

***Centre for
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EVALUATION OF "THE EDGE IN CUMBRIA"

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CONTENTS

	Page
Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Impacts of The Edge on Employers	5
3. Impacts of The Edge on Learners	8
4. Impacts of The Edge on Key Sectors in Cumbria	12
5. The Edge Partnership Processes	14
Appendix A	16
Appendix B	17

TABLES

	Page
1. "Courses" and "Course Innovations" offered by Training Providers	7
2. Prior attainment level of Participants starting on The Edge courses, 2013-14 and 2014-15	9
3. Age and Gender of learners, 2013-14	9
4. Age and Gender of learners, 2014-15	9
5. Participants with a disability starting on The Edge courses in 2013-15	10
6. Ethnicity of participants starting on The Edge courses in 2013-15	10
7. Summary of Case Studies of Learners	11
8. Numbers of Participants starting courses on The Edge by sector, 2013-15	13
9. The Edge Project Board Meetings	16

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EVALUATION OF THE ESF SSW PROJECT: THE EDGE IN CUMBRIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Edge in Cumbria is a skills development project supported by ESF Co-financing and the Skills Funding Agency. The purpose of The Edge is to support local skills needs with a focus on employed individuals. The project is managed by Carlisle College and delivered in collaboration with other skills providers across the County.
2. Various sources have been used to evaluate the impacts of The Edge on employees and the benefits that accrue to employers. These sources include data from the Individual Learner Records (ILRs) supplemented by analysis of project documents, available surveys of learners and employers as well as case studies and telephone interviews.
3. Project monitoring data shows that between April 2013 and February 2015, Training Needs Analyses (TNAs) were conducted with 720 employers and 334 have subsequently registered 1,489 employees on training programmes through The Edge.
4. Surveys of employers suggest that The Edge has been well-received by businesses in Cumbria. The funding has been flexible and has facilitated skills development of greater significance than might otherwise have been the case without this support. Administrative burdens on employers have been minimised. A high proportion of provision has involved innovative combinations of training to meet specific needs of employers.
5. The Edge has had some success in meeting the needs of its primary target groups. Participation from employees without a level 2 qualification increased from 47 (13.8%) during the first year (2013-14) and rose to 200 (17.5%) during 2014-15 (up to February). The project has successfully targeted more female than male employees and delivered training to 407 workers over the age of 50. Participation by those with disabilities and from ethnic minorities was initially very low but has risen to 5.9% (68) and 4.5% (52), respectively during 2014-15.
6. The Edge has provided training of relevance to many of the target sectors identified by the Cumbria LEP. These include, prominently, skills interventions in health and social care, business services, the visitor economy, manufacturing and construction. By comparison, participation from employers in nuclear, agriculture and digital, media and creative sectors has been lower.
7. Evidence from Board Meetings and feedback from providers suggests that there has been effective collaboration between providers in delivery. Training providers have clearly benefited from the flexibility in the funding of The Edge and it has proved possible to customise training to particular employer needs.
8. The Edge has proved effective, particularly in meeting the needs of smaller employers involved in the visitor economy, healthcare and business services across the County. Participation by employers in retailing, manufacturing, construction and logistics has also increased in the second year of delivery. Addressing skills issues in the energy sector, however, remains a significant challenge for The Edge and for the County as whole.

EVALUATION OF THE ESF SSW PROJECT: THE EDGE IN CUMBRIA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

This document evaluates “*The Edge in Cumbria*” Project on behalf of the Cumbria Employment and Skills Commission. The Edge is supported by ESF Co-financing and the Skills Funding Agency and delivered through Carlisle College between June 2013 to July 2015. The College is the lead accountable body for a collaboration of FE Colleges, the University of Cumbria and independent training and support organisations. The value of the contract for Cumbria is £2.9m and is intended to support up to 3,133 learners and 900 employers by July 2015.

According to the brief, the purpose of *The Edge* has been to support local skills needs with a focus on employed individuals, especially young adults (aged 19 and over) to:

- Enhance their skills in order to become more successful in the labour market
- Advance their career prospects
- Reduce the risk of long term unemployment and welfare dependency.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of the study is to provide evidence of the benefits of the project for participants and to identify examples of good practice that can be used to inform delivery in the latter phase of delivery. More specifically, the evaluation seeks to identify the following:

- The most beneficial impacts for employers and learners
- The distribution of these benefits across different employment sectors
- The lessons of good practice that have been identified in terms of the operation of the partnership, responsiveness to emerging employer needs, the impacts on project delivery priority groups as well as unmet needs that have been identified.

1.3 Method and Sources

The evaluation is based on two main sources of information:

- **Monitoring data and evidence** collected by the Project Team in the course of delivery. This information includes the following:
 - Case studies submitted to Skills Funding Agency
 - Minutes of Project Board Meetings
 - Written feedback from partner organisations
 - Results of project telephone surveys (students and employers)
 - Monitoring data held by Delivery Team (including TNA Tracker and ILRs)
 - Other miscellaneous reports
- **Interviews with selected employers** that have been supported by the Project. These were conducted by telephone during April/May 2015.

1.4 The Partnership

The Edge involves a partnership between sixteen training and support organisations who deliver a mixture of training and employer engagement services across the County. In addition, *The Edge* also partners with the University of Cumbria in gathering intelligence to inform the project delivery. The training delivery partners are as follows:

- Carlisle College (Lead partner)
- Age UK Training
- Appleby Heritage Centre
- Barrow Training Partnership Ltd
- Cumbria Growth Hub
- Cumbria CVS
- Cumbria Adult Education
- Cumbria Deaf Vision
- Farmer Network
- Furness College
- Gen2 Training
- Kendal College
- Lakes College
- Newton Rigg College
- Stand & Deliver Training Ltd
- System People

2. IMPACTS OF “THE EDGE IN CUMBRIA” ON EMPLOYERS

Documentation for “The Edge in Cumbria” indicates that ESF funding is provided in order to “*increase engagement and support participation of employed adults in education and training in order to advance career paths and reduce the risk of unemployment*”. While the key targets for the project relate to the number and types of trainees, engagement with employers is a key factor in achieving good outcomes, particularly with regard to progression onto apprenticeships. The Edge is also targeted on small and medium-sized businesses (under 250 employees) for whom the lack of critical mass creates barriers to systematic training provision.

An indication of the response of employers to The Edge can be gauged by the numbers responding to the offer of Training Needs Analysis (TNA). Between April 2013 and February 2015, there are 720 entries in The Edge TNA tracker. These businesses are all classified as SMEs but particular note should be made of the fact that 46% of these (334) employ fewer than ten workers (micro-businesses). It can be seen, therefore, that The Edge has engaged with very small businesses that are customarily “hard to reach” for training providers. Small businesses in this range are very common in Cumbria as recognised by the LEP: Under “skills development”, the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) commits partners to work with skills funding bodies to create “freedom to provide additional support to micro businesses and rural businesses in recruiting apprentices” (Cumbria SEP p.27).

Up to the evaluation data cut-off date (end of February 2015), project monitoring indicates that just under half (334) of these businesses subsequently registered their employees on training with The Edge with benefits for 1,489 employees. The range of training is broad but includes the following categories:

- Interventions to improve teamworking and leadership skills
- Customer service, sales and retailing skills
- Business administration skills (book-keeping, note taking)
- Sector specific technical skills (construction, food industry, logistics)
- Health & safety training (food safety, fire safety, adult social care, first aid)
- Awareness of health issues (autism, dementia, control of infection, mental health)
- IT-related training (IT systems, word processing, spreadsheets)
- ICT - E-safety, web design, social media.

Feedback from employers about The Edge has been derived from multiple sources. In the course of delivery, employers were given an opportunity to provide early feedback using an on-line survey. This generated ten responses from businesses that were positive about the training received in terms of its relevance, professionalism of delivery and the ease of administration.

More recently, this has been supplemented by telephone interviews conducted by researchers in CRED. This took the form of semi-structured phone interviews with a further ten employers each lasting approximately 20 minutes. These discussions confirmed the positive reaction of employers to the support provided by The Edge and provided an opportunity to probe this response for more detail (the interview schedule can be seen in Appendix 1).

Awareness of “The Edge”

Most became aware of The Edge through personal contact with their training provider. This suggests that training providers have been alert to this funding opportunity when approached by employers for training provision.

Expectations of The Edge

Employers' expectation for the actual training was governed by their prior relationships with the relevant training provider. These expectations were generally quite high. The fact that the cost of training through the Edge is subsidised did not appear to diminish expectations.

Training provided by The Edge

The numbers of trainees varied considerably between interviewees from a cohort of 15 down to some that trained just 1-3 people. The training provided focused on very specific employer needs in all cases, including skills related to construction, leadership, food safety, first aid and customer service in their specific business environment.

Employer experience of The Edge

With regards to administration, all employers thought the paperwork burden to be minimal, and that the training providers were knowledgeable about the scheme and helpful in explaining the requirements. They also appreciated the fact that the training could be flexible to their needs.

Benefits for employees

When discussing the benefits of the training received, employers were unanimous in their view that the training had been beneficial to their employees or had enabled unemployed persons to secure employment. This was justified on the basis of specific technical skills and new knowledge that had been acquired. There was a recognition that these benefits extend to personal and group attributes such as levels of individual confidence and general staff morale. The Edge has, in some cases, provided an opportunity to train larger groups together rather than spreading cost over a longer time period. There were recognisable benefits for team-building as a consequence of this.

Benefits for the business as a whole

Employers were generally positive about the impacts of the training on their business as a whole. In some cases, this impact was fairly tangible in terms of opportunities now opened up due to accreditation. In another case, an employer recognised real benefits in that trainees no longer needed close supervision which released management time for other purposes. There were benefits for businesses also in terms staff motivation and general effectiveness, although it was too early to tell how significant this would be for business performance.

Interviewees were very positive that the Edge support had enabled them to deliver skills to meet their own specific needs. Employers have been able to work with providers to use the Edge support to fund skills provision designed for their purpose. This finding is corroborated by evidence from the ILR data which shows that most courses offered via the Edge involved "course innovations" rather than "ready-made" course provision. Innovations involved the development of hybrid combinations of training constructed to meet particular employer needs. Table 1 shows that the majority of provision under the Edge (59.4%) involved courses of this type.

Table 1: “Courses” and “Course Innovations” offered by Training Providers

Provider	Courses	Innovations	% Course innovations
Furness College	17	6	35.3
Kendal College	95	66	69.5
Lakes College	50	35	70.0
Carlisle College	45	27	60.0
Newton Rigg	1	0	0.0
System Group	13	8	61.5
Gen2	7	3	42.9
Age UK	15	0	0.0
AdultEd	6	2	33.3
BTP	8	3	37.5
Appleby	7	6	85.7
S&D	2	2	100.0
Total	266	158	59.4

3. IMPACTS OF THE EDGE ON LEARNERS

The ESF contract specifies the “Primary target group” as employees with low skills, defined as those with either no qualifications or whose highest qualification is below level 2. In addition, there is an expectation that the project will prioritise particular types of individuals, specifically females, participants with disabilities, ethnic minorities and those aged over 50. At the same time, flexibility was allowed to support the priorities identified by the LEPs (ESF 2007-13 Schedule – Skills Support for the Workforce, p. 4).

At the point in time when The Edge was designed (2013), the LEP evidence-base had begun to identify a number of emerging skills needs and also specific sector priorities. Most of these appear compatible with the ESF primary target groups. These included, for instance, the need to improve employability skills and a wide range of generic skills associated with communication, team working, literacy, numeracy, IT skills as well as general abilities in business and management. LEP evidence also pointed to the need to address the needs of those that lack basic skills (Cumbria LEP (2012) LEP Emerging Skills Priorities).

The evidence also clearly indicated the likelihood of a significant increase in demand for higher level skills (levels 4-5) and STEM skills linked to projected developments in manufacturing and the energy sectors in Cumbria (subsequent publication of the Cumbria Skills Plan in 2015 has confirmed these priorities). This suggested a need to enhance level 3 qualifications to bridge the gap to higher level skills. The evidence also indicated that the skills base could be strengthened by investing in “multiskilling” (diversifying existing skills) and adding capabilities to existing skills rather than progressing to higher levels.

With these considerations in mind, “The Edge in Cumbria” identified the following priority learners:

- Those without basic skills
- Those with basic skills needs
- Those without a Level 2 qualification
- Those without a Level 3 qualification

- Those with a disability or learning disability
- Those over 50
- Females
- Those from ethnic minorities

and particularly in the following sectors:

- Specialist manufacturing
- Nuclear
- Visitor economy
- Construction
- Agriculture, land and sea based
- Digital, media and creative
- Logistics and transport services
- Low carbon and renewable energy
- Business services
- Retail
- Health and social care.

Evidence on the targeting of the Programme in terms of skills levels is provided by analysis of the ILR data which is summarised in Table 2. During 2013-14, there were 47 learners without a level 2 qualification which is 13.8% of the total. This increased to 17.5% (or 200) in the second year up to the end of February 2015. The proportion of learners without a level 3 qualification is obviously higher in both time periods (31.6% and rising to 44%). In general, records show significant improvement in targeting those on lower skills levels in the second year of delivery.

These figures also demonstrate that learners with higher skills levels have been supported through the project. In 2013/14, 17.6% of learners supported by The Edge were qualified to level 5 or above. The most common training undertaken by people at this level was team leading, e-safety and social media awareness. 28.2% of learners indicated that a Level 4 qualification was their highest achievement to date. Again, team leading, e-safety and social media were popular along with some courses specific to the health and social care sector. 19.1% of learners already had a level 3 qualification. Courses that were popular for learners at this level were customer service, IT, team leading, electric vehicle repair, e-safety and a significant number of “innovation” deliveries (i.e. where packages of credits and units from different qualifications are combined as a training package to meet the individuals’ needs).

Table 2: Prior attainment level of Participants starting on The Edge courses, 2013-14 and 2014-15

Prior Attainment Level	2013-14	2014-15
Participants without a level 3	108 (31.6%)	502 (44%)
Participants without a level 2	47 (13.8%)	200 (17.5%)
Total no. of learners	341	1,148

As regards other personal characteristics, The Edge has successfully targeted more female trainees compared to male trainees (219, 64% in 2013/14 and 643, 56% in 2014/15). With regard to age, 94 (27.6%) students in 2013/14 and 313 (27.3%) in 2014/15 were aged 50 or over (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Age and Gender of learners, 2013-14

Sex	50+	Under 50	Grand Total
F	63	156	219
M	31	91	122
Grand Total	94	247	341

Table 4: Age and Gender of learners, 2014-15

Sex	50+	Under 50	Grand Total
F	167	476	643
M	146	359	505
Grand Total	313	835	1148

Table 5 indicates that the vast majority of trainees have no disabilities (physical or learning). Also, very few are from ethnic minorities (see Table 6). However, the numbers in both of these categories have increased over time.

Table 5: Participants with a disability starting on The Edge courses in 2013-15

	2013-14	2014-15
Participants with a disability or learning disability	13 (3.8%)	68 (5.9%)

Table 6: Ethnicity of participants starting on The Edge Programmes in 2013-15

	2013-14	2014-15
Participants from ethnic minorities	10 (2.9%)	52 (4.5%)

The monitoring data discussed above gives an indication of the quantitative impact on target groups. More qualitative evidence is provided by the findings of a telephone survey of 72 students conducted around mid-way through the first phase of delivery in September 2014. The responses are from a range of trainees across different levels and sectors including health and social care, customer service, IT, social media, first aid, risk assessment and vehicle repair.

This data has many positive results. Respondents reported a very high level of satisfaction with advice and guidance as well as unanimous approval of the knowledge of instructors and the relevance of the training received to their job. As a consequence, these learners felt that their level of confidence in the workplace had increased and all would recommend the training to friends and colleagues.

These positive findings are also supported by a number of case studies of particular learners. Full details of these can be found in Appendix B and the summary in Table 7 gives an overview of these experiences. There are clearly instances where learners supported through The Edge have addressed the needs of individuals that had previously lost confidence in their ability to learn and gain qualifications. Examples include a learner who has overcome a particular disability (dyslexia) and another who has been given a new opportunity as an ex-offender. This has been achieved in some cases with the active support of the employer. Several of these individuals have also been able to take advantage of progression opportunities between levels including some moving onto apprenticeships as was envisioned by the design of The Edge in Cumbria.

These cases do not constitute a “representative” sample, so caution is required in drawing general conclusions from any one particular source. However, the available evidence comes from a variety of sources and uses different methods which, when considered together, adds credence to the conclusion that The Edge has delivered positive outcomes both for learners and employers.

Table 7: Summary of Case Studies of Learners*

Description	Learning opportunity	Outcome
Female 26 care worker	Diploma L2 in Health and social care	Regain confidence and overcome dyslexia – being left behind by colleagues
Female 27 farm machinery operator	ILM course	Raised aspiration to acquire managerial skills and capabilities
Female 31 care worker, health checks	Level 2 Health Care Support	Learner-led training led to increase in qualifications (level 2) and better rate of pay. Progression possible to level 3 apprenticeship
Male 40 sales	Sales management	First training in management more confidence dealing with staff. Helped career progression to next level
Male 44 care worker training in medication	Level 1 food hygiene, autism awareness, person-centred care	Ex-offender given opportunity to prove commitment and ability
4 Individuals age 20-31 care home – infection control	Pre-apprenticeship programme: Spread of infection	Opportunity to prove competence in work-based environment. Increased motivation and brought training needs forward.
Female 27 bookkeeping level 1	OCR level 1 award in bookkeeping	Enabled her to progress onto an apprenticeship in accountancy at level 2

* For details of cases, see Appendix B

4. IMPACTS OF THE EDGE ON KEY SECTORS IN CUMBRIA

The Edge in Cumbria was funded through the ESF 2007-2013 Skills Support for the Workforce Programme the focus of which was agreed with the Skills Funding Agency. In the agreement, the service requirements include a commitment by the College to “work in partnership with the LEP/Core Cities to identify and address skills priorities” (p.2). It was anticipated that the College as the lead body would adapt the offer and processes to ensure that LEP requirements were met.¹ The LEP skills priorities at the time were itemised in Appendix 1 of the document. The priority sectors were identified as follows: (Appendix 1, p.15):

- Specialist manufacturing
- Nuclear
- Visitor economy
- Construction
- Agriculture, land and sea-based
- Digital, media and creative
- Logistics and transport services
- Low carbon and renewable energy
- Business services
- Retail
- Health and social care

The Edge project, however, evolved in a fairly dynamic context and this “long list” of sector priorities has been subject to change in emphasis during successive drafts of the LEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and the European Structural and Investment Fund Plan (ESIF). The final version of the SEP gave higher priority to three sectors – Advanced manufacturing, nuclear and visitor economy. A fourth priority is based on “strategic connectivity of the M6 corridor” rather than a specific sector, although there is specific reference to transport and logistics and agri-based businesses in this context. Although the relative visibility of sectors in strategy documents may have changed, however, there are references to most of the sectors listed above either in terms of growth potential or as key supporting sectors for key sectors.

It is evident from minutes of meetings of The Edge Board and reports to the LEP and the Employment and Skills Commission that there were ongoing discussions about sector targeting throughout delivery. At The Edge Project Board meeting held on 11th July 2014, it was noted that a high percentage of Training Needs Analyses were within the priority sectors, although an under-representation of the nuclear industry was also noted. An update of progress was subsequently reported to the LEP ESIF Workshop on 21 October 2014. It was noted in this report that a total of 521 TNAs had been completed including many in target sectors (21% in business services, 20% health and social care). However, there are fewer in the key sectors of specialist manufacturing (11%) and nuclear in particular (0.5%).

A more recent and comprehensive assessment of sector targeting is provided by the ILR data for the period up to February 2015 (Table 8). In 2013-14, the highest number of trainees was classified under “Education and Training” which accounted for around 46% of all learners (156). The Health and Social Care sector accounted for a further 20% of all learners (67). As regards other LEP priority sectors, there were 32 trainees in business services, 27 trainees associated with the visitor economy and 20 in specialist manufacturing.

¹ Skills Funding Agency ESF 2007- 13 Schedule, Skills Support for the Workforce NW-31937, Feb 2014.

There were also trainees in construction (8) and logistics & transport (7). In 2014-15, there was an improvement in sector targeting, notably with a rise in those involved in Health and Social Care, Tourism and Recreation, Retailing and Construction.

It is notable that the nuclear sector appears under-represented in this sector breakdown. The classification used for this data, however, may underestimate the significance of the nuclear industry within The Edge. The Sellafield supply chain is highly diverse and complex and it is quite likely that some of the trainees working for employers in logistics and transport, business services and construction will depend in part on growth in the nuclear industry. This may also apply to tourism and recreation in relation to provision of quality accommodation for nuclear industry executives.

Table 8: Numbers of Participants starting courses on The Edge by sector, 2013-15

Employment Sector	2013-14		2014-15	
	No.	%	No.	%
Education and Training	156	45.7	205	17.9
Health and Social Care	67	19.6	350	30.5
Business Services	32	9.4	67	5.8
Tourism and Recreation	27	7.9	118	10.3
Specialist Manufacturing	20	4.7	40	3.5
Retail	16	0.5	117	10.2
Construction	8	2.3	113	9.8
Logistics and Transport Services	7	2.1	76	6.6
Digital, Media and Creative	6	1.8	5	0.4
Other	2	0.6	35	3.0
Agriculture	0	0	13	1.1
Nuclear	0	0	2	0.2
Not specified	0	0	7	0.6
Total	341	100	1148	100

5. THE EDGE PARTNERSHIP PROCESSES

This evaluation is also intended to take stock of experiences with regard to partnership working and collaboration between providers. As noted in the introduction, The Edge in Cumbria involves collaboration between providers under the leadership of Carlisle College as the accountable body. The providers include the Colleges of further education, the agricultural college at Newton Rigg, the University of Cumbria as well as private training providers. To some extent, the strength of this collaboration can be gauged by inference using project documentation and feedback received by Carlisle College during delivery.

The Edge has held monthly Board Meetings in Tebay and these have been fairly well attended (see Table 9). The agendas for these meetings suggest that problems have been discussed openly (see topics discussed in December 2014) and performance has been analysed using appropriate forms of data. Specific issues have also been addressed openly at these meetings, for instance, the reasons for underperformance in the land-based sector (October 2014).

Table 9: The Edge Project Board Meetings

	Attendees	Topics covered
Jan 2014	9	Structures, terms of reference, Finance, Marketing
March	10	Terms of Reference, Performance profile, Marketing
Apr	10	Performance profile, Marketing, capacity-building, QA, unmet demand
May	9	Performance profile, Marketing, Capacity-building, QA, TNA feedback, Barrow Training Partnership added to delivery, LRF Update
June		Performance profile, Marketing, QA post filled
July		Performance profile new 120 starts – expect 500 by end of July; Emerging skills needs discussed, underrepresentation from nuclear supply chain noted
Sept	10	Performance profile – over 700 on programme; how to increase progression to apprenticeships; unmet needs identified, Marketing – decision to sponsor Growth Hub Magazine
Oct	7	Performance – 758 learners on programme. Barriers to engagement with Newton Rigg discussed – high cost of training in land-based sector
Nov	9	Performance, future strategy, Springboard project linked to Lake District Hotels consortium
Dec	7	Performance profile. Discussion regarding reasons for unmet needs– ad-hoc enquiries, lack of referrals, employer misunderstanding, raised expectation
Jan 2015	10	Performance profile – already ahead of target for January. Unmet demand discussed – HR, Barista training, money advice, timber occupations, bar skills. Marketing - CN Magazine

The Edge in Cumbria Project has also been subject to ongoing evaluation through its delivery that includes periodic reviews and feedback from participants and delivery partners. Such evidence has informed delivery as evidenced by records of Board meeting discussions. Towards the end of year 1 in July 2014, the project team requested feedback from delivery organisations regarding lessons learned and aspects for improvement. This evidence was recorded and provided to the authors of this report. Responses were obtained from five organisations including FE Colleges as well as private providers.

There was widespread agreement that The Edge in Cumbria has added a valuable resource linked to a mechanism for delivery that has proved flexible to meet need. The ability to target smaller businesses and to develop bespoke curriculum has been particularly valuable. Partner organisations also identified good governance and management structures as a success factor for the project. Regular meetings were regarded as effective and extensive communications during delivery, including written guidance are regarded positively.

Partners recognised that there are administrative burdens associated with The Edge that tend to fall upon training providers. Feedback from employers suggests that providers have internalized these processes and sheltered employers from these demands to a large extent. There was recognition of the fact that this complexity reflects the demands of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the constraints under which the SFA operates. Attempts by the project team to simplify procedures (fewer signatures required, shorter forms for enrolment and induction) have been welcome.

Delivery organisations have found dealing with progression challenging. It was recognized that within an educational environment, progression between courses and levels can be managed. In a work-based environment however, there are barriers to progression between levels related to staffing and pay structures within businesses. It was suggested that it would be useful to issue guidance on progression rules possibly involving progression between modes (work-based) or hours (part time to full time, variable hours).

APPENDIX A

Interview schedule for The Edge employers

1. How did you become aware of “The Edge”?
2. What were your expectations of the project?
3. How many of your employees received some training on The Edge and what courses did they do?
4. How would you describe your experience of engaging with the project ie. in terms of administration, responsiveness to your needs, flexibility and your ability to influence the process?
5. What benefits do you think that your employees have got from their participation in the project?
6. What are your views on the impacts of the training on your business?
7. Part of the logic behind The Edge programme was that it would be responsive to the skills needs of employers providing courses that wouldn't otherwise have been available to their employees. Do you think that this has been the case?
8. Have you any other comments on the Programme?

APPENDIX B

Learner case study A – Female aged 28

Female A suffers from dyslexia and had poor experiences in previous training due to lack of sympathy and understanding of her difficulties. As a consequence, she fell behind with her work and lost all confidence in her ability and knowledge. She now works for a private Care Home that is very supportive of her and has given her responsibilities that have helped boost her confidence. This support and encouragement has helped Learner A to complete her Diploma L2 in health and social care through **The Edge** project at Carlisle College.

What did the learner do while taking part in the project?

The aim was to help Learner A to gain confidence in her own ability and to show that she has the knowledge required to carry out her job effectively. The College work patiently, going at the Learner's pace to achieve this. She has taken part in discussion using a digital recorder to gather the evidence required to cover all practical work. Learner A's manager has been very encouraging and supportive.

What does the learner think about the project?

Learner A has found being on a diploma only qualification very beneficial as she can relax and not worry about taking functional skills tests at this time. She says that she enjoys the course now as she can demonstrate her knowledge *verbally* as she struggles with the written work and gets really stressed and panics with putting it on paper. Tutors hold discussions with the Learner using a digital recorder. While nervous with Tutors at first, she is now quite comfortable with this method of gathering evidence.

What does the learner want to do, now and in the future?

Learner A has shared that her confidence has grown by completing her level 2 diploma in health and social care and then going on to complete her level 3. She has worked at the Care Home for the past 8 years and has now taken on new roles that are helping her to progress within the company. She is very interested in the dietary needs of the residents and is responsible for documenting all dietary needs in the care plans and updating these when needed. She now has ambition to progress to a supervisory role in the future.

Learner A has now almost completed her Diploma through the Edge, and is considering starting her level 3 as soon as possible. She feels confident to progress to this due to the support she knows will be given. Tutors have spoken to Learner A's manager who is keen for her to complete a Team Leading course as she wants her to supervise a night shift, which she feels Learner A is more than capable of doing.

What does the learner think they would be doing if they had not taken part in the project?

Learner A becomes quite emotional when asked this question. She has started the level 2 in health and social care twice previously but due to lack of support has never completed it. She has found it upsetting to see co-workers progress after a short time while she had felt she would never have the opportunity to do the same. Without encouragement to take the level 2 diploma only qualification, Learner A believes that she would never have regained confidence in her own ability and would probably have remained in a junior role with no chance to look to the future and improve.

Learner Case Study B – Female aged 27

Before undertaking the ILM course, Learner B had just joined the management team at Dale Farm. Her new role consisted of meeting her KPI targets; these are efficiency, OEE, wastage and hygiene. Learner B was the newest key operator and therefore was just starting to learn her new role. She has up to 30 team members to organise and manage throughout her shifts and these are between morning and afternoon on a rolling weekly basis. Attending weekly machine meetings to add input and to gain the achievement of improving the machines where necessary - this means having to work closely with the onsite engineering team. Also a big part in Learner B's day would be helping her team members to achieve their daily targets that would have been set from the shift manager for that day. This would be dictated by the Learner and the team to come up with running orders, changeovers or break reliefs if needed, or just simply to encourage and spur the team members on.

What did the learner do while taking part in the project?

Learner B continued to fulfil her daily role as a key operator at Dale Farm. Having only to attend the course once weekly did not affect things too much. Each week the different elements of the course work would enable the Learner to incorporate this with her role as a key operator. Gaining feedback from the other team members was a key factor to completing the course work that was given, and also made it easier to understand the task given.

What does (or did) the learner think about the project?

"I thought the course was helpful in my current new role that I started this year. I also found that Anne was a very good tutor in the way that each session was approached. This helped in understanding each segment of the course. I was able to incorporate the course with my job role and team members at work. I would certainly look at future courses of this nature."

What does the learner want to do, now and in the future?

"I would like to establish myself within my current role at Dale Farm, as I'm currently new to the position. I would like to gain as much experience as possible and maybe in the future look at climbing the company ladder. I also enjoy the role as it lets me express myself and help others where ever possible or needed."

What does the learner think they would be doing if they had not taken part in the project?

"I would be doing the same role as I am now but the course has definitely helped me to gain more knowledge to do the job and helped me to understand the different managerial aspects."

Learner case study C – Female aged 31

Learner C was working for Ulverston Health Centre as a health care support worker. Her job enabled her to conduct health checks and phlebotomy of her patients. This was as much as she could do as she needed level 2 health care support to progress in her career and to undertake other courses within her work. Before accessing the course through AgeUK, the Learner was extremely passionate to progress in her career and to stretch herself to fully achieve her potential, but unable to due to lack of qualifications.

What did the learner do while taking part in the project?

Learner C and her trainer worked together to enable her to gain Level 2 Health Care Support. It was learner-led therefore inclusive and adapted to the learners needs. This was done to enable Learner C to be a timely achiever and to fit it around her job and personal life. While undertaking the project the Learner completed mandatory units in Personal development, Communication, Equality and inclusion, the role of a health and social care worker and Health and safety. In addition to this, the optional units were built around the job that Learner C undertakes making it personal to her. For example, she undertook an unit in Safeguarding and Maintaining quality standards in the health care sector.

What does the learner think about the project?

Learner C found being on the qualification very beneficial as it kept her on target of meeting her goals and progressing within her career. She found a six month course was also beneficial as it was not a long drawn out course and she was able to fit it around her personal life.

What does the learner want to do, now and in the future?

Learner C wants to progress in her career within Ulverston Health Centre and undertake as many health care activities as possible. Now that she has been successful in completing the Certificate Level 2 on The Edge, this will allow her to progress and she can undertake Level 3 Apprenticeship in Health and Social Care. This will enable Learner C to be more employable, which also allows her to adjust to different situations. By undertaking this course Learner C has been promoted from health care support to the health care assistant within the health centre.

What does the learner think they would be doing if they had not taken part in the project?

If Learner C had not taken part in this project, then she would not have been able to progress in her career in the health centre. Consequently, she would not have received a pay rise. Therefore, undertaking academic studies in further education has resulted in an individual being more employable and on a better rate of pay.

Learner case study D – Male aged 40

Before undertaking training, Learner D had moved up from being a salesman to sales manager 18 months previously. Learner D soon had to change his thinking from being one of the boys to that of a manager and had not found this to be an easy transition. This course helped enormously.

What did the learner do while taking part in the project?

Learner D put into practice the things that he learnt on the course in order to help him with his everyday decisions.

What does the learner think about the project?

“I enjoyed the training course. This was my first management specific training giving a good overview of what the role means and providing really useful ideas to use everyday.”

What does the learner want to do, now and in the future?

Having completed the first course, Learner D would like to move to the next level to look at his role in even more detail helping him to progress in his career.

What does the learner think they would be doing if they had not taken part in the project?

The training has given Learner D more confidence in dealing with his staff from day to day. He now handles situations using some of the theories that were presented on the training course.

Learner case study E – Male aged 44

Learner E had been a plasterer for some years before he became addicted to heroin. This had led him into crime to pay for his habit and, although he had been clean for 6 years, he was unable to work whilst taking methadone. He was offered a place by the Unity Project, and was then given an opportunity to volunteer at The Heathlands Project.

What did the learner do while taking part in the project?

Learner E completed all the Level 2 units and also received training in medication, completed Level 1 Food Hygiene, Autism Awareness and Person Centred Care training. At Heathlands he now carries out personal care, delivers one-to-one support including meal times, toileting etc and supports individuals in IT and classroom activities. He also takes a 'Men's Group' out regularly to museums and other locations. Recently, Learner E has taken service users to The Calvert trust In Keswick once a week, where they have participated in outdoor pursuits.

What does the learner think about the project?

Learner E enjoyed the project after overcoming his initial fears of returning to the classroom. He knew that it was important to make it work because of the opportunity he had been given. He feels he has been given the chance to develop a wide range of skills which have helped him to be a carer. He feels he 'gets more out of it' than he gives, in personal terms. Learner E felt that his tutor, Liz, was excellent at putting him at ease, drawing out his knowledge and making him more confident.

What does the learner want to do, now and in the future?

He would now like to learn to drive and complete the whole Level 2 qualification so that he can specialise in working in the psychology of offending behaviour in younger people (18-21), in order to help them change their behaviour patterns.

What does the learner think they would be doing if they had not taken part in the project?

Without the project, Learner E feels his future would be uncertain, as it is less likely that he would have been given an opportunity. His prospects of employment would have been very low, so he would have faced a future without work.

Learners case study F – 4 individuals aged between 20 and 31

The learners were new to this care home and all wanted to gain relevant work experience to help them be competent at their roles. They also wanted to be able to obtain relevant qualifications to prove that competence.

What did the learners do while taking part in the project?

The learners undertook a 5 credit programme through Edge funding to support a pre-apprenticeship programme. They undertook the ERR element which was a great help in them understanding their role and reviewing the tasks within their job profile priority areas and the impact on the elderly who are under their care.

They also completed units covering causing and the spread of infection. This is obviously a very important area within a care home environment. It is also a very interesting subject area and gives the learners the opportunity to get into the wider understanding of an important area of their work. Zoe, their training Officer would cover underpinning knowledge on the subject and then develop an action plan with a series of tasks that the learners needed to do. As part of the checking of competency, Zoe could mark questions in a work book, carry out observations of working practices and interview the learner about the topic area.

The above took place over a number of visits which were convenient to the learner and the employer's pattern of work. Although the four learners could support each other it was not always possible to see all four learners together.

What do the learners think about the project?

The learners all felt that the Edge contract was a good introduction to understanding what would be covered in the apprenticeship programme. They also felt that doing the ERR first made them really look at their job profile and what it means and also gave them a wider knowledge of company procedures.

What do the learners want to do, now and in the future?

They are keen to remain with their employer and complete their apprenticeship programme within the timescale set. They do have concerns about the functional skills elements but this is normal for most apprenticeship learners and Zoe is supporting them to achieve the functional skills first, in order to remove this pressure.

What do the learners think they would be doing if they had not taken part in the project?

They probably would have still liked to have done the apprenticeship but would have had to wait until they were more settled into their roles. Starting too soon or before their competence and confidence was able to handle a full apprenticeship may have ended up with them withdrawing from the programme.

Learner case study G – Female aged 27

Learner G is employed at Knox Accounting, a small Accountancy business based in Ulverston, Cumbria. She had an administration role within the business and wanted to undertake an accountancy qualification so that she could then apply this knowledge in her job role and take on new tasks for her employer. Her employer was really keen for her to undertake the funded training through The Edge to help her develop her skills and progress within the company.

What did the learner do while taking part in the project?

Learner G undertook an OCR Level 1 extended Award in Bookkeeping qualification to broaden her skills set in order to be able to apply this to her job role. This course lasted from July to September 2014 and she passed all of the exams. This allowed her to then progress onto an Apprenticeship in Accounting undertaking an AAT Level 2 qualification as well as functional skills. She started on this qualification in September 2014, 2 weeks after completing her Level 1 qualification.

What does the learner think about the project?

She was really happy that she could undertake the course fully funded. She enjoyed learning new skills which will now help her in her current job role.

What does the learner want to do, now and in the future?

Learner G is currently doing her apprenticeship and is hoping that this will allow her to progress further in the future and in her career. She is hoping that in future there will be opportunities of promotions within the company.

What does the learner think they would be doing if they had not taken part in the project?

Learner G believes that she wouldn't have signed up to an apprenticeship if she hadn't signed up for the accountancy course through The Edge. By undertaking the course, it allowed her to see the opportunity to progress and further develop her skills.