

Project Final Evaluation for the

LONDON WRENS
(Women Returners' Employment (K)nowledge Skills
40+) Project

Funded by London Councils ESF
Co-financing Programme 2007-08

Specification: **5.1**

Target group(s):

Economically inactive women
re-entering the labour market

Period covered by report:
Q1-Q4 (April 2007 – March 2008)

Actual project start/finish dates:

01 April 2007- 30 June 2008

Evaluation conducted by:
GLOBAL GATEWAYS LTD

Project manager:
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Date: June 2008



1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The London WRENS 40+ Project has succeeded in meeting a current gap in training services for older women and addressing their individual needs and barriers. TAF starts where the client is at the point of entry be this with basic or no ICT skills; never having worked before; having failed in business; coming off long-term unemployment; and/or needing financially to return to paid work.
- 1.2 The Project addressed the *Catch 22* situation whereby the 40+ from hard-to-reach and/or low educational attainment communities needing less training generally, are less likely to be taken on by employers. Transferable ICT skills have been delivered to 100 unemployed women, resident in 10 Outer and Inner London Boroughs. Of note are the number of learners who are 50+ (58%), also their range of varied professional backgrounds and rich life experiences.
- 1.3 TAF's tried and tested OCR accredited ICT Skills for Life, New CLAiT Level 1 and CLAiT Plus Level 2 work upskilling training was packaged with a bespoke management module to deliver skills and assertiveness training, also ageism and gender equality strategies at a low unit cost delivered at 0.6% below profile.
- 1.4 One-to-one, client led, diagnostic assessment, Accreditation of Prior Learning, Information/Advice/Guidance, confidence building, Skills for Life, Personal Development (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), life and networking skills, team building, action planning, curriculum vitæ development, job search, interview skills, enterprise training and employer liaison were used to prepare for entry into a male-dominated ICT sector, with on-going support.
- 1.5 Project areas that worked well have included high retention levels (70%); the support given to clients who were long-term 2 years+ unemployed (57%), those with disabilities (15%), from BAME communities (45%) and lone parents (42%); and progression into third sector volunteering.
- 1.6 Provision has been delivered successfully using new outreach facilities across 7 boroughs that in turn, have generated new voluntary and statutory partnerships. Also, the 'distance travelled' by participants with 100% feeling more confident/positive/responsible for their own learning and better equipped for employability.
- 1.7 Areas that worked less well have included progression into employment. The profile target was ambitious in view of the changed economic climate; cutbacks in employment levels and work; and TAF's finite employer liaison staff resources.
- 1.8 Key lessons learnt have been to aim to change client mindsets about moving into work on project completion, using sustained confidence building; also support in the transition into and during the first stages of work, using an employment liaison officer.
- 1.8 Project sustainability realised includes the London Councils *FORCE* Project (running until March 2010), to support 85 former carers 50+ in 10 London

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Boroughs who lack confidence and relevant work skills to access specialist ICT sector and other job opportunities.

2. Methodology

- 2.1** The evaluation methodology used for this final evaluation has been to measure actual performance against the profile outputs, outcomes, milestones and targets of the approved project. The evaluator has sought to capture the added value realised and the lessons learnt; also to make recommendations towards developing the London WRENS 40+ Project model including its exit strategy and future sustainability.
- 2.2** Research methodology employed has been to analyse key primary project quantitative and the quarterly submitted monitoring beneficiary and financial data, also secondary qualitative data recorded by Third Age Foundation (TAF) management (1), delivery (8) including 2 volunteers, financial (1) and administrative staff (1).
- 2.3** Beneficiary level quantitative and qualitative monitoring data capture was recorded face to face from a 9% sampling of LONDON WRENS 40+ project beneficiaries from 23-25 June 2008. The questionnaire used covered questions relating to:

TRAINING MODULE		ICT MODULE	
Personal development	100%	Word processing	100%
Motivation/orientation training	100%	Spreadsheets	100%
Individual action plans	100%	Database	60%
Key skills assessment	100%	Graphs & charts	60%
Work advice/guidance	100%	Powerpoint	60%
Curriculum vitæ development	100%	Desk top publishing	20%
Work advice/guidance	100%	Website design	40%
Interview techniques	100%	Photoshop	20%
Job search skills & assistance	100%	E mail for business	100%
Enterprise induction	25%	Internet for online research	100%
Management module	100%		

- 2.4** Also, pan London strategic documentation and the project fit with the London Council's *Co-Financing Plan*, *ESF Objective 3 London Regional Development Plan*, *London Skills Commission Regional Skills Prospectus* and *London Skills and Employment Board Strategy* for London have been evaluated.

3. Rationale for the project

- 3.1** The London WRENS 40+ Project sought to address the *Catch 22* situation whereby older women from hard-to-reach and/or low educational attainment communities who need less training generally, are less likely to be taken on by employers.
- 3.2** Up-to-date ICT skills that can be transferred and applied across a variety of work roles demanded by today's labour market remain a principal skills gap faced by people 40+. If left unsupported, older people especially women face workplace inequality, compounded further by an ICT sector that is traditionally male-dominated at 80%.
- 3.3** Employer need is clear to measure in a climate when businesses require personnel with ICT competences, team working and customer skills; also problem solving, numeracy, oral communication competences and the ability to work flexibly in a changing environment to meet workforce development needs. Additionally, the 40+ are identified now as an under-utilised pool of labour (16% of the population increasing to 20%+ by 2016), at a loss of some £31 billion annually to the UK economy.
- 3.4** The London WRENS 40+ Project targeted 100 women on Income Benefit or coming off Income Support, resident in 10 Outer and Inner London Boroughs. TAF's tried and tested work upskilling training package was packaged to deliver ICT skills and assertiveness training (to counter ageism and gender inequality), using one-to-one, client led holistic diagnostic assessment, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG), confidence building, Skills for Life (SfL), Personal Development (Neuro-Linguistic Programming-NLP), life and networking skills, team building, action planning, curriculum vitae development, job search, interview skills, enterprise training, a management module, employment brokerage and on-going support for up to 6 months. OCR accredited Skills for Life at Entry Level 3 (50%), New CLAiT at Level 1 (35%) and CLAiT Plus at Level 2 (15%) qualifications.
- 3.5** This training intervention was targeted at women coming off Income Benefit or Income Support such as mothers of 16+ children. These women would find difficulty accessing a labour market that had changed significantly since their last working roles. Additionally for some clients, an additional barrier was expected to be only some if any formal work, the result of a lack of educational and work opportunities in the UK and countries of origin.
- 3.6** Additionally, the 100 female 40+ learners targeted were expected to be suffering from a debilitating cocktail of access and progression barriers ranging from low self-esteem and confidence to return to paid employment and real and/or perceived age discrimination from employers and businesses; also lone parenthood; needing to return to work for financial reasons; made redundant or having failed in business; overcoming periods of illness and/or temporary/permanent disability such as sight and/or hearing impairment also mobility problems (20%) and shortfalls in Skills for Life including ESOL (30%).⁴

3.7 The London WRENS 40+ Project sought to address these documented barriers to learning and employment by addressing the specific needs of the 40+ to maximise inclusion; by promoting gender equality within the workplace and labour market; by providing tailored opportunities for upskilling; and by equipping future labour market entrants with ICT transferable workforce skills.

4. Aims and objectives

4.1 The London WRENS 40+ Project had 11 key aims and objectives. Firstly, it sought to tackle social exclusion, labour market disadvantage and age discrimination for disaffected and hard-to-reach 40+ women, with emphasis on those from BAME backgrounds. The profile was to support 20% of clients in this category. Actual delivery reached 45%, an area of success that was attributable inter-alia, to new community outreach facilities established and developed in Brent (Dudden Hill Centre); Ealing (Community Voluntary Service Lido Centre); Hillingdon (Barra Hall serving Hounslow residents also); Hackney (Bootstrap Company) Kingston (RAKAT Centre also serving Richmond clients); and Westminster (Abbey Community Centre).

4.2 The second aim and objective was to offer *matrix* standard IAG, also APL. (TAF was one of the first UK Voluntary Sector Organisations to achieve *matrix* in September 2002 and was reviewed successfully in September 2005 and will be again in September 2008. (The organisation has been used as a case study since 2002). TAF built capacity for *matrix* IAG delivery through its partnership working with nextstep, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and CIPD-TASIG to secure client referrals. To be noted is that over the lifetime of the project, JCP has taken over the referral of potential project beneficiaries increasingly, with 66% of clients interviewed signposted to TAF by their JCP local offices.

4.3 Thirdly, London WRENS 40+ was designed to deliver the wider soft skills needed for work, using the externally standardised *Rickter and DWP approved indicators—'Measuring Soft Outcomes & Distance Travelled.'* Impact areas assessed monthly by TAF tutors have included improved appearance/engagement; positive attitudinal skills to training/lifelong learning; raised basic ICT skills; increased confidence; higher motivation levels; development of self-esteem/worth; inter-personal skills; team working; understanding work skills; ability to work with others; and/or how lead a team.

4.4 The fourth aim and objective was for the project to offer OCR ICT accredited Skills for Life training at Entry Level 3 for up to 50% of beneficiaries, according to individual need. It was anticipated that shortfalls in Skills for Life (including ESOL), would affect up to 30% too. Specialist ICT SfL sessions were delivered at different days/times during the week and individually tailored to clients' needs/availability, resulting in 26 participants gaining full qualifications and a further 17, *Units Towards*, this reflecting their individual needs to both stage and consolidate 'bite-size' learning over a longer time-frame.

- 4.5** Fifthly, 35% of clients were to achieve the OCR New CLAiT Office ICT upskilling award at Level 1. 17 project beneficiaries gained full qualifications and a further 9, *Units Towards*. With regard to progression up to Level 2 CLAiT PLUS Office and Media, this was profiled at 15%. This aim was under-delivered with 3 clients reaching full qualification level and 1 gaining *Units Towards*, due partly to a shortened project duration and linked financial constraints. Also, it is to be recorded that clients who progress from Level 1 to Level 2 training cannot be counted or funded twice, according to ESF Co-Financing monitoring requirements and this has affected TAF's recorded completion rates.
- 4.6** Sixthly, a management module was added to the programme to empower beneficiaries towards sustainable employment including management functions. TAF devised and piloted its own in-house module which was delivered to participants either in 2x3 hour sessions or in 3-4 hours at outreach centres. Results obtained were somewhat mixed. Whilst 60% of clients interviewed had derived clear benefit from this module, the remaining 40% felt that it was not relevant to their own work ambitions.
- 4.7** The seventh aim and objective was to progress a total of 30 beneficiaries into full-time work and 20 into part-time roles. To achieve this, TAF has engaged employers and encouraged them to forward suitable ICT specialist and related jobs, (put on TAF's website weekly), also sending them quarterly newsletters. Additionally, through the appointment of an Employer Liaison Officer in April 2008, clients have had additional support towards referrals into work, also via specialist employer events such as Borough Job Fairs and related events such as the *White City Jobs West* activities and the *Imperial Healthcare* for clients progressing into hospital work. To date, 9% have progressed into full-time and 10% into part-time jobs. This is below profile, although the perennial difficulty of obtaining a letter signed by the employer stating that there is a reasonable expectation that the job will last for 13 weeks, is to be noted. In fact, TAF achieves a 30%+ return rate on written job confirmation which is significantly more than the 10% usually achieved. Also, it is anticipated that additional project beneficiaries will secure work, always allowing for the current adverse and prevailing negative employment conditions.
- 4.8** Eighthly, the London WRENS 40+ Project sought to support 15% towards self-employment and setting up micro-businesses, (of 25% undertaking the Self-Enterprise Module). TAF offers specialist staff expertise through its Business Advisor who has specialist qualifications and has run her own business successfully for a number of years. This is again difficult to quantify with 1% recorded as self employed. However amongst clients interviewed, none stated an intention to become self-employed although the evaluator noted that there were some popular misconceptions about running a business and a lack of contact with those who had successfully achieved this. Perhaps in the future, female directors/entrepreneurs might be invited to participate in the self-enterprise training as positive role models and/or mentors.
- 4.9** The ninth aim and objective was to progress 15% of participants into volunteering activities, designed to act as a springboard into onward employment. To date,⁶

7% have progressed into both local and regional roles within well-known national organisations such as the *Marie Curie Cancer Charity* and the *St. John Ambulance* service. Once again, the lack of documentary evidencing is relevant, also the later progression of project completers over the first 6 weeks.

- 4.10** Tenthly, London WRENS 40+ was to support up to 40% of beneficiaries into next stage, higher level progression routes within further education or with other training providers including TAF. Once again, the difficulty of obtaining evidence from college and training organisations is to be recorded, with 11% logged to date. However, it is to be noted equally that 3% of clients have extended their study at TAF for example to complete CLAiT PLUS Office and Media at Level 2. Additionally, TAF has referred clients wishing to follow further ICT specialist courses to LSC approved work-based learning providers, for example the Gateway Technology Centre that can provide C++ and Cisco accredited training, as well as Computer Maintenance.
- 4.11** Finally, it was estimated that 20% would remain unemployed due to dominant SfL needs, family commitments and other external factors such as a move out of the area. To mitigate against this, TAF has been able to provide one-to-one interventions across each 12 week block of training and for the last quarter, additional advocacy through its new Employer Liaison Officer. However, the investment return on this April to June 2008 only work has yet to be quantified.
- 4.12** The 100 target female beneficiary group- *defined in 3.6*, were to be supported and empowered to move from former low paid and non-sustainable employment into accessing new work opportunities, with emphasis on supervisory and management roles. Thus, in addition to TAF's holistic core programme of information, advice and guidance; confidence building; motivational training; life skills; job search assistance; action planning; curriculum vitæ preparation; self employment preparation: management module and ICT accredited training (up to Level 2).
- 4.13** The target group *further defined in 3.4 and 3.5*, was selected in recognition of ICT remaining the primary gap in skills faced by 40+ clients especially female, who are unable to access a much changed labour market meaningfully and certainly not as supervisors or managers. Also, the intention was to target the long-term unemployed and in fact, 57% of beneficiaries had not worked for 2 years+. Additionally, TAF has aimed to help women returners into a male dominated ICT sector (80%) and the emerging labour market information on the 40+ age group- *please see 3.3*.

5. Inputs and activities

5.1 Evaluation of other project inputs

- 5.1.1** TAF's staff are notably well-qualified and all hold NVQ Level 4/5 equivalent qualifications. Additionally, the ICT Tutors have City & Guilds 7307 or 7407 Stage 1 and/or Stage II and the Personal Development Tutor is Advanced

NLP qualified. The Business Advisor has specialist qualifications and has run her own business successfully over a number of years, too.

5.1.2 High levels of beneficiary satisfaction have been recorded throughout by this final evaluation. 100% of the participants interviewed would recommend the London WRENS 40+ Project to others and indeed, some had already done so stating that TAF provision was much preferred to other training provision experienced such as self-learning through library distance learning resources. Consistently, clients praised the supportive and caring approach and especially the high calibre, skills levels and expertise of the specialist ICT staff. Direct comments from project beneficiaries included:

- 🌍 *Patient staff*
- 🌍 *Outstanding teacher*
- 🌍 *Training is excellent*
- 🌍 *The quality of tuition is outstanding*
- 🌍 *Such experienced professional tutors*
- 🌍 *Tutors keep classes utterly engrossed*
- 🌍 *They promote the excitement of learning*
- 🌍 *Makes students feel good about themselves*
- 🌍 *I wouldn't have lasted on the course without the tutor*
- 🌍 *He makes me believe that I can do it too*

5.1.3 The 9 well-experienced TAF staff members offer long and stable service history records with the organisation of between 5 and 10 years. Their job descriptions and person specifications do remain fully appropriate to ensure that the project could be delivered as planned. Indeed, a review took place pre project start and yearly, as part of regular staff review and appraisal activities.

5.1.4 Day-to-day administration of the London WRENS 40+ London Councils Project has been delivered together with 2 other ESF Co-financed Projects - the London Development Agency funded IMPACT 40+ Project and the WRENS 40+ London West Learning & Skills Project. A dedicated Office Manager/Administrator works 4 days per week, an ex-student appointed to do administration on a further 2 days per week (in place for the past two months) as well as another ex-student to help weaker clients with ESOL two days per week and do administration work on an additional day. However, the 3 London Co-Financing Organisations have individual and differing reporting systems and so this has resulted in a much expanded workload, also in order to maintain TAF's central database.

5.1.5 Project areas that worked particularly well included the 'distance travelled' by beneficiaries. Amongst interviewees, 100% felt more confident than at the start of the course; 100% more positive and responsible for their own learning; and 100% better equipped to continue their own learning. Moreover, 100% believed that the project had improved personal employability and work prospects and 78% stated that they were ready to begin employment. One interviewee only stated hereg

not present but future intention to work, owing to caring responsibilities for elderly parents.

- 5.1.6** Another outcome of note, has been the direct project support delivered to the 50-59 year old age group, alongside provision for 40-50 year old beneficiaries. Of project participants interviewed, 25% were aged 51-59. Moreover, 80% stated their intention to re-enter the labour market as soon as possible, 55% into full-time and 45% into part-time work including volunteering. This is understandable not only from the 100% financial need expressed but also, it is reflective possibly of the changes in attitudes and mindsets following the October 2006 and the to-be announced June 2008 Age Legislation.
- 5.1.7** Of note, is that the London WRENS 40+ Project has been instrumental in supporting clients with disabilities. TAF aimed to support an ambitious profile of 20% and in fact, they have been successful in delivering personally tailored training experiences to 15% of older women supported.
- 5.1.8** Also, to be recorded is the project's success in tackling social exclusion, labour market disadvantage and age discrimination for those clients from BAME backgrounds. The profile was to support a 50% profile of clients in this category and actual delivery reached 45%, an area of success that was attributable inter-alia, to new community outreach facilities- *please see 4.1.*
- 5.1.9** Lone parents have been supported positively by the project, too. 42% of beneficiaries were in this category (against the 20% profiled) and to be recorded is the effective delivery through community located outreach centres that facilitated the identification of these hard-to-reach, often time-constrained clients.
- 5.1.10** Moreover, the project can evidence measurable added value through outreach delivery at the heart of the community- *please see 4.1* which in turn, has established both new networks and partnerships that can be further developed and rolled out for future projects designed to reach hard-to-reach clients, for example those with mobility restrictions.
- 5.1.11** A particular area of success of the London WRENS 40+Project has been the flexibility of the ICT and one-to-one personal development training delivered that has been tailored to individual training needs and personal availability. Individually negotiated learning plans with agreed targets have maximised attendance and has secured completion and accreditation numbers realised. Indeed of participants interviewed, study packages have included an Introduction to Computers & Computing and a choice of 3 (for Certificate qualification) and 5 (for Diploma qualification) ICT modules from Word Processing, Spreadsheets, Graphs and Charts, DataBase, DeskTop Publishing, Powerpoint, Website Design, PhotoShop, E-Mail for Business and Internet for On-Line Research).⁹

Similarly, training packages had ranged from 8 to 15 hours weekly on 2-2½ days per week over 12 weeks, both on TAF premises and in the 4 outreach centre premises used.

5.1.12 To further evidence the individual support levels delivered by the project, it is to be recorded that each completing client has received 2 personal development one-to-one interviews, with access to 2 extra guidance meetings to appraise suitable progression opportunities and options for higher level progression routes into Further Education and other employment support programmes. Additionally, work signposting advice has been delivered and maintained by TAF support and tracking at quarterly intervals for up 12 months, using job search assistance (now strengthened through the April 2008 appointed Employer Liaison Officer); also referrals into work via specialist employer events such as borough job fairs and related events for example the *White City Jobs West* activities and the *Imperial Healthcare* whereby clients progress into hospital work.

5.1.13 Individual achievement rates recorded by the London WRENS 40+ interviewed beneficiaries were spread across the ‘pick and mix’ menu of ICT and personal support modules, much valued by clients to progress their individual needs, interests and job aspirations including self employment options:

TRAINING MODULE		ICT MODULE	
Personal development	100%	Word processing	100%
Motivation/orientation training	100%	Spreadsheets	100%
Individual action plans	100%	Database	60%
Key skills assessment	100%	Graphs & charts	60%
Work advice/guidance	100%	Powerpoint	60%
Curriculum vitae development	100%	Desk top publishing	20%
Work advice/guidance	100%	Website design	40%
Interview techniques	100%	Photoshop	20%
Job search skills & assistance	100%	E mail for business	100%
Enterprise induction	25%	Internet for online research	100%
Management module	100%		

5.1.14 Project areas that have worked less well include progression into employment. The profile target of 30 beneficiaries into full-time work and 20 into part-time roles was considered too ambitious by TAF, based firstly on the now changed economic climate; secondly, on the current employment prospects which is an area that has seen recent cut-backs; and thirdly on reduced delivery times at tight unit cost. TAF did address

this situation using the services of an Employment Liaison Officer (from April 2008). However the impact of this work is not yet clear.

- 5.1.15** A recommendation here is to develop and market further joint working with employers, such as by expanding the direct vacancy posting facilities on the TAF website, also access to anonymous client positive case studies. Also, TAF might review increased working with Chambers of Commerce in communication channels when details could be given of available London WRENS 40+ course completers. This would serve to heighten further the primary employment goal of the ICT training
- 5.1.16** Additionally, work experience (paid if possible), might need to be integrated into the basic training package, or become an entitlement on project completion to prepare project beneficiaries for the much ICT changed world of work. As a number of participants already volunteer, for example with national organisations such as the *Marie Curie Cancer Charity* and the *St. John Ambulance*, perhaps the voluntary sector could be used further in addition to private sector employers, also opportunities in the public sector such as those based in Local Authorities.
- 5.1.17** Also recorded by this evaluation, was a beneficiary expressed shortfall in opportunities to practise acquired ICT skills both during and after course provision, either because they had missed modules as a result of absence, or because they felt that they needed more practice time. However, extra access is provided by TAF in the form of job search skills on Tuesdays, ESOL support on Tuesdays & Fridays and extra ICT on Wednesdays - taken up by very few.
- 5.1.18** It is suggested that additional funding might be secured for additional staffing to provide extra ICT facilities either in existing classrooms or in current office accommodation, also to complete curriculum vitae and to undertake wider internet job search skills. Currently, this client perceived reduced ICT access is aggravated further by a number of students who do not have access to a computer at home or indeed, the extra finance needed to use libraries at an average cost of £0.50 per hour.
- 5.1.19** Also recorded were a few beneficiaries who had ESOL needs that required addressing before benefit could be derived fully from the specialist ICT training. TAF has done its best to address these needs which were not resourced in the profiled project budget, for example by working with a former student who could offer expertise in this area such as one lady who is a trained and experienced ESOL tutor, with experience of working with adult students. Whilst this solution has been able to supply a temporary response, it is recommended that for future projects sufficient resourcing needs to be included within budgets to deliver initial ESOL support, in addition to the referral routes already in place for these clients into Further Education Colleges such as the nearby Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College.

5.1.20 With regard to early leavers, 30% have not completed the London WRENS 40+ Project in full. This has been for reasons such as poor health, a move away from the area, insufficient basic skills and level of ESOL support needed. Indeed, an on-going challenge logged by tutors was the urgency to address such client barriers as soon as they appear for example access problems due to childcare responsibilities, benefits issues and increasingly, mental health needs. Nevertheless, it is to be recorded that TAF does achieve high retention and completion rates- 80% for first courses and 86% for second courses, undoubtedly due to the bespoke, holistic training delivered and the one-to-one underpinning client-specific support provided.

5.1.21 Two final areas that have worked less well have been firstly, what was described by clients as the inflexible approach and negative handling evidenced by some JCP local offices, (although TAF has arrangements with some JCP offices to call). Both clients and staff identified this issue, with one beneficiary being told that even if a job was available for one week only, she would be required to leave the training immediately. Moreover, the position regarding signing on whilst undergoing training seemed to vary across a number of JCP local offices and clearly, this is unhelpful to older clients who are often heavily dependent on benefit payments.

5.1.22 Secondly, a sensitive issue is the perceived marginalisation of male clients, in particular those originating from White British backgrounds. Indeed, it is to be recorded, here that TAF as a training organisation has been unable to support a growing number of male applicants due to the situation whereby just one of their 3 ESF Co-financed projects (the LDA funded IMPACT 40+ Project), is open to both men and women.

5.1.23 Necessary changes over and above on-going monitoring made to processes, systems, staff, or administration were minimal. Monthly targets using both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators were set to measure the outputs/outcomes/milestones of the approved workplan; also baseline value for money indicators to assess the impact of IAG and APL delivered and staff usage realised.

5.2 Evaluation of partnerships

5.2.1 TAF has led and managed the London WRENS 40+ Project's delivery outputs/outcomes/milestones robustly as set out in the London Councils contract; also the quarterly staged project workplan. Wider, informal project partners were nextstep, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and CIPD-TASIG to take forward client engagement. Although no formal service level agreement was in place, this joint working proved effective with JCP increasingly taking over the IAG and referral of potential project beneficiaries. Indeed, 66% of project beneficiaries interviewed had been signposted to TAF by their JCP local offices.

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- 5.2.2** This evaluation identified a number of local JCP offices and range of Income Support and Disability Advisors working in increasing partnership with TAF to refer suitable 40+ female clients. This consolidated joint working together with the intermediary JCP contract held by TAF, has realised good capacity building strategic and voluntary sector interface. Further development good practice areas are emerging, too such as immediate notification by JCP Advisors with TAF seeing clients within 15 minutes of notification.
- 5.2.3** Additionally, TAF has worked with its network of strategic mainstream agencies and regeneration partnerships such as the Ealing Community Network/Ealing Community Voluntary Services steering group on the Ealing Local Strategic Partnership Economy, Enterprise and Housing Board and sub-group 3rd Tier Skills & Employment Group. It is to be recorded, too that TAF's Director of Projects represents the West London Network Steering Group (6 Community Voluntary Services and Voluntary Sector) on the IAG Strategic Board and on the West London Business Borough Partnership; the Voluntary Sector on the West London City Strategy Partnership (West London Working) and these networks have raised the profile of the project substantially.
- 5.2.4** Changes made were few except to increase the number of JCP advisor referrals- *please see 5.2.1*. What worked less well was joint working with TAF's 100+ London-wide small and large employers, although business success was secured through TAF's 3 times yearly external awards ceremony functions involving distinguished audiences such as Members of Parliament, LSC Local/Regional Directors, Ministers of State and Councillors pan London. These events attracted press coverage and engaged statutory mainstream organisations and private sector employer audiences, sometimes in prestigious locations such as the House of Commons.

5.3 Innovative approaches taken

- 5.3.1** TAF has succeeded in meeting a current gap in training services by providing and adding value for older learners through its intensive and exclusive focus on their complex needs starting where the beneficiary is at the point of entry: be this with only basic/no ICT skills; never having worked before; having failed in business; coming off long-term unemployment; as a lone parent or person with disability or mental health issues; and needing financially to return to paid work. To be noted, too is that the 'London WRENS 40+' Project has brought forward innovative and creative activity that could not be delivered to the present levels, due to on-going financial/funding constraints.
- 5.3.2** Much expertise in delivering assertiveness training to counter ageism and empowering the 40+ has been developed by TAF initially in West London but today, across the capital as demand increases for their age-specific, employer-driven ICT training. It is to be noted, too that TAF works at the heart of the community with clients unlikely to self-present and engage with learning providers at Borough-based Further Education Colleges for reasons of the₁₃

age of learning peers; study approaches used; a lack of intensive focus on their age-related barriers/needs; and the confidence building needed to improve their key skills levels- *please see 4.1.*

- 5.3.3** TAF sought to empower its often long-term 2 year+ unemployed learners (78% of those interviewed and 57% project-wide); forced into redundancy; or as a result of illness. Its already proven and successful holistic personal development programme (delivered to some 5,000+ participants to date), is designed to equip participants to progress into sustainable ICT specialist and related employment within London's labour market, with particular application to target sectors such as Retail.
- 5.3.4** Of particular interest, is the range of professional and managerial backgrounds that project beneficiaries brought with them. Indeed, of those interviewed 88% described themselves as skilled or professional; 34% as professional; and 13% as managerial. This was borne out by the level of qualifications held before project start. 63% were qualified to GCE Advanced Level or degree levels. Quite clearly, these project beneficiaries were suitable for the management and gender focus of the project which aimed inter-alia, to assist clients to break through the 'glass ceiling.' Women still earn less than men and for every £1.00 earned, they receive only £0.80 in comparison to male colleagues- *BBC News 26 June 2008.*

6.6. Significant Change

- 6.6.1** One Significant Change was made when the project was extended by 3 months from March to June 2008 with re-profiling carried out, as required. Actual staff, beneficiary and other cost variances are explained in the following *Section 7, Financial Information.*
- 6.6.2** No changes were made to the number of starters, this reaching the targeted 100 beneficiaries. In fact, a waiting list was kept due to high demand over and above the funding available for the 100 beneficiaries. The number of completers totalled 70 which was 10 (10%) below profile as a direct result of 30 Early Leavers. This was due to a range of additional factors affecting new female beneficiary needs such as complicated family commitments, clinical depression and increasing levels of mental health needs that needed specialist input pre and during project training.

7. Financial information

- 7.1** On-going monitoring of beneficiary data, project spend and of TAF's centralised beneficiary database has been transferred into formative monthly and summative quarterly returns to the London Councils using their standardised EXCEL spreadsheets also *Quickbooks*. These 'backed up' activities have been delivered by the dedicated Office

Manager/Administrator- *please see 5.1.4* and a monthly retained qualified accountant.

- 7.2** Actual Staff Costs have varied and underspent by 18% against profile. This is due to required, increased spending against approved budget headings under Other Costs such as Consumables – *please see 7.1.5*.
- 7.3** Beneficiary Costs have underspent by 96%. A large reduction in the profile demand for travel (20) and child/eldercare (5) has resulted in modest spend only under these budget headings. This is due in part to the 40+ project clients not having young children for whom care was required and/or not requiring eldercare.
- 7.4** With regard to travel, this evaluation noted some small concerns expressed such as the high cost of travelling. Project beneficiaries have been reimbursed for travel wherever possible, once required receipts were produced, However, this requirement has proved problematic for those using *Oyster* cards, due to the necessary documentary evidence required by the funder.
- 7.5** Other Costs have overspent by 150%. This is due to a number of factors and additional cost requirements such as project file storage and associated financial services until June 2013, according to ESF Objective 3 requirements, also computer and allied equipment updating. Consumables expenditure has risen too, particularly ICT running costs.
- 7.6** Actions taken to get the project back on profile have been to revise the delivery profile from 4 project intakes for 25 clients each in April–June 2007; July–September 2007; October–December 2007 and January–March 2008 to 4 project intakes in July–September 2007 (7 students); October–December 2007 (47 students), January–March 2008 (18 students) and March to May 2008 (28 students). The increased beneficiary intake numbers and re-timed 4th intake were due to initial contracting delays but a 3 month project extension was given to the end June 2008 to compensate for this.
- 7.7** Added value impacts of these rescheduled delivery timings have been to move away from the traditional academic year cycle with clients; also to secure increased flexibility from TAF delivery staff.

8. Outputs and outcomes

8.1 Beneficiary starters, completers and early leavers

- 8.1.1 Table 2-** The number of female only 40+ project starters is 100% on profile. A 15% actual rate against the profiled 20% for people with disabilities has been achieved, as has a 45% against a 50% profile for project beneficiaries from BAME backgrounds- *please see 4.1*. Success is attributable inter-alia, to¹⁵

newly developed community outreach facilities that were able to reach additional hard-to-reach, disconnected clients who would have found it challenging to attend TAF's central training premises in Hammersmith.

8.1.2 Table 3- Actual numbers of completers was 10% under profile. Some reasons for this are given in 6.6.4. Additionally, there were a few project beneficiaries referred by JCP who had dominant ESOL and Skills for Life needs that necessitated referral to specialist agencies such as the Ealing, Hammersmith & West London Further Education College- please see 5.1.19

8.1.3 Table 4- Early leavers totalled 30%, 10% above profile. Reasons for this are given in 5.1.20. It is to be noted, too that TAF's 15 year track record does evidence higher retention and completion rates at 80% for first courses. Management input on this reduction points to wrong advice being given to clients by JCP advisors pre TAF enrolment; the enforcement felt whereby clients were made to undertake a specialist and intensive ICT training package in which they are not engaged; and also the threat of losing benefits.

8.2 Equalities and Other Target Groups

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8.2 Beneficiary backgrounds		Profiled	Actual	% achieved
1.	Women re-entering the labour market	100	27	27%
2.	Women moving into non-traditional occupations or occupations in which women are under-represented	100	27	27%
3.	Women from ethnic minorities with low participation in the labour market	50	45	90%
4.	Economically inactive	100	100	100%

8.3 Beneficiary training for occupations

Employment Category	Profiled		Actual	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Managers and administrators				
Professional				

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Associate professional/ technical (computer programmers, nurses)				
Clerical, secretarial		75		3
Personal, protective (healthcare, childcare)				
Sales				
Plant and machine operators				
Other		25		8
NOT KNOWN: 8				

8.4 Average hours each week and number of weeks spent on the project

8.4.1 The London WRENS 40+ Project beneficiaries were profiled to complete an average 12 hours weekly over 12 weeks. Delivered, flexible training packages as detailed in the approved application- *please see 5.1.11*, have ranged from 8 to 15 hours weekly on 2-2½ days per week over 12 weeks, both on TAF premises and at the outreach centre premises used.

8.4.2 Whilst the average hours spent per week on the course are close to profile at 92%, the number of average weeks attended has reduced to 50%. This is attributable partly to the increased use of outreach provision which has delivered more concentrated provision to fit in with clients' personal commitments such as school hours, also certain clients whose pattern of attendance proved erratic.

8.5 Project outputs (full time, part time, self employment, voluntary work and referrals into further education and training)

8.5.1 Outcome/Output profiles have varied significantly, particularly in relation to employment. To date, 9% have progressed into full-time and 10% into part-time jobs. Reasons are *outlined in 4.7* and include inter-alia, the difficulty of obtaining a headed letter signed by the employer stating that there is a reasonable expectation that the job will last for 13 weeks. Also, TAF anticipates that additional project beneficiaries will secure work but always allowing for the current adverse and deteriorating economic & employment conditions.

8.5.2 15% were to have been supported towards self-employment and setting up micro-businesses. This was an ambitious target and progression is again difficult to quantify, with just 1% progressing into self-employment. However, amongst clients interviewed, 30% recorded an interest to become self-

employed. Nevertheless, there were some popular misconceptions about running a business noted by this evaluation- *please see 4.8.*

8.5.3 With regard to progression into volunteering, 15% of participants were to have progressed into volunteering activities, designed to act as a springboard into onward employment. To date, 7% have secured within some well-known national organisations- *please see 4.9.* Once again, the lack of documentary evidencing has an impact, as will onward progression of project completers over the 6 weeks after project end, until mid-August.

8.5.4 London WRENS 40+ was to have supported up to 40% of beneficiaries into next stage, higher level progression routes within Further Education or with other training providers including TAF. To date, 11% has been realised. Once again though, the difficulty of obtaining evidence from college and training organisations' enrolments is to be recorded, as is the short length of the project training (at 12 weeks). Nevertheless it is to be noted that to date, 3% of clients have extended their study at TAF for example to complete CLAiT PLUS Office and Media at Level 2, whilst others are looking into further ICT specialist courses with Learning & Skills Council approved work-based learning providers- *please see 4.10.*

8.5.5 Here it should be noted that 40% of qualification outcomes are not yet known, due to the future notification of results in late August; also the 17 clients who have obtained *Units Towards*, reflecting their individual needs to both stage and consolidate 'bite-size' learning over a longer time-frame.

8.6 Number of qualifications gained

8.6.1 The project was designed to offer OCR accredited Skills for Life training at Entry Level 3 for up to 50% of beneficiaries, according to individual need- *please see 4.4.* 38% did ICT Skills for Life, with 32% achieving full qualifications. 20% undertook OCR New CLAiT Office Level 1 and 32% achieved fully. 2% did OCR CLAiT Plus Level 2 with 1% gained the full qualification. Here it should be noted, though that 40% of qualification outcomes are not yet known, due to the future notification of results in late August; also the 17 clients who have obtained *Units Towards*, reflecting their individual needs to both stage and consolidate 'bite-size' learning over a longer time-frame.

8.6.2 20% of project beneficiaries were expected to remain unemployed. In fact, 7% only are recorded in this category, with 1% economically inactive. However 51% are as yet unknown and 3% remain in the 'Other' category. The on-going difficulty of obtaining hard copy evidence is of relevance again, as is TAF's quarterly follow-up of project completers (for up to 12 months), that usually

achieves a 30%+ return rate, significantly more than the 10% usually achieved by other training providers.

8.7 Unit costs

- 8.7.1** TAF profiled a low unit unit cost per beneficiary of £1472.50. This has been realised fully with a further 0.6% saving realised, although the 10 additional early leavers above profile is a contributory factor.
- 8.7.2** When compared with similar provision from other providers, at an average £2,000 unit cost, this represents good value for money. Moreover, other organisations do not offer the age-specific, personal skills development and technical ICT training uniquely for older learners 40+, also the added value holistic Personal Development integrated in the ICT programme.
- 8.7.3** Similarly, the cost of delivering qualifications has been efficient and effective. The actual cost against profile has been just 8% over budget, a figure that can be accounted for as a result of inflation costs over the duration of the project.
- 8.7.4** However, the actual cost of realising beneficiary progression into employment has been 30% below profile. 30 beneficiaries were to have progressed into full-time work and 20 into part-time roles. Actual numbers realised were 9 and 10 respectively, with a further 7 progressing into voluntary work and 1 into self employment. The reasons for these shortfalls have been given earlier – *please see 5.1.14.*
- 8.7.5** TAF continues to work towards evidencing the employment potential of older clients and importantly, to changing employers' mindsets, for example with its 100+ businesses and strategic organisations. Additionally, they raise awareness of gender equality and of the 'glass ceiling' to maximise support to fight anti-ageism, a process that has intensified since the new 2006 Employment Equality (Age) Regulations implementation.
- 8.7.6** Similarly, TAF sustains its joint working with age-specific representation organisations such as Age Concern, Help the Aged, BGOP, Forties People, Over 50s Employment Bureaux, Worktrain, AgeWise and Age Positive.

9. Value for Money

- 9.1** TAF has run direct Government Office for London (GOL) ESF programmes since 1997 and today is an experienced and respected 40+ age-specific, training organisation managing a range of ESF Co-Financed, LDA, LSC and Borough and GOL direct funded projects. The organisation has consistently delivered a quality service at low unit cost, realising a range of client

empowerment strategies including intensive interventions, small holistic groupwork and priority one-to-one sessions.

- 9.2** Over 11 years, TAF has costed its specialist bespoke integrated programme for older people competitively when compared with other similar provision, e.g. that delivered by private ICT training providers; the small number of London age-specific training organisations such as Wise Owls; and TAF's own portfolio of 10 delivered projects/provision (*as outlined in question 5 of the application form*).
- 9.3** The London WRENS 40+ Project has once again delivered a low unit cost per beneficiary of £1,463.96 against the profiled £1472.50, a saving of 0.6% - *please see 8.7.1*.

10. Added Value

- 10.1** London WRENS 40+ has met a current gap in services by providing and adding value for older learners through its intensive and exclusive focus on their complex needs starting where the beneficiary is at the point of entry: be this with low SfL; having only basic or no ICT skills; never having worked previously; having failed in business; coming off long-term unemployment; and/or as a lone parent or person with disability needing financially to return to paid work.
- 10.2** Apart from Information Technology upskilling training, project beneficiaries have received measurable added value through Personal Development, Job Search & Life Skills and Business Advice for Self-Employment and assertiveness training to counter ageism, facilitated throughout by one-to-one tailored sessions, also the services of the newly appointed Employer Liaison Officer delivering additional advocacy.
- 10.3** The Project has evidenced further measurable added value through outreach delivery at the heart of the community- *please see 4.1* which in turn, has established both new networks and partnerships that can be developed and rolled out further for future projects aimed at hard-to-reach 40+ clients, especially female.
- 10.4** London WRENS 40+ has promoted new third sector work opportunities for women through its partner voluntary sector agencies, realising a 7% progression rate. This is of note as it can lead into paid employment as has been realised already. Additionally, the voluntary sector networks already in place and championed by TAF's Director of Projects – *please see 5.2.3* – can be developed further.

- 10.5** Individual client case studies has been realised, also to measure the added value of employing older persons. These can be moved up horizontally to strategic policy makers such as the Government Office for London, the London Development Agency, London Boroughs and the London Councils to promote the recognition of the potential of investing in older clients and future employees.
- 10.6** Other added value impacts have been the re-scheduled delivery timings achieved whereby clients have been moved away from traditional academic year cycles, also delivery staff. This was necessitated by delayed contracting but it has established a model of increased flexibility amongst the staff team, also.

11. Soft outcomes

- 11.1** The London WRENS 40+ Project was designed to deliver the wider soft skills needed for work, using the externally standardised *Rickter and DWP approved indicators*– ‘*Measuring Soft Outcomes & Distance Travelled*’- please see 4.3
- 11.2** Impact areas assessed monthly by TAF tutors have included improved appearance/engagement; communication competences; positive attitudinal skills to training/lifelong learning; raised basic ICT skills; increased confidence; timekeeping; higher motivation levels; development of self-esteem/worth; inter-personal skills; team working; understanding work skills; ability to work with others; and/or how lead a team.
- 11.3** The additional ‘distance travelled’ by beneficiaries on the project is of particular note. Amongst interviewees, 100% felt more confident than at the start of the course; 100% more positive and responsible for their own learning; and 80% better equipped to continue their own learning. Moreover, 100% believed that the project had improved personal employability and work prospects.
- 11.4** A key lesson learnt was to start where ‘the student is at’ and to address and change mindsets about a timebound move into employment often from a position of extended economic inactivity- (57% of interviewees were long-term economically inactive- *please see 4.1.13*). Only 50% stated that they were ready to begin work. Clearly confidence building remains an on-going need, as does extended support in the transition into and during the first vulnerable stages of employment.

ESF Cross-cutting Themes

12.1 Equal Opportunities

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12.1.1 Equal opportunities as driven in the *London European Programmes' Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Action Plan*, have been incorporated and integrated into the project design, delivery and management for beneficiaries and also for delivery staff, managers and specialist administrative and financial personnel. The Director of Projects has led quarterly impact reviews involving clients and staff, to ensure equal access to services for all across initial publicity (for example by using non-traditional, older female positive visual images); also of recruitment, interviewing, selection, induction, beneficiary support measures, retention, completion and achievement rates and onward progression.

12.1.2 The London WRENS 40+ Project's strategy has been to deliver equality of opportunity by empowering older women to challenge ageism in all its forms and settings, with particular focus on progression into management levels. The Project has set quarterly performance indicators to measure impact and progress for example the percentage of female clients recruited from BAME groups- now culminatively 45%, delivered against a 50% profile.

12.1.3 Project beneficiaries have been empowered for example, via direct user involvement during group and individual feedback; through focus group meetings and as representatives at the quarterly Management Committee Meetings. Suggestions made to date, have included the use of larger format course information materials and assistive technology for those with chronic disabilities.

12.1.4 Participants were briefed about TAF's equal opportunities policy and the aim to meet everyone's learning and training needs by realising each person's full potential. Positive role models from previous training intakes originating from hard-to-reach communities such as BAME, have been actively engaged with new beneficiaries. This work has taken place, too during TAF's 3xyearly external awards ceremony functions- *please see 5.2.4.*

12.1.5 TAF adopts a continuous improvement approach in the implementation of equal opportunities strategies and they have actively targeted clients with particular needs such as with disabilities or with lone parent status. Challenges have included those older people with a range of visual, hearing and motor impairments- *please see 5.1.7 and 5.1.9.* Current budgetary constraints have been limiting but it is planned to make some future provision for specialised needs, subject to available funding.

12.1.6 London WRENS 40+ has endeavoured to promote equality and access through the provision of beneficiary support measures. The modest budget allowed for 20 clients to be supported with travel costs and for 5 to receive child/elder care costs. Travel costs were given to beneficiaries most in need. With regard to childcare, there was much lower than anticipated demand logged, due perhaps to the older client group being supported.

12.2 Sustainable Development

- 12.2.1** In line with the London Councils ESF requirements on sustainable development and London Environment Centre recommendations, London WRENS 40+ has aimed to make a measurable contribution to environmental protection and enhancement through project delivery. TAF's environmental practice is always to recycle paper, toner and print cartridges; to switch off lights whenever possible; and to use fairtrade products e.g. tea/coffee/bio-degradable products.
- 12.2.2** TAF also encourages beneficiaries to care for the environment by focusing on the prudent use of finite resources such as electricity (particularly pertinent to their ICT training); also promoting increased use of electronic resources to cut down on paper and ink wastage; and leading by example through the recycling of old computers and items of office furniture.
- 12.2.3** Awareness of environmental concerns are integrated into course content, for example at induction when TAF promotes protective strategies such as clients walking, cycling or using group transport preferably public, wherever individual health circumstances allow. Noted by this evaluation, was the number of clients who pursued sustainable development strategies actively such as the internal and external recycling of double-sided used paper.
- 12.2.4** London WRENS 40+ has sought to tackle social exclusion and to help overcome barriers by reaching out to hard-to-reach older learners at increasing disadvantage in today's labour market society through prejudice and misconception and to equip them with the skills and strategies to address and overcome enduring ageist barriers.
- 12.2.5** Equally, the Project has sought to provide the economic skills that businesses both demand and require, now and in the future; also to change mindsets and stereotyping about older people and to break down the erroneous myths that exist amongst employers, including the 40+ potential for management.

12.2.6 The primary aim of London WRENS 40+ has been to provide upskilling and transferable ICT training to build measurable potential to address specific skills shortages; to meet future upskilling needs; and to progress 40+ women into work. Also, TAF has sought to combat the well-documented male bias of the ICT sector (80%) and the recurring ageist practices prevalent across the industry, too.

12.2.7 The Project has contributed towards realising an adaptable and flexible labour market of help to maximise business sustainability by equipping beneficiaries with the essential, transferable tools for a sustainable working life including within management.

12.2.8 Also, TAF has used individual client case studies to measure the added value of employing older persons, moving these horizontally up to strategic policy makers such as the Government Office for London, the London Development Agency (LDA) and the London Councils who have all recognised TAF as an organisation of essential research for the 40+.

12.3 ICT

12.3.1 ICT was to have been used to design the ‘London WRENS 40+’ Project and for production of publicity leaflets, delivery materials and monitoring materials. This was achieved fully, due in part to TAF’s dedicated ICT design, production and website manager who takes this specialist work forward. Indeed, the design of some course leaflets, induction materials and the website are under review with a view to increasing font sizes and presentational styles, in recognition of an increasing number of clients with visual impairment difficulties; also the inclusion of the *plain English Crystal Mark*.

12.3.2 Beneficiaries were to have benefited from a 70% ICT driven programme of Personal Skills Development, with 100% completing ICT-based CVs and action plans; also to deliver the OCR accredited ICT Skills for Life, New CLAiT and CLAiT Plus qualifications. Actual delivery reached 100% with clients extending their ICT skills both at TAF and outside, for example in libraries and internet cafés, although some shortfall has been recorded in extra facilities offered not being taken up – *please see 5.1.18*.

12.3.3 The technical training was planned to be 100% digitally based and delivered in group and one-to-one sessions facilitated by experienced tutors well-skilled in removing ICT barriers and phobias for clients. Staff interviewed emphasised the 100% successful usage which had occurred.

12.3.4 ICT was viewed as essential to the Project's implementation and management, to be used 100% in day-to-day monitoring of the TAF centralised beneficiary database; in monthly and quarterly financial and beneficiary returns to the London Councils including Significant Changes via centralised client database and financial Quickbooks systems; Excel usage to efficiently manage recording of funded project outputs and outcomes; equality, disability, sustainable development and ICT targets; and also to deliver a back-up system of all project level beneficiary and financial data. Actual 100% delivery is detailed *in 5.1.4*.

12.3.5 TAF has offered a range of comprehensive ICT resources to address clients' barriers to ICT skills development. A total of 38 networked computers and 12 laptops with Windows XP and Office XP software and whiteboards, flipcharts, projectors, scanners, printers and other relevant office equipment/resources have been available across 3 training rooms. However, in recognition of the speed of change in ICT equipment today, it is recommended that priority is given to the regular updating of hardware and software, subject to the identification of sufficient finance.

13. Programme Management (The role of GLE and London Councils)

13.1 Allocated GLE and London Councils officers have worked closely with TAF's Director of Projects, Office Manager/Administrator and Accountant to support delivery and the realisation of funded outputs. TAF has found all allocated officers to be both helpful and supportive in the task of on-going project management, in particular regarding feedback on monthly monitoring and quarterly claims that has resulted in a streamlining of reporting procedures, also when dealing with additional activities such as the Capacity Building project.

13.2 The London Councils Project Overview Excel Spreadsheet used was seen as most effective, in that it was straightforward to complete and update and it could be viewed easily. Equally, it aligned well with TAF's internal cross-project database in that information could be easily added and extracted.

13.3 Programme management areas that were less successful relate firstly to available staff resources. Day-to-day administration of the London WRENS 40+ Project has been delivered together with 2 other ESF Co-financed Projects, (the London Development Agency funded IMPACT 40+ Project and the WRENS 40+ London West Learning & Skills Project). However, the 3 London Co-Financing Organisations have individual and differing reporting systems and so this has resulted in a much expanded workload for the Office Manager/Administrator, also in order to maintain TAF's essential central database. *Recommendations for improvement are made at 5.1.4.*

13.4 Another area of pressure on programme management resources has occurred in relation to post project ESF closure requirements such as documentation storage and additional financial and administrative work needed. It is suggested that these costs need to be built into projects' profiled and approved budgets to avoid additional costs once delivery is complete.

14. Lessons Learnt

14.1 A key lesson learnt was to start wherever the student was at the point of entry, often having to address and change mindsets about a time measured move into employment often from a position of extended economic inactivity- *please see 11.4*. Confidence building needs to be sustained for some clients especially those referred by JCP.

14.2 Equally, extended support in the transition into and during the first vulnerable stages of employment is needed up to 6 months+. Whilst TAF effects quarterly follow-up of project completers for up to 12 months, they do not have the additional resources currently to provide on-going, one-to-one support for clients especially for the first 6 months.

14.3 Thirdly, the need for employment liaison services is proven. From April 2008, TAF has been able to deliver this service with the appointment of a new Employment Liaison Officer. However, the results of this recent appointment are as yet to be determined – *please see 5.1.14*. This is an area which TAF would need to look at developing in future projects, provided that sufficient funding can be identified.

14.4 However it is to be recorded that the profiled into employment target was considered by TAF to be unrealistic, especially during the difficult current economic and employment conditions affecting organisations and businesses alike pan London - *please see 5.1.14*.

15. Future of the project

15.1 In line with the original tender exit strategy and onward support, TAF has applied for continuation external funding from mainstream funders such as the 4 ESF London Co-financing Organisations to meet increasing demand from 40+ clients, predominately female.

15.2 To date, the organisation has been successful in securing the 3 following project awards:



- The Learning & Skills Council London West ESF Co-Financing Measure 5.1 *WRENS 40+* Project delivering IAG, Personal Development, ICT&OCR qualifications, ICT SfL, CLAiT 1&2, Job Search, Self-Employment and Management Module for 100 older women returners 40+ into work - ran from June 2006 - May 2008,
- The London Development Agency Regional Skills and Competitiveness Measure 2.2 *IMPACT 40+* Project delivering IAG, Personal Development, ICT and OCR qualifications, Skills for Life, New CLAiT Level 1 and CLAiT Plus Level 2, Job Search and Self-Employment for 233 unemployed 40+ older people into work- finishing on 31 August 2008
- The London Councils *FORCE* Project supporting 85 workless and 50+ former carers in 10 London Boroughs, lacking confidence and work skills. Participants can access a bespoke and holistic personal development (NLP), Skills for Life and ICT employer-led upskilling package of information/advice/guidance; diagnostic assessment; confidence, motivation, assertiveness, action plan building; employability and enterprise training; work placements and aftercare for up to 6 months- running until March 2010.

15.3 TAF intends to bid for LDA Opportunities Programme support, through the yearly bidding round expected in October 2008, also Open and Competitive Tendering managed by the Learning & Skills Council, for mainstream provision such as Skills for Jobs – the next round expected in September 2008. Local Authority grant funding is being pursued and Charitable Trust and Big Lottery support, too.

15.4 To be recorded, also is that TAF has scoped the potential to develop its older persons ICT upskilling model as one that could become potentially self-sustaining, for example through social enterprise. Also, consideration is being given to making ICT training packages available to employers and employees and to providing consultancy services on older persons' issues, especially in the context of recently introduced age-related legislation.

15.5 Additionally, TAF intends to market its ICT training to Borough Regeneration Heads where recruitment has been good and to give consideration to targeting of specific London growth sectors, such as retail to provide further preparatory future workforce upskilling. Additionally, TAF will continue to engage in Neighbourhood Renewal and Local Area Agreement initiatives

15.6 With regard to relationships developed with other organisations, TAF can evidence closer joint working with Jobcentre Plus through increased client referrals (66%) and an intermediary contract. Similarly, increased capacity has been realised through strengthened co-working in place with nextstep.

15.7 Following the success of the EU *Grundtvig* Programme 2 funding with TAF acting as the lead partner in a 6/7 country project delivering ‘trial tank’ activities to advance the learning and training of older persons at European level, the organisation is seeking further EU Programme support to deliver its innovative work focussed at older learners. Consideration is being given, also to other EU Programmes such as LEONARDO DA VINCI 2 specialising in vocational training, with direct employer participation that will promote the delivery, dissemination and mainstreaming of its successful older learner preparation for work model transnationally.

Beneficiary case study

16.1 Individual beneficiary case studies has been realised to measure the added value of employing older persons. They have been moved up horizontally to strategic policy makers such as the Government Office for London, the London Development Agency, London Boroughs and the London Councils to promote the recognition of the potential of investing in older trainee clients.

16.2 To be noted, too is that TAF’s Director of Projects has been a keynote speaker at the recent *GLE European Social Fund Co-Finance Celebration Event* held on 26 June 2008. She presented the achievements, qualifications, progression and retention successes of the London WRENS 40+ Project.

16.3 Additionally, TAF was asked to present a case study at the recent *GOL – LVSTC Conference* held at the Chelsea Football Stadium also in June 2008 to celebrate the successes of the ESF Programme 2000-2007 and the launch of the new ESF 2008-13 Programme.



