

Experience Works Biannual Impact Report

4. April – September 2022





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

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Experience Works is part-funded by the European Social Fund through the Department for Work and Pensions, and is managed by Petroc.



Key Findings

1. The project has continued to recruit new young people, with 167 now active, and increase of 66 (39.5%) over the previous period.
2. 53 participants have completed, with 64% of those having exited into work or education.
3. All delivery partners recruited participants during this period.
4. A number of demographic targets were exceeded:
 - The young people engaged on the project who report having a disability has risen to 49% (from 28% in the previous period).
 - A further 20% of participants report having mental health issues.
 - The project has recruited a higher percentage of women than forecast, with 41%, against a target of 38%.
 - More starters were economically inactive (as opposed to unemployed) than anticipated, with 54% against a target of 32%
5. Partnership development has continued with:
 - two partnership meetings,
 - a local mentors' meeting
 - six instances of training and support from Petroc
6. The Explore website (employment key) was further developed and showed a slight increase in use during the period.
7. There have been continuing changes in staffing among the partners, however there are signs that this is beginning to stabilise.

Introduction

April – September 2022 was the fourth 6-month period of the project which started in October 2020 and which runs to June 2023.

This report presents the main results from this period and sets them in the context of the progress from the start of the project, exploring the activities undertaken, the outputs achieved and relating these to the project outcomes. It references 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 its relationship to impact measurement please see the report *Introducing Experience Works*.

This partnership project is managed by Petroc, who manage the project's strategy, budget and administration, and 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. There are nine delivery partners during this reporting period. They vary in size and operating structures with a number of mentors per organisation. Delivery partners operate throughout Devon (as shown in the table below), with Plymouth covered by three of them.

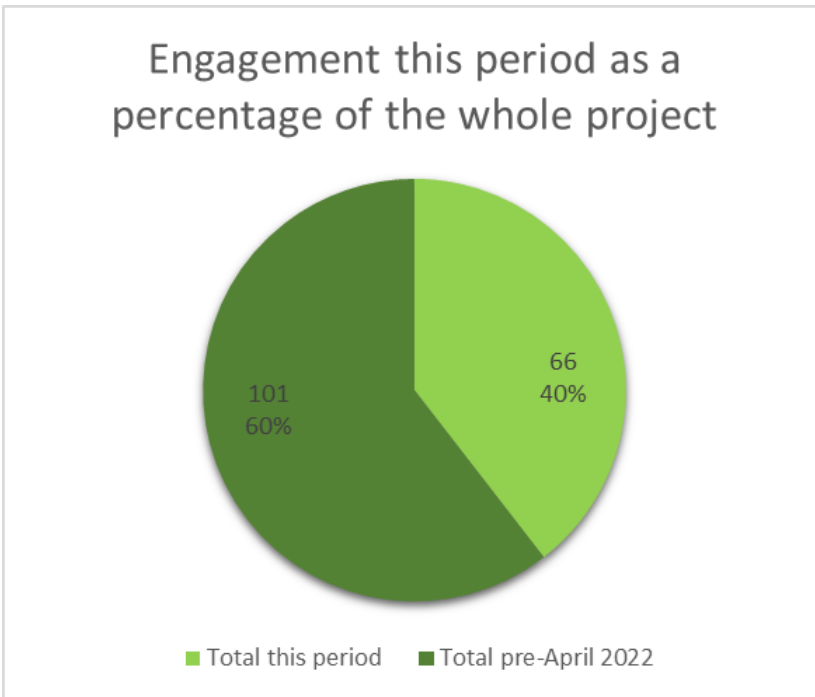
Delivery partner	Area
Battling On	Plymouth & Tavistock
Bluescreen IT	Plymouth
City College Plymouth	Plymouth
Groundwork South	Plymouth & Torbay
ODILS	Plymouth
Petroc	Barnstaple & North Devon
PGL Training Ltd	Exeter
South Devon College	Torbay
The Prince's Trust	Plymouth, Torbay, Exeter & North Devon

Of these, five were active in recruiting young people to the programme: Battling On, Groundwork South, Petroc, PGL Training and The Prince's Trust.

There were no Covid restrictions in effect during the period April – September 2022. However, infection numbers have continued to fluctuate with peaks at the end of March/early April and in July. Anecdotally, partners have said that there is still some anxiety around social contact. This appears to be having an impact on the numbers of young people willing to take part in work and training programmes. There are also changing attitudes to work, with a greater concern among employees for wellbeing and a workforce adapting to flexible working.

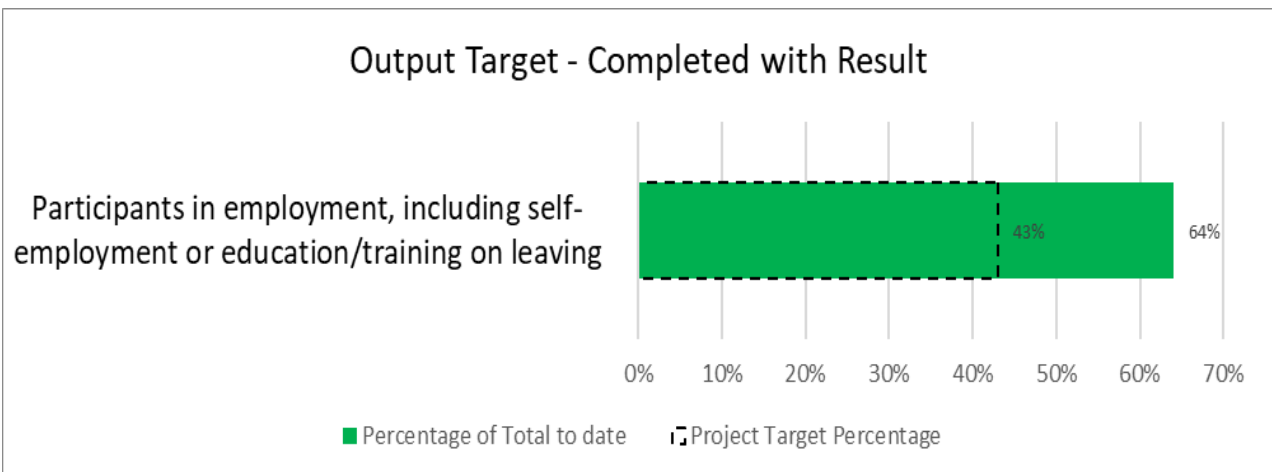
Activity

Total Engagement

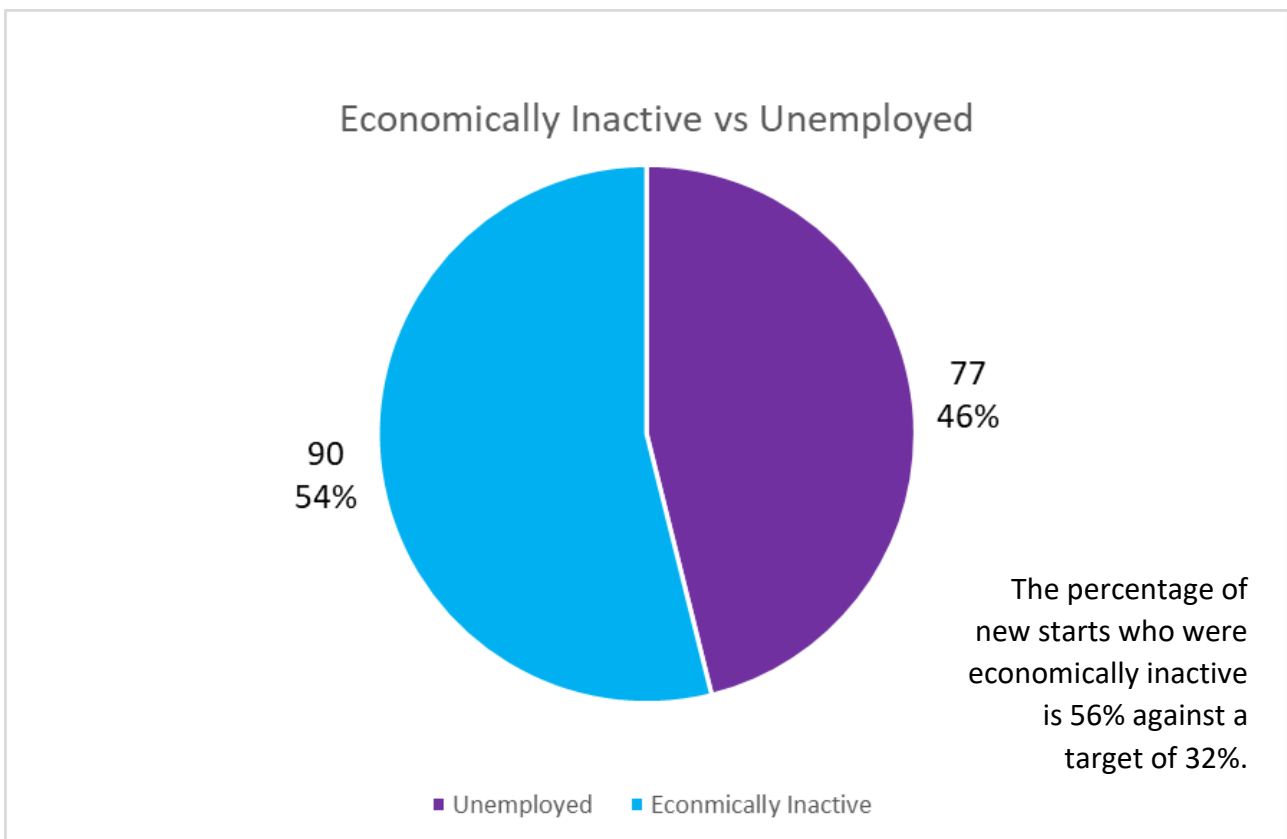
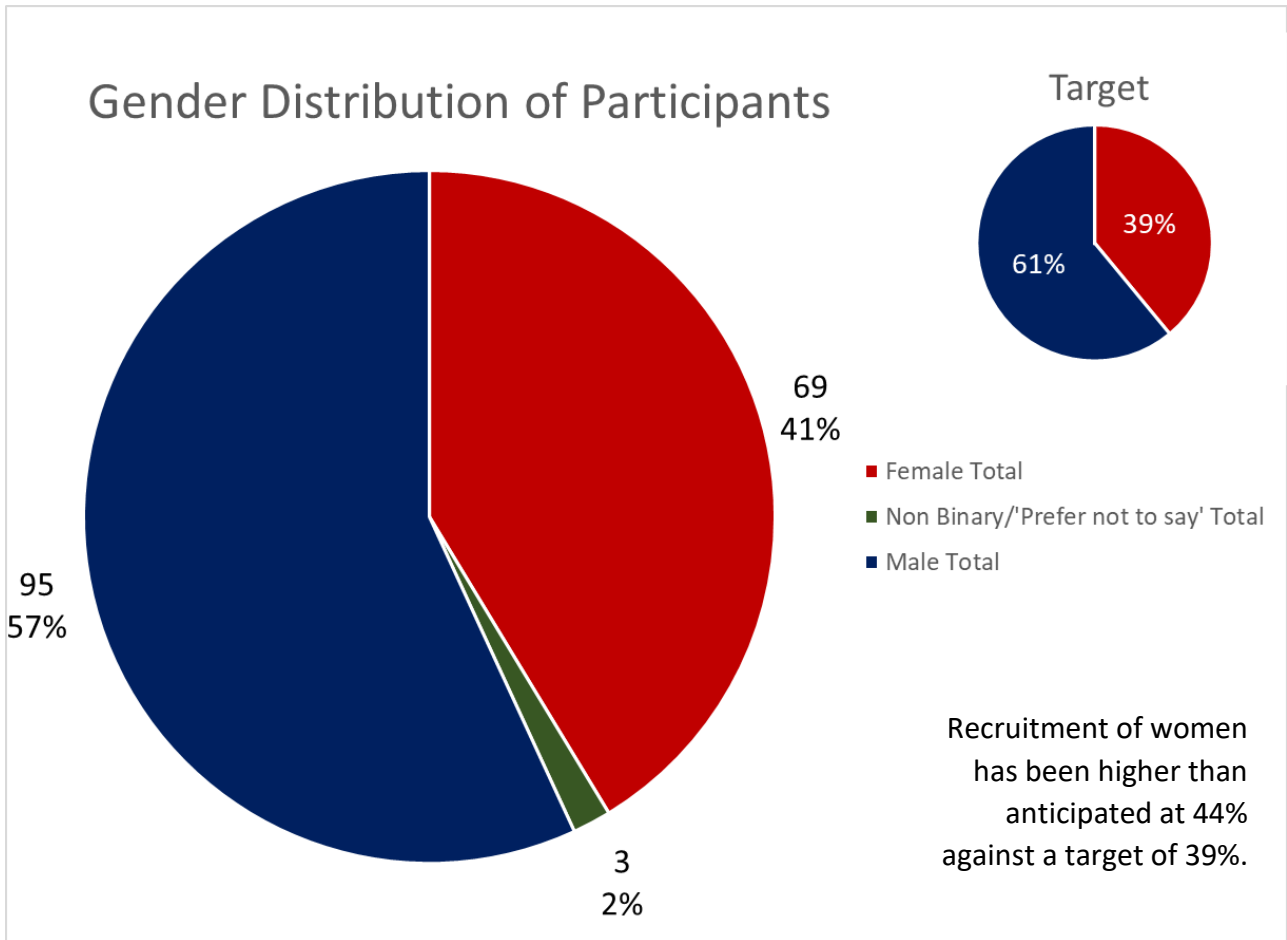


The 66 new starts during this period account for 39.5% of the total to date. It illustrates how recruitment is picking up post-Covid, with over 1/3 of participants joining in 1/4 of the project duration.

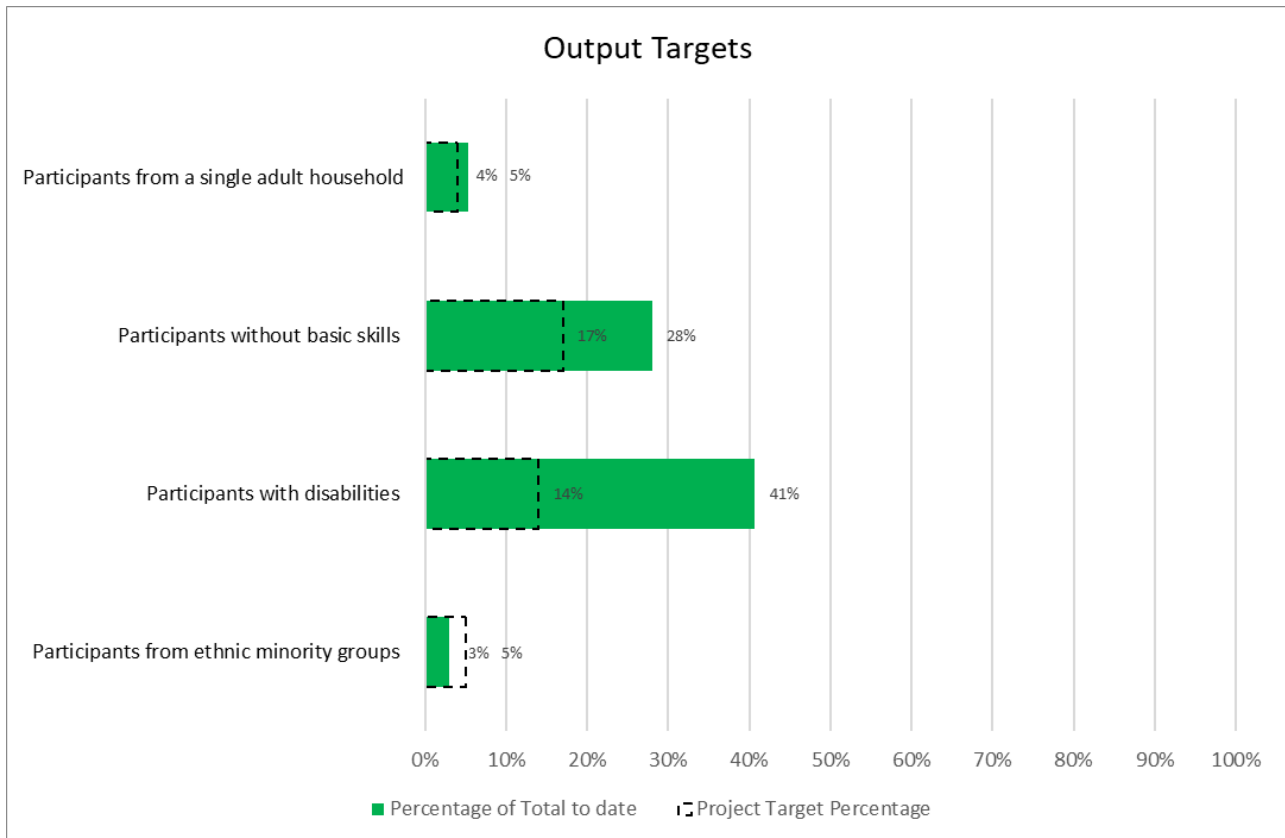
Progress to date (whole project)



A number of demographic targets have been exceeded:



A larger proportion of disadvantaged young people have started on Experience Works than forecast.



Single adult household

The number of participants from a single adult household is slightly greater than forecast, at 5%.

Basic skills

28% of participants did not have basic skills, 11% more than forecast.

Disability

Most notable is the number of people with disabilities. A total of 113 (68%) were reported as having any sort of disability against a forecast of 14%. This includes:

- 81 (49%) with a physical and/or learning disability (compared with a population rate of 21% of the working age population)¹
- 32 (19%) with a physical disability
- 68 (41%) with a learning difficulty or disability
- 90 (54%) with a mental health difficulty

Of these, 19 (11%) reported both physical and learning disabilities.

86 did not have a learning or physical disability. Of those, 35 reported mental health issues.

¹ Kirk-Wade: UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences, House of Commons Library, July 2022

This correlation between disability and mental health and NEET status is borne out by UK government figures showing that the proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET was higher for those with disabilities (28%) than those without (8%).²

Ethnic minority groups

The only category where there were fewer participants than forecast was those from ethnic minorities, with 3%. This is close to the 2021 census figure for Devon of 3.6%.³

² Powell: NEET: Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, House of Commons Library 2021

³ <https://www.varbes.com/demographics/devon-demographics>

Outputs (Targets)

The following outputs and results are the projects' targets agreed with DWP.

This shows details of the 167 **participants who went 'live' on the project** since the start of the project meaning that they completed the entry paperwork with their mentor and provided and submitted the necessary paperwork to evidence their eligibility. It is worth mentioning that there are a considerable number of potential participants that the mentors are working with that Petroc are not able to report as eligibility paperwork evidence has not yet been submitted. This work will be reported once eligibility has been proved from the correct documentation as required by ESF.

Outputs	Total	Target / % of target	Revised target / % of revised target
Target		1220	850
Total participants engaged	167	14%	20%
Breakdown of participants		% of 'live'	
Male	95	57%	
Female	69	41%	
Unemployed	77	46%	
Economically inactive	90	54%	
- not in education	64	38%	
- in education	26	16%	
Participants from ethnic minority groups	5	3%	
Participants with disabilities (inc learning and physical)	81	49%	
Participants reporting a mental health condition	33	20%	
Participants without basic skills	44	26%	
Participants from a single adult household with dependent children	31	19%	
Participants in employment, including self-employment or education/training on leaving	32	19%	

The target of 1220 is the original target contracted with DWP. The target of 850 is the total that Petroc has requested through the Project Change process with DWP and are awaiting approval. This change will make the targets more achievable following the slow start due to Covid.

Project outcomes

The next section of this report details the project's desired outcomes, and a **range of additional outputs** have been identified by Devon Communities Together and Petroc to support the identification and measurement of progress towards outcomes being achieved. Though these are not contractual targets, when considered cumulatively, they are valuable indicators of change.

Experience Works Outcomes

- 1. Young people participating in the project have improved their employability and life skills.**
- 2. Young people have increased their knowledge of their local communities and have made positive contributions to them.**
- 3. Employers have increased their understanding of young people who are NEET, and are better equipped to provide them with valuable opportunities.**
- 4. Local support services have benefitted from improved referral processes**
- 5. Organisations inside and outside the partnership have access to best practice and lessons learned from Experience Works.**

Outcome 1

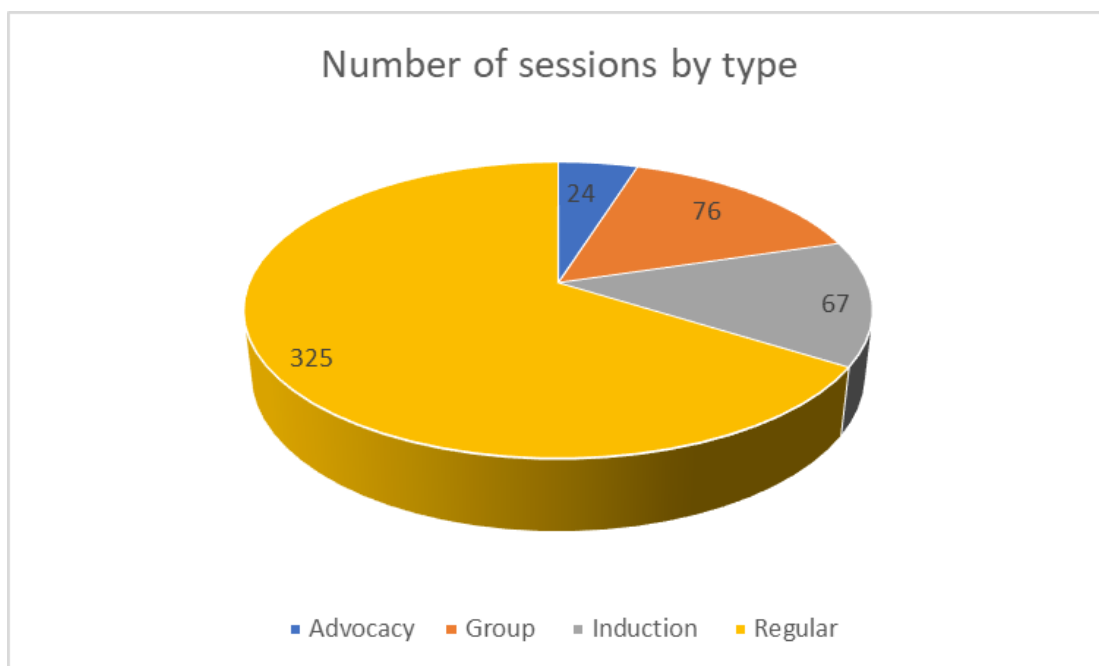
Young people participating in the project have improved their employability and life skills.

167 young people started and received support from Experience Works.

Of these, 53, (32%) completed into employment, education or training.

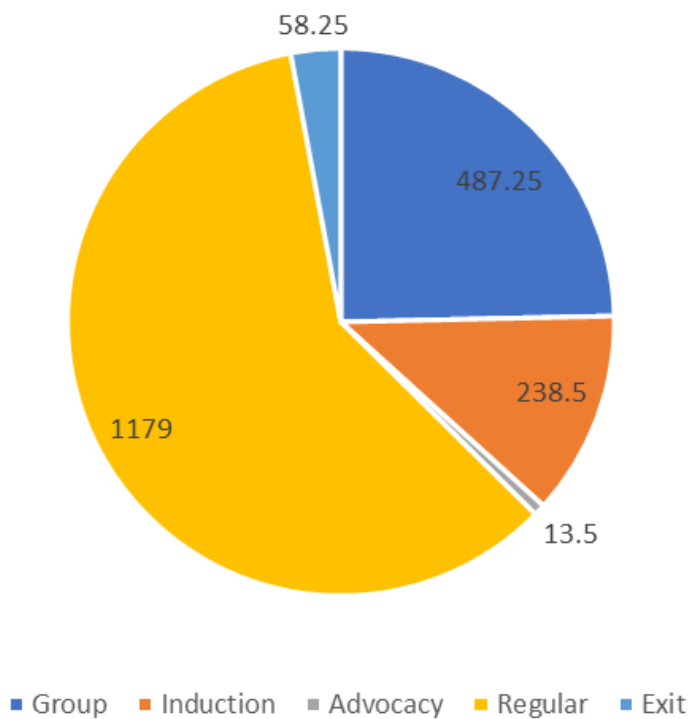
Participants engaged with mentors via the following types of sessions:

- Induction: during which the young person is enrolled onto the programme. These focus on completing the paperwork required to establish eligibility.
- Regular: one-to-one sessions with the mentor covering job-seeking skills, support with issues such as housing or any other guidance
- Group: these may be with the mentor or other staff or with external partners. They could include the development of social or work skills, health and fitness, and volunteering or social activity.
- Advocacy: these are for signposting young people to support services and useful organisations and links. Examples include the Careers Service, employers, The Samaritans and online training courses.



A total of 492 sessions took place, the bulk of which were one-to-one. A total of 710 hours (equal to over 94 working days) was spent by participants in sessions. Although group sessions formed only 15% by number, they amounted to over a third of the time spent.

Time spent in hours on sessions



Partners report that group sessions are important in addressing social isolation and developing social skills and relationships. Staff are able to model positive behaviours in real-life situations.

Breakdown of starters by delivery partner in this reporting period

	Starters in this period	Percentage of total
Battling On	11	16.67%
Groundwork South	8	12.12%
Petroc Delivery	8	12.12%
PGL Training	8	12.12%
The Prince's Trust	31	46.97%
TOTAL	66	

Examples of activities undertaken to improve employability skills

Employability activities include those delivered by the partners, for example helping a young person to write a CV or prepare for an interview, and those delivered by external organisations including employers and training providers.

The Prince's Trust run a series of taster days in IT, hospitality, retail and photography. For suitable candidates these lead to training courses in those industries run by external partners. The hospitality and retail tasters are run in partnership with major employers, whilst the photography and IT sessions are with training providers.

A participant on the retail programme said *“The Prince’s Trust program has been greatly beneficial to me. It has provided me the valuable opportunity to work with M&S. I have gained skills and experience and learned different aspects of operating the store [...] it has made me feel more secure about my future because previously I was uncertain of my direction.”*

As a result of the IT induction five participants went on to complete online training and gain Google IT certificates – valuable additions to their CVs.

A strength of the Experience Works mentoring model is the flexibility to provide tailored support for individual young people. In one example, Battling On were able to connect a housebound participant with a local graphic designer who provided advice about the industry and possible training options online.

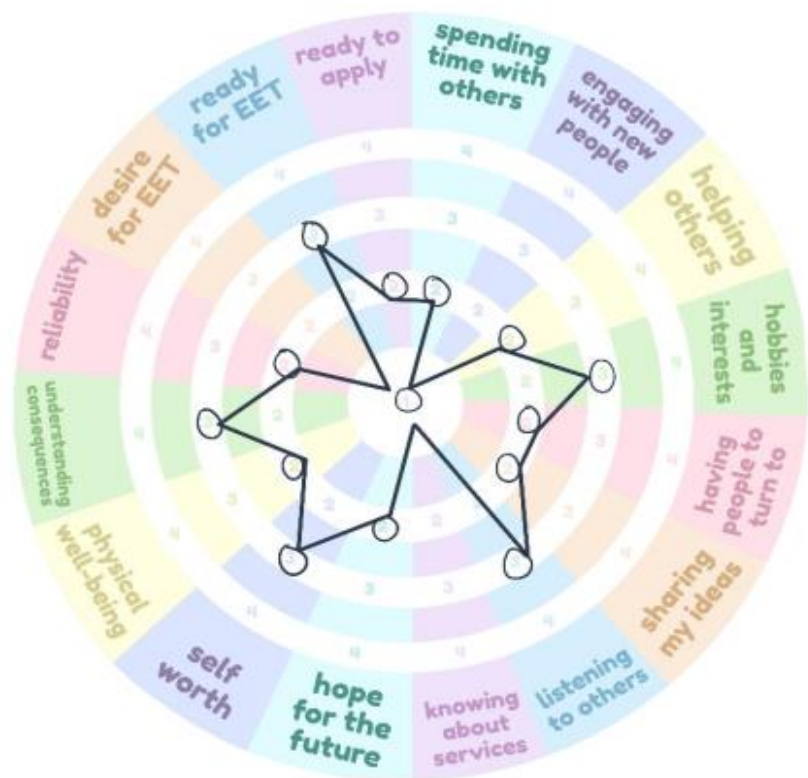
Petroc is well-placed to support young people into educational programmes, enabling them to acquire skills and qualifications which will support them in seeking work. This includes English and Maths courses online to prepare for GCSE retakes, Public Speaking to develop verbal skills and confidence, and kitchen and cooking skills.

At PGL, participants can gain hands-on experience in construction trades or hairdressing. Alongside this they have been taking functional skills lessons to improve their employability.

Groundwork South, by working in schools, can provide both one to one and group sessions in CV writing and interview skills. They have been particularly successful in helping the students consider and choose possible employment options. (See the case study – link on px)

Progress Star

The progress star is a tool for participants to self-assess themselves against 16 categories creating a picture of their employability skills, life skills, community engagement and wellbeing. They do this on entering the project and again on exit.



A subset of the categories is aggregated to give scores for ‘employability’, and another subset for ‘life skills’.

From the progress star 21 (47%) participants showed increased employability skills, whilst 19 (42%) showed improved basic life skills.

17 (38%) had increased scores for ‘feel more prepared to apply for opportunities’ and 13 (29%) showed improved scores for ‘feel more prepared for EET’. Against this only seven (16%) expressed ‘higher levels of **desire** for EET’.

This suggests that improvement in specific skills or attributes (eg ‘Listening to Others’ or ‘Reliability’) did not necessarily result in greater confidence or desire for work.

In some cases participants scored themselves **lower** on some categories at the end of the project than at the start. In one case this resulted in an overall lower score. This did not mean the young person had scored themselves lower on all categories. One participant showed a slightly **lower** exit than entry score for Life Skills, but a **higher** score for employability due to the specific combination of categories contributing to those measures.

Given that the young people were receiving support with employment skills, and therefore all scores might be expected to increase, one factor in lower scores may be that their increased knowledge made them more self-critical.

Explore

Explore was designed to support participants to prepare for job searching. It includes resources on transferable skills, preparing a CV, job searching, and interview techniques. It contains links to job search sites, further training and education, volunteering opportunities and wellbeing resources. It is specifically designed to help those with little or no work experience to identify attributes that may be valuable in job seeking. The website can be found using the following link: [How to write a CV | Explore | England \(explore-experienceworks.com\)](https://www.explore-experienceworks.com)

Site use Apr – Sep 2022

	Current reporting period		Previous reporting period Oct 21 – Mar 22	
	Total Sep	Ave per month	Total	Ave per month
Site sessions	120	20	117	20
Unique visitors	87	15	70	12
• New	59	10	35	6
• Returning	28	5	23	4
Ave session duration		4m 53s		9m 16s*

* This is artificially high due to an outlier – a very high duration in one month. The true average is more like 6 minutes.

Use of the site increased over the previous period. The site was developed during this period, with more emphasis on links to volunteering and work opportunities and careers sites. This may have resulted in increased visits by partners to make use of the new resources.

Outcome 1 Indicator (Output)	From project start
# of young people receiving support from Experience Works	167
# of 1-2-1 sessions (and hours)	540 (798)
# of group sessions (and hours)	765 (114)
# people who exited	53
- # of young people in employment on leaving	25
- # of young people in education/training on leaving	11
# of young people have gained a qualification	4
# of young people have gained an RQF accredited qualification	1
Participants feel that their employability and life skills have improved*	20
Participants express higher levels of desire for EET*	7
Participants feel more prepared for EET*	13
Participants feel more prepared to apply for opportunities*	17
# of Outcome 1 Case Studies	4

*These outputs are measured via completion of the Progress Star. They only apply to participants who have completed Experience Works as scores are compared at the start and end of the project.

Outcome 2

Young people have increased their knowledge of their local communities and have made positive contributions to them.

Experience Works intends that communities will benefit from young people making an increased positive contribution through social action and work experience; their young people being better skilled and prepared to make positive contributions; a lower risk of young people participating in negative behaviours; and places being more socially cohesive and safer due to reduced antisocial behaviour.

In this period seven participants (16%) reported on their progress stars that they were 'increasingly helping others' whilst 11 (24%) felt 'better able to engage with other people'.

Volunteering

Each partner has a different approach to volunteering. For example, The Prince's Trust and PGL are very work experienced focussed – the former mainly through relationships with business partners, the latter via its own training facilities – and therefore tend not to use volunteering as part of their programmes. Battling On undertakes many community-based activities, some of which are direct volunteering, other which are internal activities with a voluntary element, such as creating a water safety poster which was adopted by the local RNLI lifeguards.

Volunteering has not proved to be a major outcome. Part of the reason may be that mentors report that young people often don't appreciate the value of 'working for nothing' as a way of developing their employability either by acquiring work skills or building a portfolio of experience. However, the reported figures (three participants attended a volunteering session) do not reflect the amount of voluntary activity that takes place.

The three reported sessions are a sponsored walk, forest school activity and signing up to a volunteering website to search for opportunities. In addition to those:

- Three participants at Petroc helped out in a local retirement housing complex, cooking and serving meals to the residents, whilst another volunteered with the National Trust.
- A participant who makes textile products has produced bibs for a local person with Down's Syndrome.
- Participants with Groundwork South supported St Lukes Hospice with fundraising activities, including taking part in a sponsored walk.
- Groundwork have also delivered sessions in community settings, for example the local library. This is a quiet place where they can work on their employability skills, but which also introduces participants to an important community resource with access to information and services.
- At Battling On a participant that has been volunteering at National Aquarium has benefited from greater confidence saying that they feel they enjoy and have ownership over their work.

Community Activity

A range of community-based activities were offered by the partners introducing young people to aspects of their locality that they may otherwise have been unable to access. These sometimes took the form of training or social events which were, nevertheless, based in the community.

- As part of The Prince's Trust's Get into Photography programme, three participants took part in a video course delivered by Fotonow, a local CIC. They interviewed members of the local community on location to create a documentary about life for young people which will be completed later in the year.
- Participants from The Prince's Trust created and performed a theatre piece around identity as part of 'Get started with theatre' programme, run in conjunction with Theatre Royal in Plymouth. It covered themes such as sexuality, gender, clothing, and how participants see themselves within their communities, for example: cultural events, sharing food/food memories and Plymouth as a place for young people to live. Participants also met other young people within their community and built links with the theatre community.
- Get started with Sport, run in partnership with Plymouth Argyle, supporting young people with confidence and leadership skills through sport.

Groundwork South and DCT are working together to deliver group sessions that allow the young people to envision what works well in the community and what could be improved.

An important aspect of all community-based work is that participants travel to new places and increase their knowledge of the local area. Sometimes engaging with the community involves enabling young people to access public transport and gain confidence in travelling. A Battling On participant was supported to get to a training programme despite having barriers to transport and worries about going to new places. They are now able to take a multi-bus journey, opening up wider possibilities for engagement.

Outcome 2 Indicator (Output)	
# of participants attended a Volunteering session	27
# of instances of a participant attending a Volunteering session	31
# of participants attending a social action session	2
Participants feel that they are increasingly helping others*	19
Participants feel that they are better able to engage with new people*	17
# of Outcome 2 Case Studies	3

*These outputs are measured via completion of the Progress Star.

Outcome 3

Employers have increased their understanding of young people who are NEET and are better equipped to provide them with valuable opportunities.

Delivery of Experience Works is expected to lead to employers having a greater understanding of the needs of young people. This is being achieved through offering positions and experiences to young people on the project as well as awareness raising training with support partners, DCT.

Partners also have direct communication with employers as they offer wrap-around support for participants, and work with employers to secure appointments and other forms of work experience.

Employer engagement takes place both through the delivery partners' contacts with businesses and DCT's networking and training programme.

Devon Communities Together

Through DCT's awareness-raising work of the Experience Works project and young people who are NEET, they made contact with 92 employers in Devon in this period. This was through a combination of Chamber of Commerce events, bespoke workplace sessions and free online workshops, which DCT have been running since January 2022, on 'Young People and Inclusive Employment'. The content of these sessions included:

- An overview of Experience Works, what 'NEET' means and some of the challenges facing young people today,
- How employers can benefit from offering opportunities to young people and,
- Simple ways to make hiring and induction processes more inclusive.

Comments from charity shop managers who took part in the Inclusive Employment training include:

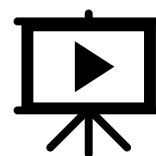
"Most helpful was learning about a whole talent pool of potential new employees/volunteers previously overlooked."

"The training was a good insight into the problems young people are facing with regards to employment, great that it's being recognised as a problem"

For a more detailed case study of Hospiscare's participation in inclusive Employment Training see the case study section.

From DCT's work and relationship building with employers, offers of workplace opportunities were made, which were passed on to Experience Works delivery partners. These opportunities came from a range of sectors and covered a variety of offers from workplace visits, interview 'top tips', work experience and potential employment. Some of these opportunities were offered by local charity Hospiscare, who have charity shops across Exeter and East Devon, Saddles and Paddles a bike and boat hire shop in central Exeter and Core Highways, a highways maintenance company based in Torbay and North Devon.

DCT created two 'Top-Tips' videos, aimed at supporting Experience Works participants around the topic of applying for and starting a job. DCT worked with Hospiscare and Saddles and Paddles to produce these, who offered their 'Top-Tips' as experienced local employers.



See the Top Tips on the Experience Works YouTube channel in the Case Studies section.

Partners

The mentors' focus is on supporting young people and helping them to be ready for work. The resources available mean that they are not able to prioritise employers' understanding of the issues faced by young people who are NEET. That being said, when they put a young person in touch with an employer, whether for training or work experience, they are communicating those issues.

The Prince's Trust ran several projects in conjunction with local employers in the commercial as well as charity sector, which will have contributed to those employers being more aware of the project and the needs of its participants. These include:

- Get into retail with M&S
- Get into hospitality with Torbay Leisure Hotels
- Get into theatre with Theatre Royal Plymouth
- Get into IT programme via a Google online course
- Get into photography with Fotonow CIC

One participant on the Get into Retail programme came close to dropping out on several occasions due to additional needs. With close support from The Prince's Trust and the employer he was able to complete the full four-week programme. As a result, the employer has improved their understanding of the needs of young people and those that have been unable to complete mainstream education.

The Princes Trust also set up a networking event to bring employers and young people together, described by one member of staff as 'speed dating'. As well as building on existing employer relationships this type of event is valuable in attracting new partners, in this case Paignton Zoo.

Partners continue to engage with businesses in securing work placements. These included:

- four participants with PGL working with a local employer to develop their construction skills;
- Supporting young people in accessing the Kickstart apprenticeship programme, for example a Battling On participant working as a Natural Grid Assistant for Plymouth City Council

Partners are creative in finding informal approaches to offering work-related experience. Battling On enabled a housebound young person to get online advice from a local graphic designer. They also facilitated attendance for participant at Plymouth Jobs Fair, enabling them to meet several potential employers. Another young person has been in a long-term volunteering role at the National Aquarium.

Petroc have run work experience sessions at Medard House retirement housing where participants have worked alongside staff to provide lunches for residents.

PGL has good connections with construction industry employers and set up work experience for participants.

Where long term engagement between participants and employers takes place there is evidence that employer's recognition of the changing needs of young people is enhanced. This does not always result in a successful outcome for the participant; in one instance the employer's financial situation prevented an apprenticeship being offered, and some participants on The Prince's Trust's 'Get Into...' programmes did not get jobs as a result.

In shorter term engagements some development of employer understanding is also possible.

Case Studies for Outcome 3

In a PGL case study, one of their participants had gained work experience with a local holiday park, leading to learning from both participant and employer.

*"His hard work led to him gaining external work experience with a large local Holiday Park, Sandy Bay, Exmouth, which has in turn increased his confidence and enabled him to extend his practical skills. **This interaction also led the employer to better understand the factors affecting young people who are NEET.**"*

Additionally, a case study produced by DCT for The Prince's Trust, shows Experience Works participants at Torbay Leisure Hotels where the Prince's Trust hold their 'Get into Hospitality' programme. The video showcases the voices of two of the participants and the HR manager at the hotel while attending the 'Celebration Event' for the programme.

This case study shows how an inclusive approach to employment, with participants being able to get a taste of each department of the hotel with the support of the mentors and staff, can have hugely positive benefits for both participant and employer. Participants who have experienced barriers to work or may not have any formal work experience get the chance to learn, gain confidence and show the hotel their individual skillsets. While the hotel, who told us they typically hope to offer at least 50% of participants a position at the hotel, gain valuable members of staff in a climate where positions, especially in the Hospitality sector, are challenging to fill. They told us how much they had learned about the needs and strengths of the young people they meet through the programme:

Outcome 3 Indicator (Output)	
# of learning opportunities offered to a participant by an employer	12
# of employers made aware of Experience Works	104
# of Outcome 3 Case Studies	3

Outcome 4

Local support services have benefitted from improved referral processes.

Relationship building with support services, for both referrals in, and signposting out, is central to the success of Experience Works and has been prioritised by partners with meetings taking place across the county.

Building relationships with local support services, for both referrals in, and signposting out, has proven to be key to the success of Experience Works and has again been prioritised by partners, with old and new collaborations being maintained across the county.

The long-standing collaboration and everyday liaison with job centres has continued to be of great value for the project's referral process with four out of five project partners maintaining active relationships with their local job centre(s). The Prince's Trust, Petroc and PGL reported to have held regular sessions – ranging from weekly to monthly – at their local job centres providing information and guidance to support young people into training and employment. Petroc's local Job centre has created a link for referrals to them, should they have any users that need support managing application forms.

A The Prince's Trust manager said:

"We are based in job centres across Devon. A particular highlight this quarter has been Rebecca Trethewey's work in Torbay. She has visited every job centre in the area meeting referral partners and young people. As a result, we have seen an increase in the number of referrals with 4 young people signing up for our next M&S programme."

Building relationships with educational providers has played an important role too and has been crucial in supporting Experience Works participants under the age of 18 back into education or training. Battling On have been accompanying participants to appointments with headteachers and college staff, for example to discuss suitable options for follow-up qualifications or re-doing a school year. Petroc being a college themselves has had the advantage of being able to access lists with withdrawn students, which has enabled them to identify young people at the risk of becoming NEET early on.

Groundwork South has mainly worked in local schools with pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET. They have held strong links with a number of schools and have continued to reach out to the different secondary schools in Plymouth. Despite the effort to strengthen links, Groundwork South reported a drop in referrals during the summer when schools were closed, and since then have noticed that communication with schools has become increasingly difficult due to staff changes within schools. Groundwork South have responded and widened their scope where to receive referrals from. This has led to links with CSW, Skills Launchpad Plymouth and within the wider community.

Project partners have also found it helpful to **attend forums and fairs to raise the profile and awareness of Experience Works as a way to open up new referral pathways** with organisations, who might not have been aware of Experience Works before. Just in this last period, The Prince's Trust have attended The Disability Jobs Fair at Devonport Job Centre, the Family Fun Day at Millfields in Plymouth, and the Respect Festival in Exeter.

For the first time there have also been instances of cross-partnership referrals, which have added a new dimension to referral processes. Both Battling On and Petroc have been referring several of their participants to programmes run by The Prince’s Trust. This has not only opened up new opportunities for participants but has also increased collaboration and the sharing of best practice within the partnership.

Outcome 4 Indicator (Output)	
# of advocacy sessions (and hours)	31
# of instances of signposting to external support services (of whom the participant was previously unaware)	313
Employment opportunities (of which the participant was previously unaware)	144
Education or training (of which the participant was previously unaware)	39
Careers advice	23
Soft skills development (of which the participant was previously unaware)	5
Mental health services (of which the participant was previously unaware)	20
Physical health & wellbeing (of which the participant was previously unaware)	15
Housing services	9
# of referrals into the project from external service (where that participant went live)	111
Participants feel that they are better informed about support services*	16
# of Outcome 4 Case Studies	1

*These outputs are measured via completion of the Progress Star. They only apply to participants who have completed Experience Works as scores are compared at the start and end of the project.

Outcome 5

Organisations inside and outside the partnership have access to best practice and lessons learned from Experience Works.

The Partner Meetings have continued to play a key role in enabling project partners to regularly share best practice, achievements, and challenges they have faced. Two Partner Meetings, facilitated by the Petroc Management team, were hosted in this period on 9 June and 15 September 2022, with a total of 28 attendees from across all partner organisations. These meetings provided an opportunity for the whole partnership to review the project's progress against contracted targets and understand current and pipeline activity. Project partners were able to exchange project updates, project ideas, funding/bursary opportunities and advice on participant engagement and retainment. Following on from one of the partner meetings, DCT shared their training resources for inclusive employer engagement with the rest of the partnership to share with their own respective networks.

The Petroc Management team used the space to share changes to processes, which ensure the project's continued resilience and efficiency. This summer, the team at Petroc brought in a new way of managing the financial claims process and asked partners to submit their claims monthly. This has resulted in the team being able to submit quarterly claims ahead of the deadline and in the speeding up of payments. The Petroc Management team has also continued to provide one-to-one support to project partners and ensure that Partners are delivering within the project specifications. This included paperwork and PDRS training sessions, as well as two online review meetings with each project partner during this period. The Petroc Management team updated the project's Operational Guide in July this year.

In addition to the two Partner Meetings, one Local Mentor Meeting took place in June 2022. One project participant from Battling On and two from The Prince's Trust were amongst those attending and spoke about their experiences on the project, giving the group the chance to gain a real understanding of the participant's project experience and insight into success stories from other project partners.

A project manager at Battling On said:

"We were honoured when one of our participants kindly came to a Mentor Meeting to talk about the project and the support that he has been given. From this meeting connections were made with another participant and the offer of helping him attend a drama group."

Partner and Local Mentor Meetings were able to be held in person again during this reporting period, which has had a huge impact on the level of creativity and productivity within the project team. Meeting face-to-face rather than online provided opportunities for more organic interaction and networking amongst the project partners. This enabled partners to develop ideas more easily and share details of their projects, which might get lost in a more formal online setting.

All project partners reported an increase in exploring new ways of cross-partnership working and collaborating within and outside their organisations. Links with external organisations, such as the job centres, Careers Southwest, Proud2Be and the Citizens Advice Bureau enabled partners to provide an even better wrap around support to their participants. At the same time, these links were great opportunities for the project partners to spread the word about the project's impact and share some of the best practice of working with young NEETs.

Stories of success were shared within and outside of the project partnership through case studies, produced by DCT and the partners themselves, as well as a newsletter sent out by Petroc. This newsletter reached 200 people, including of all the Unemployment Support project Partners and Grant Recipients,

members of the panel who appraised the Community Grants applications, and external stakeholders such as Funding Officers and Contract Managers, members of the LEP and organisations such as CSW, Pluss and Plymouth City Council.

Outcome 5 Indicator (Output)	
# of instances of a partnership staff member attending an inter-partner meeting	
Partnership meeting	61
Local meeting	14
Support/training from Petroc (e.g. admin/finance/delivery)	64
Other (e.g. steering group; focus group; etc)	41
# of instances of a partnership staff member receiving a project newsletter/newsflash	2
# of instances of project insights being shared outside of the partnership	6
# of Outcome 5 case studies	4

Looking Forward to the Impact of Experience Works

The Experience Works partnership is continuing to have an impact across Devon on young people, employers, support services, communities, and delivery partners themselves. Participant numbers are increasing, with almost 40% of the total starting during this period, and the number of young people exiting into employment or training is ahead of predictions at 64%.

The number of participants reporting a disability or mental health issue has risen to 68%, and it is apparent that there are increasingly complex needs, with 53% reporting both a physical or learning disability and a mental health issue. These young people benefit from the one-to-one support provided by the mentors and the exit outcomes demonstrate that the project is succeeding in supporting them into work or employment.

To ensure participant needs are met, the delivery partners and the support partner have been working closely to ensure that the participants are supported. The Petroc Management Team continue to hold regular reviews and training sessions with all delivery partners, both one to one and as a whole project, and this is to ensure that the project specification is being worked towards and that best practice is continuously shared. The DCT team have held meetings with all partners to discuss specific aspects of their work, to ensure they can meet their requirements regarding employer and community engagement, as a result of which DCT are developing a strategy to help partners find work experience and other workplace opportunities for their participants.

In this report DCT have continued to capture and share the work delivered and insights gained to date. We expect to continue to bring this further to life in the next period by tracing the journeys of participants and partners through on-site visits and multi-media case study development. DCT will also continue to engage employers by delivering support sessions on inclusiveness and to give insight into how employers can support young people.

Finally, the partnership will continue to engage with Experience Works' Cross Cutting Themes of Equality and Sustainable Development.

The next Experience Works Biannual Impact Report will be available in May 2023 and will provide an impact update covering September 2022 – March 2023

Case studies

Devon Communities Together recorded two video case studies during this reporting period.

Often, difficult family circumstances contribute to the factors that lead to young people becoming NEET. Here Chris, who moved from a city to a remote, rural location as a result of family circumstances, talks about the difficulties of finding work and making friends in a small, rural community.



The Prince's Trust and TLH hotel group celebrate Experience Works participants' successful completion of their Get into Hospitality course. We look at some of the problems they had to overcome to do the course.

Case Study - 'Helping Hospiscare consider a new pool of young volunteers'

In April 2022, Devon Communities Together were excited to begin working with [Hospiscare](#), the adult hospice charity covering Exeter and East Devon. Hospiscare have a network of 18 charity shops across the region, a distribution and recycling centre in Exeter, an on-line eBay shop and a house clearance operation.

As a charity, they rely heavily on volunteers to staff their shops. Their Head of Retail, Helen Hutter, expressed a keen interest in learning more about young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and how Hospiscare could support them by giving them opportunities to volunteer in their shops. Following some conversations about how best to raise awareness within the organisation, several face-to-face "Inclusive Employment" training sessions were arranged with their shop managers.

These sessions covered topics such as:

- What NEET means?
- What the factors are in young people becoming NEET?
- What employers can do to help NEET young people on their journey to full-time employment?

18 Hospiscare staff were fully engaged in the training sessions and keen to learn more about how they could support NEET young people into work experience opportunities. The sessions were lively with many contributions from Hospiscare attendees, some of whom had direct experience of children or grandchildren who fell into the category of NEET. In addition to shop managers, members of the Hospiscare HR and Volunteering teams also attended the sessions.

One immediate and exciting consequence of the sessions is that the organisation is now looking to make significant changes to their recruitment process. For example, they are looking to introduce a Magna Vitae to replace the existing CV and application form. A Magna Vitae is an alternative to the traditional CV and allows a job applicant to give a frank and honest account of the difficulties they have faced during their life and how this has affected their employment opportunities – for an example see <https://www.learndevon.co.uk/magna-vitae-an-honest-cv/>.

Following the training sessions, several offers of work experience were made by individual Hospiscare shops which have been shared with DCT's partner organisations on the Experience Works project. These partners are currently mentoring young people and may be able to take advantage of these great offers.

Feedback from attendees included:

"It was helpful to understand why young people can struggle and how that anxiety is always there. It was good to see an example of someone as well."

"I found it most helpful to know that so many young people are in need of help and that we should look more to the person as an individual and not what's on paper."