



European Social Fund in England
Improving people's lives

Introduction



Photo courtesy of Apex:James Ram

The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union. It supports Member States' employment and skills policies and contributes to the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

ESF helps people who are unemployed or at a disadvantage in the labour market to develop their skills and enter sustainable employment. By focusing on those who need support the most, ESF is helping to tackle poverty and promote social mobility. ESF also trains people in work so that they have the skills that businesses need to compete in a global economy.

The 2007-2013 England ESF programme is investing around £2.5 billion in jobs and skills. This booklet reports on progress so far and includes stories of people whose lives are being transformed by ESF. It also looks forward to the second phase of the programme in 2011-2013. Following tendering rounds, new ESF projects will start delivery in the first half of 2011.

Wendy Violentano
Head of ESF Division



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Funding

The European Social Fund is investing over £2.5 billion in England in 2007–2013. This is matched to a similar amount of national funding.

“We have successfully used ESF to support and enhance skills provision for disadvantaged people, enabling them to benefit from employment and skills opportunities. Since 2007, ESF managed by the Skills Funding Agency has helped nearly 750,000 participants, improving the skills of the workforce and those facing difficulties finding work.”

Mike Bell, Portfolio Provider Account Management Director, Skills Funding Agency

The 2007–2013 programme has two objectives:

- The **Convergence Objective** aims to develop areas where the economy is lagging behind the rest of the European Union. In England, only Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly benefits from ESF funding under this objective.
- The **Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective** covers all areas outside of the ‘Convergence’ objective. Merseyside and South Yorkshire receive ring-fenced funding as former Objective One regions in 2000–2006.

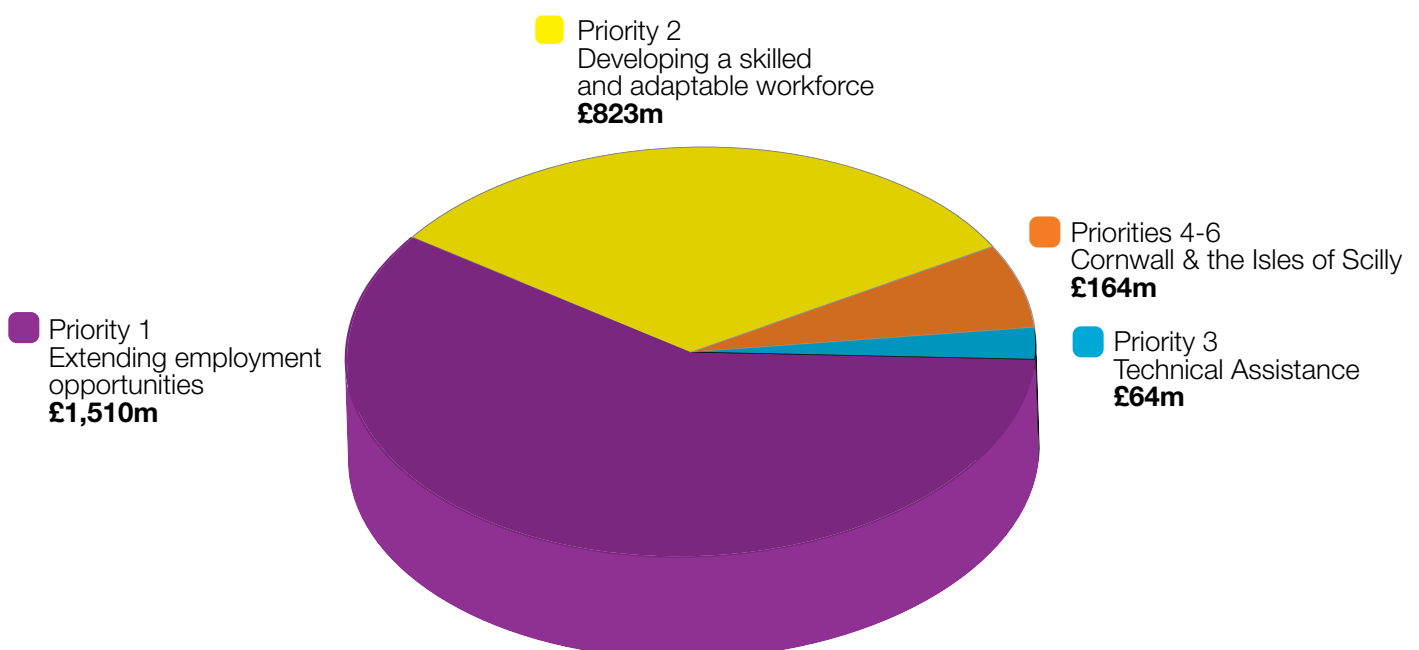
The 2007–2013 programme covers Gibraltar as well as England. Gibraltar receives £2.8m ESF to address its specific employment and skills challenges. The Government of Gibraltar is responsible for ESF within Gibraltar.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own ESF programmes.

“Without the ESF funding we would not be able to deliver such an ambitious programme. In the long term the spend on our co-financing programme should lead to savings through reduced re-offending and therefore less cost in both human and financial terms.”

Mark Nickson, Head of National Offender Management Service (NOMS) co-financing

ESF allocations by priority (£ million)



Partners and projects

"I personally have witnessed some truly remarkable individual transformations as a result of support on this project, all made possible by the ESF."

Steve Thacker, Senior Business Manager, Intraining South East

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has overall responsibility for ESF funds in England. The Department liaises with the European Commission in Brussels and manages the ESF programme at a national level.

A Programme Monitoring Committee oversees the implementation of the programme. The committee includes representatives from the European Commission, Government departments and agencies, local authorities, employers, trade unions, voluntary sector, and further and higher education.

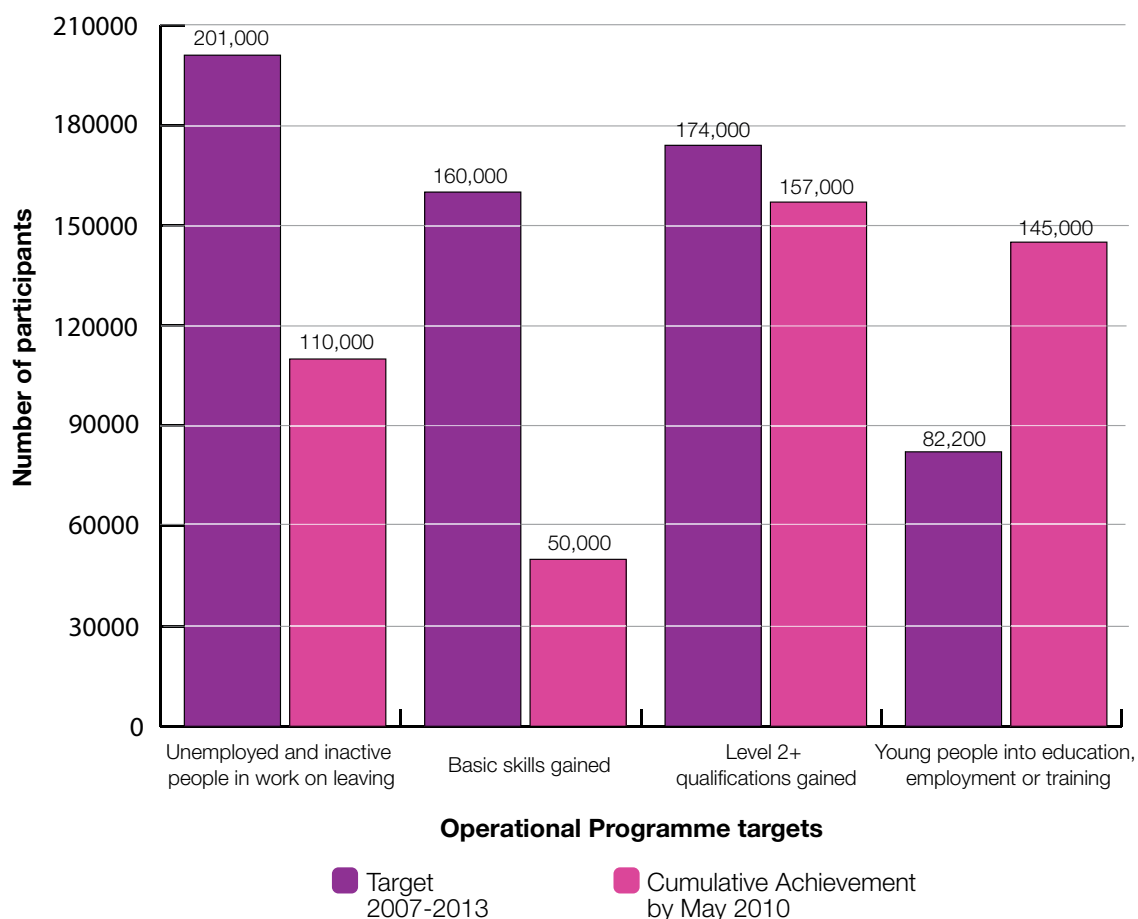
On the ground, projects are delivered by a range of providers from the private, public and voluntary sectors, working together to meet the needs of participants.

Providers access ESF funding through public agencies known as Co-financing Organisations (CFOs). These agencies, such as the Skills Funding Agency, National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the DWP, distribute ESF funding to providers through open and competitive tendering processes. Successful providers do not have to find their own 'match funding', as CFOs are responsible for this.

"The money we receive from the European Social Fund allows the Department for Work and Pensions to increase the availability of employment support for disadvantaged customers."

Alan Cave, Delivery Director, Department for Work and Pensions

Progress against 2013 targets



The 2007-2010 phase of the programme is funding over 1200 projects. The Skills Funding Agency is co-financing 835 projects with £909m of ESF funding. Other CFOs are funding 158 projects with £69m of ESF money. DWP is co-financing 84 projects with £318m of ESF funding and NOMS is co-financing 12 projects with £50m of ESF funding. DWP and NOMS operate a prime contractor model. This allows a smaller number of organisations to deliver contracts locally, outsourcing and subcontracting where necessary. There are 116 non-CFO projects funded by the ESF worth around £75m.

ESF is having a direct impact on the lives of people at a disadvantage in the labour market. By May 2010, there had been over 1.7 million participant starts on the programme. Of those who had left the programme by May 2010, ESF had helped around 110,000 unemployed or inactive participants into jobs and 207,000 participants to gain new qualifications.

“The flexibility of the ESF provision means that we are able to match the support we provide to customers to their individual needs. The outreach aspect of the provision allowing consultants to meet with customers in their own communities has changed the lives of people who have never previously engaged with welfare to work provisions.”

Paul Shepherd, Performance Manager, Working Links, Tees Valley South

Case study: Aftab Afzal

“I feel a lot more positive about the future”

With good qualifications in business and IT, college leaver Aftab Afzal thought he'd walk into a job.

But 12 months after finishing his studies – with the recession at its height - Aftab was still unemployed.

The 22-year-old, who was claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, was told about the ESF Flexible Routeways programme during one of his appointments at the Jobcentre.

He enrolled on the course, run by Intraining, and discussed with his adviser the possible learning and employment routes he could take.

With a dearth of IT jobs available, Aftab said he would also consider a job in the security industry.

He was advised to apply for a Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence – a compulsory requirement for many roles in the sector. His adviser arranged for him to attend a three day course where he learned about the many aspects of the industry before successfully completing an exam. With the SIA badge under his belt, Aftab was able to begin a search for jobs that would make the best use of his people skills. His adviser began contacting potential employers and also helped Aftab to search for positions online. Together they came across a promising job at Southend Hospital.

The pair then filled out the application together and practised mock interviews to give Aftab the best chance of success.

Aftab was offered the job and has now been working at the hospital for five months, where he monitors the CCTV systems and deals with aggressive patients to help ensure the safety of staff.

With money in his pocket again, Aftab has recently taken up studying management part-time in a bid to fulfil his ambition of becoming an IT consultant.

Aftab, who lives with his family near Southend, said he would recommend the project to anyone looking for a job.

He said, “Intraining really helped me a lot, I feel a lot more positive about the future.”



Employment opportunities

“The great thing about ESF funded courses is that we can provide longer and far more intensive support for those people who really need it. Many ESF participants have multiple barriers to work and a 13 or 26-week course can provide the time and space to explore the issues that prevent people finding a job.”

Kate Poulton, Jobcentre Plus ESF Manager, South East

ESF Priority 1 (extending employment opportunities) supports projects to tackle the barriers to work faced by unemployed and disadvantaged people. About £1.5 billion of ESF money is available for this priority in 2007–2013.

Resources are focused on people who are most likely to face disadvantage or discrimination. By tackling and preventing worklessness, this priority helps to improve social inclusion and social mobility. By helping unemployed and inactive parents to enter sustainable jobs and make progress at work, it helps to alleviate child poverty.

Key target groups include:

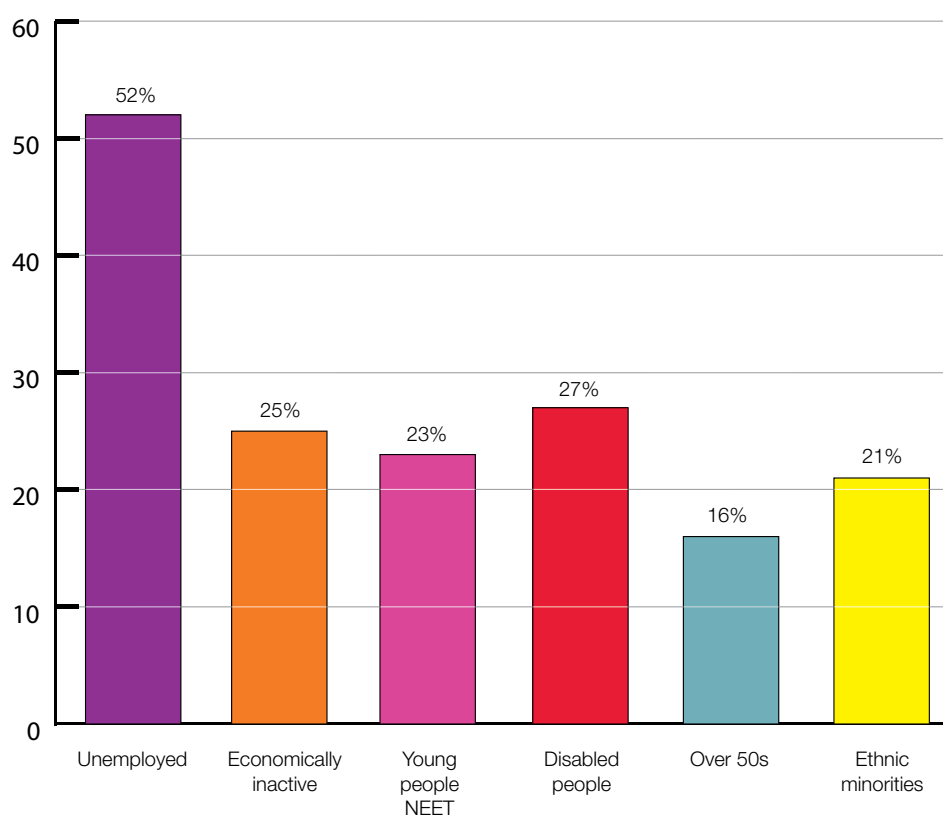
- disabled people
- lone parents
- people aged over 50
- people from ethnic minorities
- people without good qualifications and skills
- offenders and ex-offenders.
- young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

In 2011-2013, ESF Priority 1 funded provision will continue to focus on disadvantaged groups.

“ESF has supported many inactive customers who may not have engaged with Jobcentre Plus, to overcome their disadvantages, enter sustained employment and achieve social inclusion”.

Ian Dodd, Jobcentre Plus South Tyne and Wear District ESF Team

Priority 1 participants



Proportion of participants in Priority 1 to May 2010 (percent)

Case study: Krystyna Mitchell

“I’ve fitted straight in”

Having been out of the workplace for more than three decades, 59-year-old Krystyna Mitchell thought she was on the scrapheap as far as getting a job was concerned.

The mother-of-three had last worked in the 1970s, before giving up her career to look after her family.

“I didn’t think I would be an employable person to be honest,” she said. “My employment history was effectively zero and I thought my age – I was 58 then, 59 now – would be against me.”

She found out about the ESF ‘Opportunities London’ programme, run by Seetec, during one of her appointments at the Jobcentre, and as Krystyna described it, “the ball started rolling”.

“I started at Seetec in January,” said Krystyna.

“There were various modules to attend including confidence-building, CV writing, how to go about looking for work, interview techniques and computer skills.

“I had a case worker who I could go to if I had any problems or anything.

“My mother was in a care home and my case worker said it would be a good idea to do some voluntary work there.

“I really enjoyed that type of work and found it very fulfilling, so while I was volunteering I started applying for jobs in care homes – including a position for an activities coordinator at a brand new care centre in Teddington.”

Determined to get the job, Krystyna practised a mock interview with her case worker until she felt confident.

She was successful and started her new job at Deer Park View care centre in May 2010.

“The rest is history,” laughs Krystyna, who has six grandchildren. “I play games with the residents, motivate them, reminisce and do sing-songs.

“The level of activity is tailored to the resident’s condition, said Krystyna. “If I can do lively things with them, I will, or I can do passive activities.

“It’s very challenging, very interesting and because it’s a brand new care home, everyone is getting to know each other so I’ve fitted straight in.”



Young people

Young people are a key target group for ESF, especially those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET.

Young ESF participants often face multiple barriers and benefit from specialised provision to engage them in learning and keep them engaged. Support is focused on groups such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, care leavers, young offenders and teenage parents.

ESF supports a range of employment and skills provision targeted at helping young people to prepare for working life. For example, as at autumn 2010, the Skills Funding Agency/Young People's Learning Agency is funding 292 ESF projects for young people who are NEET. In addition to these projects, ESF is also supporting 53 Apprenticeship projects on which over 3,000 learners have started.

By May 2010, in Priority 1 72% of young ESF participants had progressed into education, employment or training, significantly exceeding the target.

Case study: Tom

Tom (not his real name), a Nottingham teenager, has turned his back on a life of crime to concentrate on providing for his new family. With the support of an ESF project that helps ex-offenders improve their job prospects, Tom (now 18) is working for BT.

Tom had been out of education for a number of years and was referred to Nottingham Youth Offending Service and the New Horizons project, managed by Endeavour Training Ltd and ESF co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency.

Although he had some qualifications and work experience, Tom was unsure of what he wanted to do with his future. Following the news that he would soon become a father, Tom was keen to find a job as soon as possible.

Tom's New Horizons adviser, Kiylee White, found an advertisement for a customer service Apprenticeship at BT, but Tom was worried he didn't have the experience and was nervous about applying for a role at such a large company.

However, through confidence building sessions and skills assessments with Kiylee, he realised that he had a lot of the attributes required, put in his application and secured an interview. Understandably he was quite anxious so worked very closely with his adviser on what to expect, interview questions and how to present himself. Tom was delighted to be offered the Apprenticeship and began work the following week.

He has been in his role since February 2010, thoroughly enjoys it and has not re-offended.

Kiylee said, "Tom has been through a lot since we started working together but has worked hard to face his issues and work through them. He has developed into a conscientious and committed young person since gaining his Apprenticeship and is now able to support himself and his daughter. Tom is already looking at a promotion to team leader and I am very proud of what he has achieved. He is a great example of someone who has belief in himself, wants something better out of life and who has turned his life around by taking advantage of the support services that are available."

Offenders

Projects aimed at improving employability are making a big difference to offenders' lives. Since January 2010, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) co-financing programme has been successfully working with participants whose needs may not be met through mainstream providers.

Offenders find it particularly hard to get into work, often due to lack of training or experience, and there is often uncertainty surrounding the declaration of offences to prospective employers.

Projects are proving successful, with many offenders now accessing learning opportunities and Jobcentre Plus services and others helped directly into employment.

"Many offenders have low skills levels and, coupled with a criminal conviction, it makes their job prospects poor. The programmes run by our providers are helping to develop skills and this is leading to real jobs for offenders and the opportunity for them to make a fresh start. This is good news for offenders and good news for employers who are getting the skilled people they need."

Mark Nickson, Head of NOMS co-financing

NOMS CFO has been awarded ESF funding for a further phase of the work from 2011-2013 and is working to appoint providers for new contracts starting in January 2011.

Case study: Luke

Creating Futures is a voluntary sector organisation which delivers a range of contracts across the South East. Part-funded by the NOMS ESF co-financing programme, Creating Futures acts as a sub-contractor to SERCO supporting offenders to realise their potential through Job Deal. The project provides support to offenders to develop skills and access employment, voluntary work and placements. The focus of its work under ESF is in Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire where the project has played a key role in transforming the lives of many offenders like Luke.

Luke (not his real name) is 30 years old with a long history of drug and serious alcohol misuse issues. His offending began in 1995 and escalated until his last conviction for robbery resulted in a prison sentence of seven years. Released on licence after five years, Luke was subject to public protection restrictions. He was provided with accommodation within a drug recovery hostel and referred to Job Deal.

Before custody Luke had never been able to hold down a job for more than a few weeks at a time. His long term aim though was to become a fitness instructor, building on his training and qualifications achieved whilst in prison. However, Luke was concerned that pursuing further training might affect his benefits and accommodation. The Job Deal case manager was able to provide Luke with advice and guidance on benefits as well as helping him consider his options for training and employment.

Luke was helped to draft a CV and to look at ways of addressing the issue of disclosure which he was most concerned about. He applied for numerous jobs and got interviews but each time he was unsuccessful. His case manager played a critical role in keeping Luke motivated despite the disappointments of not being offered a job.

Eventually Luke's perseverance paid off and he is now employed by a local cleaning company. Luke will also be starting his fitness instructor course at the local college in October. He remains drug and drink free.

Luke said, "The project has really helped and given me a really positive outlook on my life. The help in getting fitness instructor training and the help for me getting a job has helped amazingly."

Workforce skills

ESF Priority 2 (developing a skilled and adaptable workforce) supports the national skills strategy by funding training for people who do not have the basic skills and qualifications needed in today's workplace. This includes increasing the number of workers qualified to level 2 and, where justified, to level 3 and above.

About £823 million of ESF money is available for this priority in 2007–2013. Resources are focused on addressing skills needs in growth sectors and on employees who are least likely to receive training. Priority 2 also supports training for managers and employees in small firms.

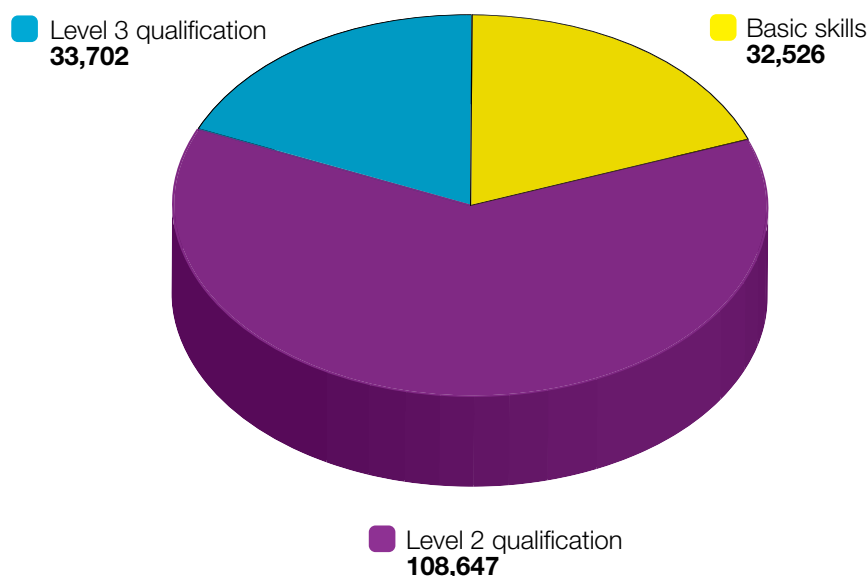
The aims are to help people gain skills qualifications needed for their career progression and social mobility, and to contribute to building an internationally competitive skills base.

In the 2011-2013 phase of the programme, there will be a greater proportion of ESF funding for Apprenticeships and for training at level 3 and above than during the first phase of the programme. This will enable ESF to respond better to the skills needs of key parts of the economy.

“As a Co-financing Organisation, we have been able to use the flexibility of ESF to react quickly to the economic downturn. Using ESF, we have funded a holistic package of support for employers and employees affected by the recession. The Response to Redundancy programme has supported over 72,000 participants who had recently been made redundant or were under notice of redundancy, providing short, job-focused skills development relating to sectors where job vacancies existed.”

Julie Hobbins, Head of ESF, Skills Funding Agency

Priority 2 qualifications



Total number of qualifications achieved by ESF Priority 2 participants to May 2010

Evaluation of in-work training

The ESF Support for In-Work Training study* which was published in July 2010 shows how ESF funding adds value to mainstream programmes and strategies.

The study undertook case studies of 41 projects involving interviews with 166 project staff. The researchers also interviewed over 60 employers and 130 learners who were being helped by the projects.

The providers, employers and learners reported examples of the benefits that their participation in ESF funded training had provided. These included:

- **for employers** - improved business performance (profit and improved efficiencies), increased workforce and management skills, and increased propensity to train.
- **for employees** – improved confidence, achieving qualifications, help with career progression, improved skills and improved attitudes to training. Most of the employees interviewed stated that the training had helped them to do their existing jobs better.

The study found that the main contribution that ESF made to the projects was through:

- enhancing provision
- supporting learners and employers to invest in training
- developing innovative provision
- improving the flexibility of provision.

*Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 666, European Social Fund Support for In-Work Training

Case study: Desi Sweets

The owners and staff of Desi Sweets, a chain of Asian sweet shops, have successfully undertaken National Vocational Qualifications in Customer Services, provided by Accent on Training.

The training, backed by ESF, aims to deliver support to local businesses that would benefit from skills development through flexible work-based training.

Hardeep Singh, Manager of Desi Sweets, commented on the impact on his staff, "The training was invaluable and had a really positive effect on their work."



Pictured: (left to right) Employee Amanider Singh Kohli, tutor Sadie Summers and general manager Hardeep Singh.'

"Many people think that training is something you do before you enter the workplace, but continuing to develop your skills is a vital part in developing both yourself and your career."

Councillor Philip Atkins, Chairman of the West Midlands Councils

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

“The talents and skills of all people, no matter their gender, race, ability, sexuality or age has a significant positive contribution to our society and economy. Learning is key to accessing greater opportunity and we hope that as many people as possible take advantage of ESF Convergence to unlock their own potential.”

Mark Yeoman, Deputy Director, Convergence Partnership Office for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

As the only Convergence area in England, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has its own ESF priorities. Along with support from the European Regional Development Fund, ESF Convergence funding aims to help Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly build a stronger, more diverse economy by supporting businesses and helping people into employment. It is also helping those in work to gain new and up-to-date skills.

ESF priorities will contribute to Cornwall Strategy and Action, the long term strategy for economic development for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Its four main objectives for developing people are to: achieve economic inclusion and reduce worklessness; provide the best start for young people; support higher education; and improve workforce development.



convergence
*for economic
transformation*



European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills

The ESF priorities for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are:

- Tackling barriers to employment – (Priority 4): This seeks to help make more people ready for work, no matter what barriers they face. It also has a particular focus on reducing the number of young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET.
- Improving the skills of the local workforce – (Priority 5): This is central to addressing the issue of low earnings and to achieving a more knowledge-based economy. ESF investment is used to support training for basic skills, levels 2 and 3 and Higher Education activity. Priority 5 also trains people in entrepreneurship, self-employment and social enterprise.

“Here in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly we have a unique opportunity to help people realise their talents. ESF Convergence is being used innovatively via Cornwall Works to ensure flexible support reaches the people who most need it, and in a way which is of the greatest benefit for their future”

Michelle Maslen, District Manager, Jobcentre Plus, Devon and Cornwall District

Compared to other parts of England and Gibraltar, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has lower numbers of adults qualified to A level and degree level and a lack of graduate level jobs in the economy. Convergence ESF is therefore helping to promote higher level skills, so that its economy can be transformed into one of sustainable prosperity, with opportunity for all.

For more information about the Convergence Partnership visit the website at www.convergencecornwall.com

Case study: Gemma Ford

“I couldn’t have hoped for more”

A graduate employed through the ESF supported Unlocking Cornish Potential (UCP) scheme has used her expertise in online marketing to launch two Cornish hotels into the world of social media.

Gemma Ford was employed as Marketing Co-ordinator for the award-winning Bedruthan Steps Hotel and its sister hotel, a luxury boutique eco-hotel, Scarlet in June 2009. After successfully launching Twitter and Facebook accounts for both hotels, Gemma was invited to produce a three minute video for Scarlet’s homepage to showcase all the various aspects of the hotel in high definition video.

The video has been well received and has gained interest in the hotel from online reviewers, bloggers and journalists.

UCP is run by the Combined Universities in Cornwall. It places graduates with businesses in Cornwall for up to one year and offers support including mentoring from experts in their fields.

Carleen Kelemen, Director of the Convergence Partnership Office for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly said, “It is fantastic to see an innovative graduate bringing a fresh approach to marketing both new and established Cornish businesses. Gemma has embraced her role and delivered beyond expectations.”

Speaking of her experience - Gemma said, “When I saw the job advertised with UCP I knew that it was the one to go for, a role where I could utilise my online marketing skills. UCP has been hugely supportive, through both the mentoring and training I have received, as well as enabling me to meet, socialise and network with other graduates, I couldn’t have hoped for more.”

Colin Milroy, UCP project manager said, “Gemma has really embraced the UCP project focused approach and has maximised the business skills training and specialist mentoring that is provided.”



Photo courtesy of Apex: Chris Saville

“ESF Convergence investment has demonstrably added value across the employment and skills agenda in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly – to date over 6,500 people have been helped to overcome barriers to employment with over 2,300 having moved into work with ongoing training, and over 15,500 people in the workforce have started a training course. Greater numbers of people in the workforce with the modern skills needed by business will help us maximise the opportunities of the economic upturn.”

Carleen Kelemen, Director, Convergence Partnership Office for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Cohort study

The ESF cohort study is a large scale quantitative survey of ESF participants covering the whole of England and all target groups. It comprises three waves of telephone interviews supplemented by a small number of face-to-face interviews with more vulnerable individuals. The report of the first wave of the cohort study was published in July 2010 and the report of the second wave will be published in November 2010. The third wave of the cohort study will be published in May 2011.

The survey was carried out by the National Centre for Social Research, looking at participant experiences and longer term outcomes of ESF provision. The first wave of 11,000 interviews took place from April to September 2009 and the second wave of over 7,000 interviews took place between January and March 2010.

The survey shows that ESF is reaching disadvantaged groups, and that participant experiences and initial outcomes are positive. Across all programme participants, 79% had at least one disadvantage; 49% had two or more disadvantages; and 26% had three or more disadvantages.

The second wave of interviews found that:

- ESF is helping participants from Priority 1 into employment, as employment rose from 6% in the week before the ESF intervention to 27% at the time of the wave 2 interview, while unemployment fell from 69% to 43% in the same period (Figure 1). This was broken down by ESF target groups:
 - **Gender:** The rate of employment rose more for women (6% to 32%) than for men (6% to 24%).
 - **Age:** The rates of employment rose more for younger age groups 16-19 year olds (8% to 29%) and those aged 20-49 (5% to 29%) than for those aged over 50 (6% to 16%).
 - **Disability:** The rate of employment rose less for disabled people (5% to 18%) than for people without a disability (6% to 32%).
 - **Ethnicity:** The employment patterns of participants from ethnic minority groups were similar to those of white people.
 - **Lone parents:** The employment rate rose more (6% to 32%) for lone parents than those who were not lone parents (6% to 26%).
- Satisfaction levels with ESF provision were relatively high, with 76% of participants saying that the course was relevant to their needs. The majority of participants also felt that the course had helped them to improve the practical skills needed for work, as well as softer skills such as communication and self-confidence.
- ESF provision was particularly beneficial to employees who had taken on higher skilled work for an existing employer (34%), with 87% acknowledging that the provision had helped them to do this work. Additionally, ESF provision was helpful to those who had taken on responsibility for managing people (27%) with 78% acknowledging that the provision had helped them with this. 44% of participants had received a pay rise since undertaking the provision, with 46% saying that this was due to undertaking ESF provision (Figure 2).
- Among participants from Priority 2 and 5 55% said that since they had been on ESF provision, they had improved their job security. Of these, a high proportion (87%) agreed that the ESF provision had helped them in this area.
- Of those participants who were unemployed at the wave 2 interview, most had made job applications (69%) since the wave 1 interview while over half had been to job interviews (56%).

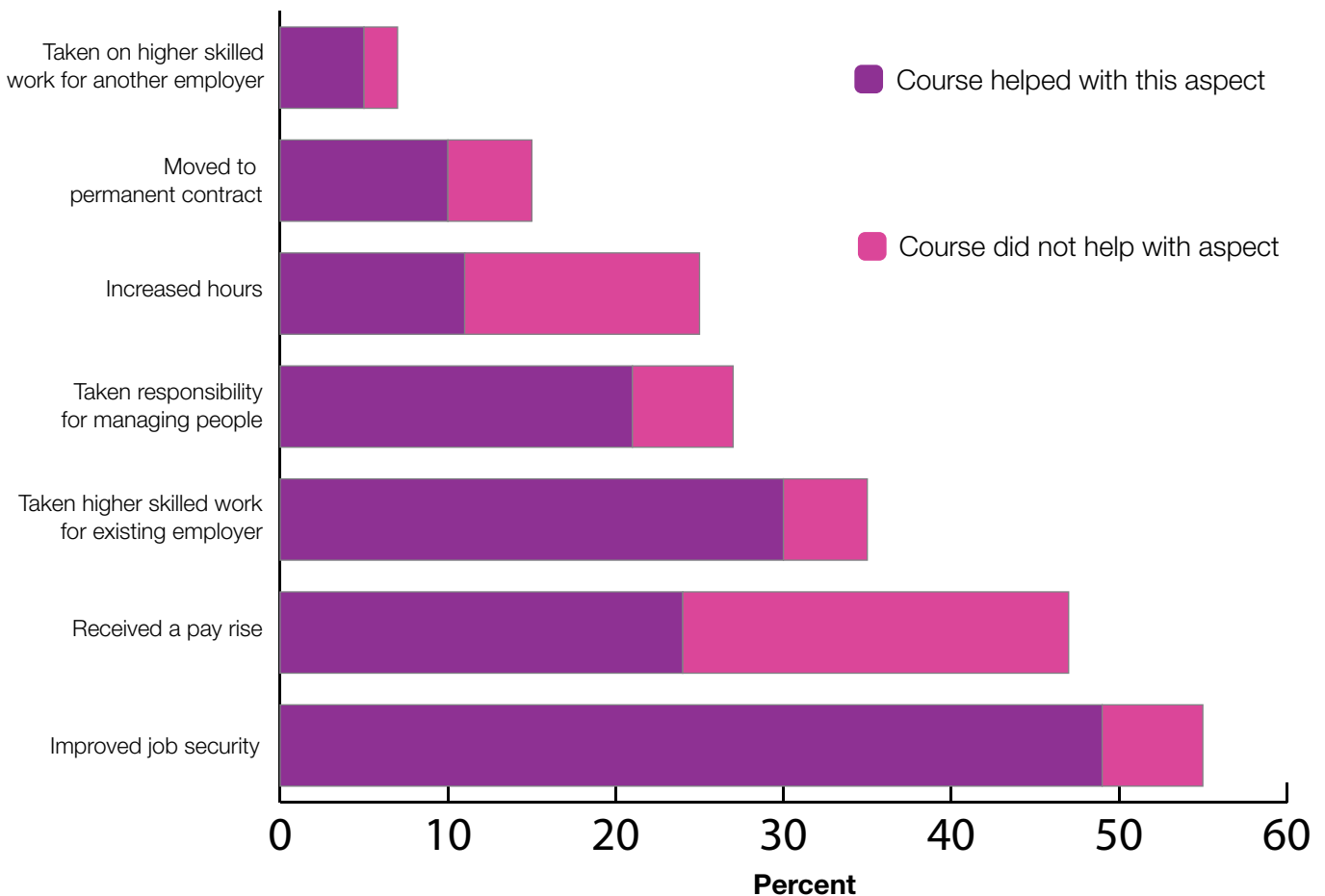
Figure 1 - Employment patterns of course leavers in Priority 1 and 4

ESF Cohort Study

Employment status	Priority 1			Priority 4		
	Week before course	Wave 1 interview	Wave 2 interview	Week before course	Wave 1 interview	Wave 2 interview
	%	%	%	%	%	%
In employment	6	21	27	6	26	30
Unemployed	69	50	43	39	25	25
Economically inactive	25	29	30	55	49	45

Source: Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, European Social Fund Cohort Study: Wave 2.

Figure 2 - Changes in employment status



Source: Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, European Social Fund Cohort Study: Wave 2.

Equal opportunities

“We run programmes focusing entirely on lone parents during school hours because you then have a group of people, normally female, with similar circumstances, similar worries and concerns, supporting each other and aware that it is their time to improve themselves.”

Wendy Cullen, TNG Ltd, Kent

Gender equality and equal opportunities is a cross cutting theme in the 2007–2013 England ESF programme.

The programme has a dual approach to mainstreaming equal opportunities:

- integrating equal opportunities into planning, procurement, contract management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- funding specific projects to promote equality of opportunity for groups at a disadvantage in the labour market.

The England ESF equal opportunities mainstreaming plan aims to make equal opportunities an issue for all organisations involved in delivering the programme. There are indicators to measure the participation and achievements of its main equality target groups: disabled people; people aged 50 and over; ethnic minorities; and women.

Evaluation of progress so far

The ESF Evaluation of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities study* found that equal opportunities are being successfully mainstreamed within the ESF programme and that provision is being tailored to meet the needs of key target groups.

Findings from the study which was published in July 2010 were:

- Contract managers and provider staff perceive equal opportunities legislation and policies to be valuable tools in the promotion of equal opportunities.
- Procurement and monitoring processes are highly developed and successful examples of mainstreaming are in operation.
- Provider staff and participants consider the proactive and sustained promotion of equal opportunities to be integral to ESF service provision and delivery.
- The main ways in which ESF funded providers work to promote access and diversity include:
 - active outreach to participant groups;
 - building links with community and voluntary sector organisations within local networks;
 - flexibility in terms of response to individual participant needs;
 - active employer engagement;
 - challenging negative employer perceptions of different participant groups; and
 - providing guidance and support around necessary adjustments.

* Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 667, Evaluation of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities within the European Social Fund.

“As equal opportunities is a key focus of the ESF provision we make specific attempts to engage with customers from all parts of our community. We have worked with community groups, children’s centres, TAEN (The Age and Employment Network) and the ethnic minority community to ensure that the provision is available to as many customers as we can reach.”

Paul Shepherd, Performance Manager, Working Links, Tees Valley South.

Equal opportunities targets and achievement



Case study: Nicky Clements

“The programme was brilliant - it took all the mystery and fear out of starting a business”

Nicky Clements had been out of work for around two years after a long illness. The 43-year-old from South Yorkshire had developed depression following family bereavements. Nicky, who is also severely deaf, had been claiming Incapacity Benefit but was keen to return to work. She had previously worked as an IT teacher but had struggled to cope with the job because of her hearing problems.

Nicky said, “When it came to getting back into work I thought, “What do I love doing?”

“I loved decorating and was always doing my own DIY – so that was the path I decided to follow.”

Through her disability employment adviser at the Jobcentre, Nicky secured a decorating apprenticeship, where she



Case study: Nicky Clements continued

learned the trade. She was then referred to the ESF Self-Employment Programme, run by A4e, where she was taught how to set up her own decorating business.

“We had eight sessions for eight weeks on subjects such as marketing, tax, promotion and coming up with a business name,” said Nicky. “The programme was so helpful – it took a lot of the mystery and fear out of starting a business. I was terrified before I started on it.” Just four months later, Nicky launched her own painting and decorating business and is now going from strength to strength.



Case study: Susan Day

“It was really nerve wracking going back to work – but I’m so glad I’ve done it”

Susan Day was forced to find a job after the breakdown of her marriage. Having been out of the workplace for half a decade, the mother-of-two was extremely nervous about finding employment – but is now relishing her new role.

“I’ve been working at Cleveland College of Art and Design since January, staffing the reception desk, switchboard, and the students’ art shop,” said Susan, 47. “Before I found the job I didn’t know whether anyone would want to employ me and it was really nerve wracking going back. But I’m so glad I’ve done it.” Susan, from Stockton-on-Tees, secured her position with the help of an ESF project run by Working Links.

“When Susan came to me she was very timid,” said her consultant, Angie Ward, who helped Susan with a CV, job searches and interview skills.

“She hadn’t had an interview in years and had zero confidence... she came to me in a bit of a pickle. We found a great job at a college that was perfect for Susan,” added Angie.

“She needed to know all about the college so I helped her find its website and she sat and studied it for hours.” Susan was selected for interview and she and Angie prepared by going over mock questions.

“When she was told she had got the job she couldn’t believe it,” said Angie.

“If you saw her now to what she was – she’s a completely different person.”



Sustainable development

Sustainable development is the other cross cutting theme in the 2007–2013 ESF programme.

Sustainable development in ESF involves three elements: promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in the labour market; providing business skills for the future; and protecting the environment.

While jobs and skills remain the key drivers for ESF activity, the 2007–2013 programme has an enhanced focus on environmental issues. This involves integrating ‘green’ issues such as energy conservation and recycling into project delivery.

The programme also supports specific projects which help to protect or enhance the environment. These include, for example, training in environmental management and protection skills and in eco-friendly technologies. The programme’s approach to sustainable development is set out in a mainstreaming plan, which is available on the ESF website.

The 2011-2013 phase of the programme will have an enhanced focus on training people in ‘green jobs’ in a low carbon economy.

Case study: Energy2

“This project is outstanding on so many levels”

A unique commercial and training enterprise in Wiltshire, Energy2, has been set up by Swindon Borough Council to enable disabled people to acquire skills that are needed by local industry

Having gained new skills in horticulture, retail, food, biomass and recycling industries, a high percentage of participants go on to find employment.

The Energy2 project is ESF co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency. Its commercial arm is Energy2burn which provides training and work experience opportunities and some full time jobs. These are available to disabled people or people with health problems that have previously been a barrier to their employment.

Energy2burn is also working closely with partners who can assist with advice and installation of the wide range of biomass boilers and heaters for domestic and commercial use that burn the eco-friendly fuel.

The new training and work experience positions will involve not only operating the pellet processing plant, but also other jobs associated with making Energy2burn a business success - including sales and marketing, finance and administration.

Dr Paul Pettigrew, Head of Provider Accounts for the Skills Funding Agency, said, “This project is outstanding on so many levels. It is financially self-sustaining, offers essential training and job opportunities, and is a benefit to the environment. We are proud to be associated with Energy2burn.”



Pictured: Energy2 participants

Community grants

ESF community grants are grants of up to £12,000 which enable small voluntary and community organisations to reach out to some of the most disadvantaged and excluded people.

The grants have a local focus and seek to move people closer to the labour market. They support a wide range of activities including:

- initial help with basic skills
- taster work experience, including voluntary work
- training, advice and counselling
- confidence building.

Because of the nature of the target groups, project outcomes usually involve progression towards a job or further training, rather than the immediate achievement of a job or qualification.

Case study: Rachel Coleman

“This voluntary work has given me a new lease of life”

A Nottingham woman is well on her way back into paid employment thanks to an ESF supported community project in St Ann's, Nottingham.

Single mum of two, Rachel Coleman, left work 17 years ago to care for her first child, but the monotony of hanging around the house with nothing to do became too much. On one of her regular visits to the Chase Neighbourhood Centre, the chef mentioned he needed some help in the café and Rachel immediately offered a hand.

Through the ‘Unity in the Community’ community grant project, which was ESF co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency, Rachel was able to undergo food and hygiene training. She now works 16 hours a week as a volunteer in the café, and is currently working with an adviser from the Jobcentre on a plan to make the move into paid employment.

Rachel said, “This voluntary work has given me a new lease of life. It’s great getting to meet new people and I really look forward to going every day.

“The job I had before the kids was admin based, so it’s been really interesting working in a completely new industry and I hope I can find a paid job in catering in the future.”

Debbie Webster, Unity in the Community Project Manager said, “The various funding streams we get for the Neighbourhood Centre are often ring-fenced, but the ESF community grant is flexible and has enabled us to give our volunteers structured training and support to help them on their way into paid employment.”



Innovation

Innovation is essential to future economic prosperity. In the context of ESF, innovation means new approaches, tools, methods and service provision to extend employment and raise skills. It can also mean adapting existing approaches to new sectors or target groups.

The innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming strand of the England ESF programme supports 32 projects. Starting in 2009 and backed by £23 million of ESF funding they are aiming to develop and deliver new ways of extending employment opportunities and raising workforce skills.

Each project includes an element of cooperation with at least one other EU Member State. Across all 32 projects there are 64 transnational partners from 19 countries.

The six themes for innovation are: active inclusion; demographic change; engaging with employers; information and communication technology and the digital divide; skills for climate change and sustainable development; and social enterprise. Each theme is supported by a network which brings together ESF projects and policy makers. The thematic networks help to ensure that project lessons and results are captured and inform policy and programme development at a national and subsequently European level.

Details of innovative projects can be found in the innovation section of the www.esf-works.com website. ESF-Works is the showcase and forum for policy and practice lessons from the 2007-2013 ESF programme in England - aimed at all professionals working in the areas of employment and skills.

Case study: Vedas

Lancashire-based recruitment company, Vedas, is helping over 50s get back into work as part of an ESF 'demographic change' innovative project led by Lancashire Colleges Consortium (LCC).

The Age No-Concern project was adapted from an existing ESF funded project run by Vedas, using a programme known as 'Altered Images', which helps participants build their confidence as the first step towards finding employment. Developed in collaboration with LCC, the programme is delivered in a series of half-day sessions over three weeks, by the end of which participants have an individual action plan to follow, which usually includes getting back into work.

Lesley Burrows, Managing Director of Vedas said, "In recent years we have delivered over £2 million of ESF-funded activity, all aimed at progressing people into work. Altered Images is the lynchpin of the Vedas training model, helping people to improve their self esteem. To date around three quarters of participants have been placed in employment."

The Age No-Concern project was developed specifically for over 50s. Because participants in Altered Images are usually split into peer groups, the Vedas team felt that this methodology could be used to address the problem of over-50s getting back into work, in a focused and productive way. The results of the innovative project have been impressive, with 20 participants finding work between September 2009 and May 2010.

The over-50s groups follow the same programme as other Altered Images participants, and being with others at the same stage of life as them is an important element in building confidence and a sense of self-worth. In fact, individuals going through Altered Images together often go on to develop strong relationships that carry on after the workshop has ended.



Pictured: Neil Adams Age No-Concern participant

England ESF Award Winners 2010

ESF Mainstreaming Leader Awards

The 2007-2013 England ESF programme Equal Opportunities and Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Leader Awards give recognition to providers and subcontractors that have made a special effort to mainstream equal opportunities or sustainable development by:

- using effective mainstreaming policies and implementation plans; or
- providing specialist support, which targets specific equality groups or has a particular environmental focus.

The 2010 national award winners are:

 <p>Equal Opportunities (Policy and Plan) Winner South Birmingham College</p>	 <p>Sustainable Development (Policy and Plan) Winner North Warwickshire and Hinkley College</p>	 <p>Equal Opportunities (Specialist Project) Winner YMWA - 'Young Mums Will Achieve' / Cornwall Council</p>	 <p>Sustainable Development (Specialist Project) Winner Gateway to SusCon / North West Kent College</p>
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Adult Learners' Week Awards

Adult Learners' Week (ALW) is an annual week-long national campaign each May, which seeks to engage and inspire people to pursue adult learning. Organised by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), and part-funded by the European Social Fund, ALW is the UK's largest learning campaign.

The 2010 national ALW ESF award winners are:

 <p>ESF Opening Doors to Adult Learners Winner Energy2work, Swindon</p>	 <p>ESF Learning Works Winner Gill Pinnock, Leicester</p>	 <p>ESF Group Winner Tesco, Old Swan, Liverpool</p>	 <p>ESF Outstanding Learner of the Year Winner Matthew Davis, Walsall</p>
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Photo courtesy of Positive Negatives

Photo courtesy of Positive Negatives

Useful websites



European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills

England ESF programme

www.esf.gov.uk

The England ESF website provides general information about the 2007-2013 ESF programme in England, including news, lists of projects, case studies and guidance. It provides links to tendering rounds launched by the Co-financing Organisations.



Adult Learners' Week

www.alw.org.uk

Adult Learners' Week (ALW) is the UK's largest and longest-running learning campaign – celebrating the achievements of learners and encouraging thousands of people, whatever their background or age to give learning a go. ALW is part-funded by ESF technical assistance.



ESF-Works

www.esf-works.com

ESF-Works is the showcase and forum for policy and practice lessons from the 2007-2013 ESF programme in England. It is aimed at all professionals working in the areas of employment and skills, regardless of their European funding experience. ESF-Works is part-funded by ESF technical assistance.



Third Sector European Network

www.tsen.org.uk

The Third Sector European Network website is part-financed by ESF technical assistance and provides information on European funding opportunities for voluntary sector organisations.



Europa

www.europa.eu

The Europa website is the website of the European Union and provides information on a wide range of EU activities including the ESF.



TAEN – The Age and Employment Network

www.taen.org.uk

TAEN works to promote an effective labour market that serves the needs of people in mid and later life, employers and the economy. TAEN runs an ESF technical assistance project to provide information and guidance to projects that are targeting older workers.



Convergence

www.convergencecornwall.com

The Convergence website provides information on the ESF and European Regional Development Fund in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The website is part-funded by ESF technical assistance.

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