

Empowering Enterprise Biannual Impact Report

JULY–DECEMBER 2021



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This report was produced by Devon Communities Together, who are the evaluation and impact measurement partner for Empowering Enterprise. Visit www.devoncommunities.org.uk for further information.

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Empowering Enterprise is a Building Better Opportunities project, managed by Petroc, and funded by the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund



Key findings

1. In total 49 participants went live in this period, and 27 achieved results (22 moved into employment; 5 moved into education or training).
2. In this period 25 (51%) participants were male, 22 (45%) Female and 2 (4%) otherwise identifying.
3. 26 out of 49 (53%) of participants who went live in this period report having a disability, and 20 out of 49 (41%) do not have Maths and/or English entry level qualifications.
4. In this period recruitment reached new areas, significantly Exeter, Barnstaple, and some rural areas.
5. 25 of the 49 live participants in this reporting period (and 67 of the 129 total live participants in 2021), have come from the local Jobcentre Plus (JCP) advisors.
6. Mentors have reported that the pandemic has continued to affect participants motivations and confidence to become involved with support services or pursue education. This is likely leading to participants being less willing to engage in group sessions, and needing project support for a longer overall period.
7. The main area of support signposted to by mentors (with 33% of reported signposting) continues to be for mental health services.
8. Co-design activities have indicated that activities around developing inclusive employment for young NEETs should focus on encouraging supportive inductions and first days on the job.
9. Partnership working continues to be a strength with evidence of partners supporting one another in delivery and cross-referring participants.
10. The Cross-Cutting Themes of Sustainability and Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities are embedded in partner delivery through the development of sustainability goals and mentoring practices.

Introduction

July to December 2021 was the second 6-month period since the project extension was agreed at the end of 2020. This report will follow the same structure of previous reports, exploring the activities undertaken, the outputs achieved and relating these to the 4 project outcomes. This report will reference the numerical targets and desired results as well as the qualitative stories and lived experiences of change which have occurred for individuals and communities. For a full discussion of the projects Theory of Change and it's relationship to impact measurement please see the previous periods report.

In the last reporting period it was discussed that a lot of energy had been required by partners for project set-up, i.e. to re-hire and train staff and redevelop working relationships with support agencies for referral routes. **In this period of July to December 2021 project set up was mostly complete with 5 of the 7 delivery partners consistently working with participants.** Groundwork South after beginning delivery last period had their mentor leave the project and did not work with participants from October to December. ODILS, as planned, began working with participants in November and December. Whilst delivery stabilised, it is notable that all partners, except WKUK, had to recruit and train new project mentors in this period and therefore hand over existing caseloads, which would cause slowing of participant progress. **In total 49 participants went live in this period, and 27 achieved results.** The project remains on target financially and partners have received target profiles until Q2 2023.

The 7 delivery partners vary in size and operating structures with number of mentors per organisation ranging from 1 (e.g. Eat That Frog) to 8 (e.g. Young Devon). Delivery partners operate throughout Devon (as shown in the table below) and Petroc have continued to manage the project's strategy, budget and administration. **Petroc are responsible for leading the partnership and ensuring that the intended targets, results and outcomes are achieved. Devon Communities Together continue in their role as evaluation and support partner.**

| Delivery Partner | Area Covered |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Battling On | Plymouth and Tavistock |
| Eat That Frog (ETF) | Plymouth, Torbay and South Devon |
| Groundwork South | Plymouth and Southwest Devon |
| I Can Do That! (ICDT!) | Torbay and South Devon |
| Open Doors International Language School (ODILS) | Plymouth, West Devon, South Hams |
| Young Devon | Devon wide |
| Whiz Kidz UK (WKUK) | Plymouth |

Regarding the Coronavirus Pandemic, all legal limits on social contact were removed during this time (on July 19th), however as will be discussed below **the pandemic has continued to affect delivery, specifically in terms of the wellbeing and confidence of young people, the sorts of activities undertaken and the availability of support services.**

Outputs (Targets)

The following outputs and results are the project targets agreed with the funding bodies. It is these that Petroc are responsible for overseeing and reporting on a quarterly basis.

| Outputs | Project targets | Total to date and % of overall target | Numbers in reporting period and % of overall target |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Total participants engaged | 989 | 79% | 786 |
| Male | 495 | 89% | 443 |
| Female | 494 | 68% | 337 |
| Unemployed | 544 | 81% | 442 |
| Economically inactive | 445 | 77% | 344 |
| Participants with disabilities | 435 | 86% | 374 |
| Participants from ethnic minority groups | 84 | 76% | 64 |
| Results | | | |
| Participants move into education or training on leaving | 205 | 73% | 149 |
| Participants move into employment, including self-employment | 164 | 76% | 124 |
| Participants move into job search on leaving | 209 | 25% | 53 |

Considering challenges of recruitment and Covid it is a significant achievement that the partnership was able to have **49 young people go 'live' on the project**, meaning that they completed the entry paperwork with their mentor and sought, collated and submitted the necessary paperwork to evidence their eligibility. This number of 49 participants represents 5% of the total project target, and means 79% of the overall target for the project has been reached, with 17 months remaining of delivery¹. **During this period 22 participants were supported to move into employment and 5 into education².**

In this time an **additional 52 young people were engaged** by a mentor to begin their participant journeys. Of these 21 have subsequently been withdrawn, but 31 may still become 'live' participants.

¹ Please note that output variations between reports is due to individuals starting and/or exiting the project in one reporting period, but their paperwork being processed in a later period. For example, 53 participants were reported as going live between Jan-Jun 2021 in the last report, but a further 27 who started their engagement in that period have since been verified as live.

² Similar to variations in those reported live, 31 results have been reported to funders since the project extension began, but the overall project result figure has not increased accordingly as previously exited participants have rejoined the project and therefore no longer count as achieving a result.

Outcomes

The next section of this report details the partnerships achievements in relation to the established project outcomes. These outcomes, shown below, are the same as those from the first stage of delivery, and a diverse range of quantitative and qualitative outputs are used by Devon Communities Together to support the measurement of progress towards these outcomes being achieved. Though these are not contractual targets, when considered cumulatively, they are valuable indicators of change.

Empowering Enterprise Outcomes

- 1. Young people participating in the project have improved their employability, entrepreneurial and life skills.**
- 2. Existing support services are more visible and accessible to young people and their communities, and are more sustainable.**
- 3. Communities and businesses are more cohesive and resilient.**
- 4. Project partner organisations have increased their capacity and capability to support young people through a more joined-up approach, sharing of best practice and access to training and resources.**

Outcome 1

Young people participating in the project have improved their employability, entrepreneurial and life skills.

49 participants became enrolled on the project in the second half of 2021. Through one-to-one mentoring sessions and group work, these participants were encouraged to identify and explore their talents, aspirations and barriers, and work towards a personal development plan. The format of support undertaken is tailored to the needs and interests of participants, and work towards building confidence, tackling barriers, gaining skills and encouraging pursuit of aspirations. **Activities supported this period have varied from coffee or a walk, through to music therapy, guided gym sessions or remote courses. Group activities addressed life skills, budgeting, and employability skills.** Mentors continue to have a unique approach and subsequent dramatic influences on individuals lives.



"Past mentors had been very money/job/education orientated, and Sue has always been 'me orientated' and I always looked forward to our meetings on a Monday so I could let go of everything with her".

"If it wasn't for her I wouldn't be ready to get back into work life or education – and I 100% thank her for now starting an apprenticeship as a chef and being back at college. Sue gave me a shove, not in you have to do it, but you can do it – and always asking me how she can help." Rory, Participant with Eat That Frog.

The quote below shows the unique ability of Empowering Enterprise to respond to participants needs by paying for expenses which aid a participant's progress:

"Callum started work [as a trainee mechanics assistant] and after a week his employer offered Callum more hours and said that if Callum had his own tools, it would enable Callum to carry out more automotive tasks and learn new skills, Callum was keen to do this but could not afford the toolkit, I Can Do That! CIC applied for support through from BBO/EE and Callum was successful in his request and now has a new tool kit which he was thrilled with and very grateful to receive.

Callum said: "Empowering Enterprise has been great for me, I Can Do That! CIC were able to support and assist me in getting my ideal job, I couldn't find this support from anywhere else, and I hated being on benefits, I just wanted to work, and I Can Do That! CIC have really helped me get off to a great start"
Project Manager at ICDT, and Callum, participant with ICDT!





Figure 1: Live Participants Jan-Dec 2021. Blue dots, are from Jul-Dec 2021

Figure 1, left, shows participants who have been enrolled in the project in 2021. Where the yellow dots show initial recruitment (Jan-Jun) took place primarily concentrated in Plymouth and Torbay. The blue dots show how **in this period recruitment is reaching new areas, significantly Exeter, Barnstaple, and some rural areas.**

The results of these interventions are clearly being seen, with participants enrolled on the project achieving results. In this reporting period 22 individuals moved into employment, and 5 individuals moved into education or training. With training in courses such as beauty therapy and functional skills and employment as diverse as Trago Mills retailer and a London Pantomime.

Results can take several months to be achieved, as mentors work to build trust and confidence, **of the**

27 results achieved in this period 5 were enrolled since July and the remaining 22 were enrolled between January to June. Beyond these results, participants have also been involved with volunteering, which is discussed in outcome 3 below.

Main Challenges participants are facing

The participant demographic of this project has always had extreme challenges, for example, it should be noted that **26 out of 49 (53%) of participants who went live in this period report having a disability, and 20 out of 49 (41%) do not have Maths and/or English entry level qualifications. These challenges have been enhanced by the continuing Covid pandemic, making partnership successes all the more impressive.** Mentors reported that the pandemic has really affected participants motivations and confidence to become involved with support services or pursue education. Mentors suggest that, as young people have not had to engage with people for 18 months this has meant they just don't see the need, for example, they are comfortable living with their parents, and have dropped deeper into their comfort zone, just wanting to play games with their online friendships. **Those living in isolated ways have just become more isolated.** Mentors believe the pandemic has had an especial impact on young adults, i.e. those transitioning from childhood to adulthood, as it has disrupted individual's development when they should be developing their identities.

Types of sessions/provision

Although of course some participants are able to move quickly into a result, the impact of Covid has meant **mentors have been increasingly sensitive to slowly pushing and developing individuals.** Rather than throwing them straight into activities. Mentors are finding especial value in casual walks for open conversation and also creative sessions with art or music. These sessions are building participants confidence in themselves and in how to interact with others.

The table, right, shows the numbers of sessions and hours spent with participants, and **low participant confidence, will have been a contributing factor to group sessions only accounting for 6% of total session time.** This is the same percentage of time for group sessions as before the project extension (2017-2020), where it was documented that it took many months of initial project delivery for mentors to feel confident in group activities. It can also be noted that advocacy accounted for 11% of session time, this is up from 6% of time from before the project extension.

| Type of session | Number of sessions | Number of hours |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Advocacy | 219 | 144 |
| Group | 30 | 79 |
| Contact attempt | 568 | n/a |
| One to one | 920 | 1,102.75 |
| Total | 1,737 | 1,325.75 |
| No shows | 160 | n/a |

The quotes below illustrate both the value and challenges of pursuing group sessions with participants.

“Group sessions continue to be slower to start, though in the new year these will be encouraged more. As in previous reports the participants are much further away from group activity than they were in phase 1 after the detrimental effects of the pandemic. Where we would normally expect young people to be moving closer to education or employment within 6 months of support, we are now anticipating more of a 9-12 month build up for them.” Project Manager, Young Devon

“We have had an excellent response to group sessions that we have provided . . . Socially, the participants have started to develop, they are becoming more confident around one another.

The first session was bowling. The participants were split into three teams; the individuals did not know one-another. So, after a brief introduction, staff left the teams to get to know each other whilst playing the game. Friendly banter and laughter at team members mistakes filled the air and the nerves began to settle. Conversations started and inclusive chats around employment and pay could be heard, this created much interest amongst the participants who were unemployed or unhappy with their current work situations. Suggestions of other jobs or informing others of positions available were more conversations that went on amongst the group. . . There were a couple of participants who were particularly nervous, so staff stayed in close proximity and supported as appropriate.” Project Manager, Young Devon

Outcome 2

Existing support services are more visible and accessible to young people and their communities, and are more sustainable.

Empowering Enterprise delivery partners are embedded in their communities and rely upon developing strong relationships with local communities and services. These relationships are often two-way, with partners both receiving referrals and signposting to services.

A major focus of the last reporting period, alongside recruitment and induction, was re-developing partnerships. This networking has continued in this period and led to strong relationships with, for example, Libraries Unlimited, Barnardo's, Plymouth Youth Hub, Young Offenders and Care Leaver teams, Housing services, Plymouth Youth Sailing and many more.

Many of these relationships led to referrals for partners, however a primary focus continues to be building relationships with work coaches and this led to the most significant number of referrals, **25 of the 49 live participants in this reporting period (and 67 of the 129 total live participants in 2021), coming from the local Jobcentre Plus (JCP) advisors.** The remaining referrals came from a wide range of sources, mostly noted officially as 'own engagement'. We know that partners have a dynamic approach to engagement, embedded in their communities and we know this includes sources such as the Princes Trust, The Zone, Live West, Encompass, Abbotsvale Mental health Clinic, and multiple housing associations or Local Authority Teams, such as care leavers, or children's social care.

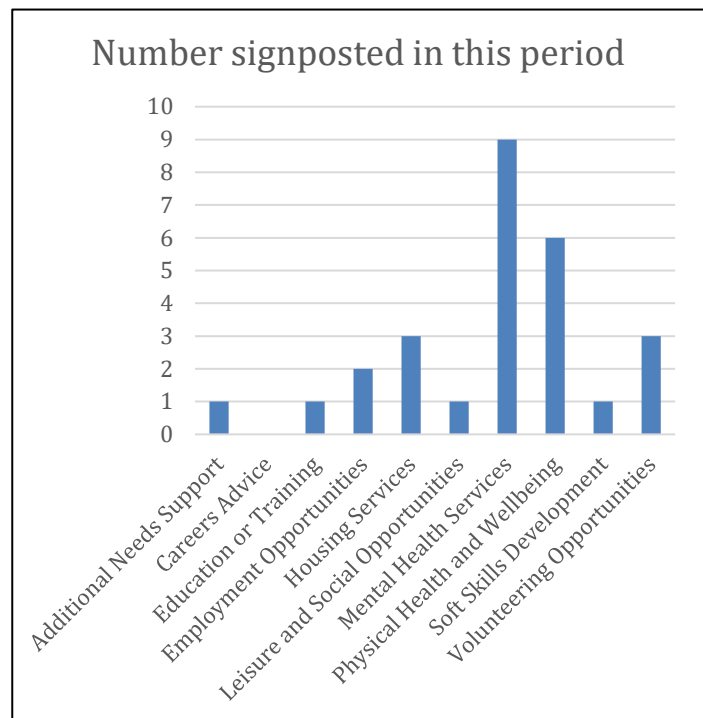
"In this quarter we attended an unpaid carers rights event at Paignton Library where we promoted EE as part of the services we offer which was livestreamed on Facebook. This network has made referrals into EE." Project Manager, ICDT!

Notably for several of the partners referrals to EE come from other parts of their organisation's delivery, such as housing our counselling teams. This shows the unique and valuable position of EE's provision within the support services ecosystem and it provides something unique for those with the greatest challenges.

"[Jay] was referred to Young Devon from his mental health support worker, Stephen Miller from Workways. Jay has also been working with his mental health worker, from Abbotsvale and is waiting for an appointment with a psychologist, due in 2022. Jay has really struggled with anxiety and depression and needed support to move forward in life. . Jay has expressed an interest in attending courses run by Young Devon, and has found the confidence to attend a meeting with myself and the course tutor in Barnstaple. He is eager for change in his life, and has grasped the opportunity to start the Independent Living Course in January, which will follow onto a Work Based Learning Course later." Project Mentor, Young Devon

27 instances of signposting were logged by mentors, and the table below shows the main area signposted towards was mental health services (9 of the 27, or 33%). Although learning from the first stage of delivery tells us that signposting is likely much more common than this. Indeed, it is the routine nature of signposting that means it is often not logged by mentors. Services signposted to in this period included both statutory services and institutions, and more localised community-based support, as well as other non-EE provision run by partner organisations. These included:

- Splitz domestic violence support charity to help a participant emotionally exhausted by her ex-partner/child’s father’s text messages.
- Eat That Frog health and wellbeing courses to help participants understand value of routine and other wellbeing activities on improving sleep and overall health.
- Horse and Heart to help a participant’s anxiety and confidence by working with animals.
- PAC Adoption support agency to help with counselling and support resources.
- Housing standards to support an individual living in a caravan with dangerous equipment.
- Citizens Advice and Christians Against Poverty for debt management.



In addition to this signposting, 219 instances of advocacy were carried out by mentors, totalling 144 hours, and the importance of mentors knowing the best ways of working with support services has only increased with Covid, as resources are stretched and demand increased.

“It has been more difficult during the project extension to access support services due to many still not operating at previous capacity or offering face to face sessions.” Project Manager, Young Devon

Outcome 3

Communities and businesses are more cohesive and resilient.

Empowering Enterprise contribution to their local communities and businesses is apparent in a number of ways. As young people are supported to build better hard and soft skill sets, they are intrinsically more able to make positive contributions to their surroundings, and they are equally less likely to engage in negative behaviours. This is likely to lead to social networks, workplaces and places in general being more socially cohesive.

22 young people entered into employment in this reporting period, and the inclusion of young people with extra-barriers creates valuable **learning experiences for both young people and the employers they are involved with.**

“Hattie has dyspraxia, which meant that she had difficulties using equipment like telephones, staplers and in writing. We supported her by taking her to buy equipment she could more easily use, including a telephone headset. We also did research to find out ways to best support Hattie” Employer of participant, based in Tiverton.

During this period the government’s ‘Kickstart’ scheme continued to be in operation. Starting in late summer 2020 this scheme funded employers to provide 6-month, 25-hour a week, minimum wage jobs available for 16-24-year olds claiming Universal Credit. Additional funds were available for support and training in these roles. **During this reporting period at least 5 participants found placements through Kickstart.** Partners report that Kickstart has helped young people in a changing job market, as where there has been a high number of job vacancies Kickstart provision has meant that these have been targeted to young people aged 18-24 and new employment opportunities have been at a realistic level for young people who have no experience of the world of work.

The Kickstart scheme has been extended to allow employers to hire young people up until March 2022. Partners believe kickstart will leave a legacy for employers who have drawn on different sectors of society, been exposed to a ‘youth voice’ and highlighted the positive impact young people can have on organisations. A message which the project will continue to champion. For delivery partners Kickstart’s legacy includes new links with often socially conscious employers.

In addition to Kickstart, partners continued to develop meaningful relationships with employers which may lead to changed workplace environments or future placements for participants.

“We have made some great contacts through Co-op stores and hosted a meeting with a group of local managers . . . We hope to be able to organise work experience placements and employability talks with them in the future.” Project Manager, WKUK

Development of strategic employer engagement

Amongst the positive impact of Kickstart, employer feedback did show that there is a need to support employers as they take on individuals with barriers or unused to the work environment. This process of in work support is a big strength of the EE programme, where young people are not exited as soon as they find work. **While mentors often continue to support the young person, there is potential for further contact with the employer themselves to develop joined up support.**

“There was no support from Kickstart during the placement, though there was someone available to help with any HR issues on request Young Devon’s mentor called during the placement to see how it was going and met with Hattie several times away from the workplace. [We] felt that it might have been useful to have more contact with a mentor, and perhaps to meet them with Hattie at work to explore ways to support her.” Devon Surface Care, Kickstart Employer

As the employer engagement lead, Devon Communities Together’s role is to build on the feedback such as this and to support local employers at a strategic level to better understand and support this demographic. Therefore, to better understand the key areas needed by young people for support, DCT developed a co-design processes, carried out between June and August 2021, on the topic of Employer Support. This sought to understand the key areas for support young people felt an employer could most help with, and how.

Findings showed that **although participants’ concerns and desires for support are similar to anyone starting a new job, due to this demographic having additional barriers and extreme challenges (personal and circumstantial) these concerns can be magnified** and lead to more extreme results if there are problems. As such it was found that areas such as Mental health support and Day-to-day supervision are important. However, due to many participants finding it challenging to enter new situations and meet new people, **a primary area of support focus should relate to the induction and first days on the job.** Anxiousness can be due to both meeting new people, and having to understand their role or how to complete tasks to the employers’ standards.

From January 2022 these key messages will be a part of monthly online support sessions for employers, and other communication channels to help employers to focus on creating an environment where participants feel welcome and useful.

Community engagement

Participants directly contributed to communities through social action with the importance of volunteering recognised as a valuable bridge to developing skills for an individual. Similar to businesses we know that organisations benefit from being exposed to the diversity brought by young people.

“For one young person recently in North Devon [our mentor] was able to advocate on his behalf whilst he was going through a significant mental health difficulty and the volunteering placement have been hugely supportive, they are also now offering training to make sure they are best able to support the mental health of their staff and volunteers.” Project Manager, Young Devon

Participant volunteering has included placements with community shops, administrative support with a charity, helping with a community fridge scheme, beach cleans or creating packages for the community.

“We collected at short notice from a local manufacturer a large quantity of craft items destined for landfill. We made these into packs which were distributed into local community organisations. These were gratefully received and actually we were unable to keep up with demand and we ran out.” Project Manager, WKUK

The below case study illustrates how participants on placements influence those around them, in this instance at a community gardening project.



“Everybody’s got something to offer, we tend to marginalise older people or we marginalise youth. We should stop doing that, we should bring them together. We already have it here, so on Monday I have my volunteer day, and you know, I think our youngest person here is late teens, early 20s and my oldest person here is in their 60s. We’ve already got that bond between those generations. They work together. They play together at breaktime they share anecdotes. They start to learn from each other there’s a lot of mentoring goes on it all happens as an incidental part of the program.” Staff member at Eat That Frog’s Parkfield site.

Outcome 4

Project partner organisations have increased their capacity and capability to support young people through a more joined-up approach, sharing of best practice and access to training and resources.

Collaborative work within the partnership has always been central to its success as partners have significantly benefited from sharing best practice and lessons learnt through delivery.

In this period partnership wide meetings continued, **19 partnership staff members attended 2 partner meetings**, these quarterly meetings serve to provide key project management updates from Petroc, and partners can update on their achievement of targets and other key areas of work. An additionally dedicated project manager meeting was held in November to discuss Innovation Funds and the project extension. **In addition, 16 members of staff attended 1 local partner meeting**, which was intended more as a support for mentors and key delivery staff rather than project management. At this local meeting mentors shared their approaches, and frustrations, around engaging participants face to face.

Petroc also held a paperwork support session for partners in December, and distributed **1 newsletter and 1 newsflash bulletin** which shared key updates, stories and celebrations of achievements. Importantly the newsflash helped clarify administrative challenges with the project extension. **The newsletter reminded partners of valuable support service resources available for equality and sustainability.**

Stories of collaboration include ICDT! referring participants to WKUK due to geography, Young Devon mentors accessing ETF courses in Torbay and collaboration sought on group sessions between ETF, Young Devon, WKUK and Groundwork South.

Devon Communities Together supported partners in the creation of 4 case studies, delivered a training session on Design-led thinking to aid co-design of innovation funds, and occasionally shared work placement opportunities.

As well as the inter-partner collaboration, the internal development of partners also continued. As mentioned under Outcomes 2 and 3 partners have developed their working networks and general presence, including the practice of intra-departmental referrals showing how EE complements other services to create a full package of support.

“Promotion and engagement with the project continue to be a focus, with referrals from within other staff within Eat That Frog. We have worked together with colleagues on the Youth Hub/Princes’ Trust to encourage participants who need/prefer 1-2-1 support.” Project Manager, Eat That Frog.

They have also been able to upskill their teams, for example Eat That Frog created a staff resource for navigating Universal Credit and working with JCP work coaches.

“The team is now using the UC statement guide that Chris put together, which is helping with new starts and the overall recruitment process.” Project Manager, I Can Do That!.

Cross Cutting Themes

Sustainability & Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities

By championing best practice and challenging assumptions and beliefs, the partnership aims to ensure the Cross-Cutting Themes (CCTs) are incorporated into delivery with participants and in community and employer engagement. The partnership seeks to influence organisational policies and practices within and beyond the delivery partners.

Sustainability

Last period Petroc asked each partner to **identify 3 simple goals to achieve for increasing sustainability** over the year, which Petroc would monitor and support with. Goals could be identified as a partnership effort or for individual organisations. Petroc carry out regular reviews of progress partners have made towards their goals.

These sustainability goals include: encouraging participants to recycle more by sending reminder messages; encouraging sustainable consumption through group discussions – especially around clothing and food; partnering with a local reuse store for activities; litter picking/clean up opportunities – especially on beaches; developing awareness of a community fridge; renovating a local green space; independent cooking skills; reducing travel of staff and organisational paperwork; encouraging participant bicycle use; and increasing the number of group activities held outdoors.

These goals are brought passionately into delivery activities, such as via sessions on healthy cooking, food waste, food growing and energy suppliers. Additionally, the Covid pandemic has meant that sessions have taken place outdoor, and mentors have commented on how they see the positive impact nature connection has on their participants wellbeing.

“We are planning a trip to the National Aquarium to help with understanding the complex issues of sea pollution and for the participants to understand the wonders of what lies beneath.” Project Manager, Battling On

Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities

After positive signs last period that the uneven number of participants from different genders was beginning to close, there has again been a higher number of male participants in this period. **In this period 25 (51%) participants were male, 22 (45%) Female and 2 (4%) otherwise identifying.** This compares to 56.4% male, 42.9% female and 0.8% identifying otherwise or preferring not to say across the life of the project. It is important to note there is still a positive trend to reaching more female participants after only 41% of participants in the first stage of delivery (2017-2020) being female.

Partners are finding ways to focus their work to reach females, with Battling On working with young mums and those within the care system, ICDT! contacting Exeter based domestic violence support organisation Splitz, and ODILs running mentoring sessions alongside a creche on their premises.

Mentors are helping participants who are exploring their gender identity by creating a supportive environment. Mentors have reported their use of existing resources previously created by the partnership on LGBTQ+ language and Transgender support.

“We had a group session at which gender diversity acceptance was raised. Concerns [by a transgender participant] were unfounded as they were accepted openly into the group by the rest of the participants without any issues or adverse reactions.” Project Manager, WKUK

The partnership continues to network with key organisations for both referral pathways and in order to support participants. With key support organisations named as Proud2Be, and Torbay council’s Transfigurations, as well as local GPs. However, partners have noticed that there is a disparity in support services across the county.

“There are good links from Proud2Be in the south of the county however in North Devon, Mid and East Devon it is much harder to find local charities.” Project Manager, Young Devon

Other areas of Equal Opportunities are intrinsic to the partnership’s work. Partners work closely and consistently with participants with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, English as a second language or other challenges. Partners have strong relationships with support services, such as the County’s Autism team.

“Young people are able to be open about their needs and how they can be supported, for those who are less confident with this, mentors are encouraging topics around personal advocacy and supporting them with attending appointments or interviews to ensure the employer or other service have all they need to work with the young person.” Project Manager, Young Devon

Promoting a message of inclusivity is a key element of the emerging Employer Engagement strategy.

Looking Forward

In the next period, it is expected that all 7 partners will have stable and established teams to keep building their successes with participants. **The next period will provide insight into the longer lasting impacts of the pandemic**, and we will be able to see the average length of time for participants on the project, and how this compares to pre-pandemic averages. We expect to see group work increasing as confidence and trust is built between partners and participants, and expect this to play an important role in participant development and social action.

It is likely that support services will remain stretched, but we can hope to see improved access for participants.

In this period there were positive signs about **new geographical areas being reached, and we can expect to see this continue with teams now established** in North Devon, Exeter and Okehampton. Similarly, the plans and relationships developed for gender inclusion should lead to more female participants.

With Kickstart ending we will hopefully gain a sense of its lasting impact, and the networks partners have developed with sympathetic employers. **DCT's employer engagement activity, and inclusive employment training will contribute to this conversation**, which will be especially relevant as the economy remains uncertain following Brexit and the Pandemic.

Partners, having met in November were strongly encouraged to submit Innovation fund requests, and we expect to see these beginning in the next period.

Ultimately as delivery continues **dozens of individuals will be moving closer to achieving results in Education, Employment or Job Search** and support services, businesses and communities in Devon, as well as the partnership organisations themselves will continue to benefit.