephone survey with the 99 Round 2 DPs to provide an update on progress in Action 1 and early implementation.
- Interviews with stakeholders and the programme organisers (including the TNG Chairs, the Support Units in GB, Scotland and Wales, and with the managing authority).