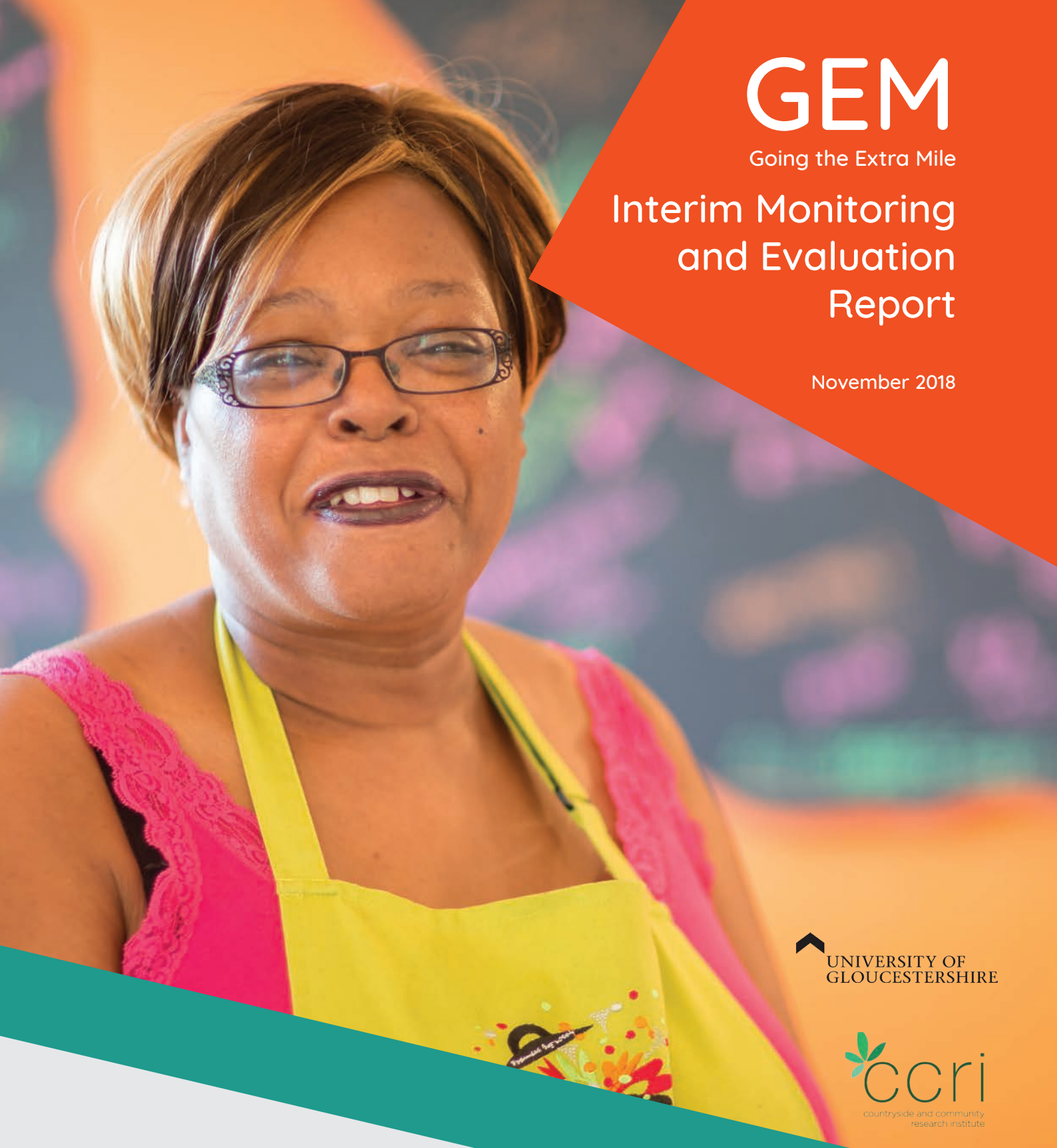

GEM

Going the Extra Mile

Interim Monitoring and Evaluation Report

November 2018

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

ccri
countryside and community research institute

gem
GOING THE EXTRA MILE

BIG LOTTERY FUND
NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDED

European Union
European Social Fund

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Foreword

In September 2018 the Gloucestershire Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Project celebrated its second anniversary.

This unique and unprecedented partnership of over 50 VCSE and other organisations in Gloucestershire, led by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and managed by Gloucestershire Gateway Trust (GGT), engages with people who face multiple barriers to work, with the aim of moving them towards and into education, training, or employment, including self-employment.

Our original bid to Big Lottery Fund and European Social Fund was based upon the firm belief that within Gloucestershire we had all of the necessary skills and expertise to help people targeted by this project, and that by working collaboratively rather than within our individual silos we could achieve so much more.....'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts' – Aristotle.

We also firmly believed that by working together in this way we could build greater resilience within and enhance the future capacity of the VCSE sector in Gloucestershire.

So, two years into this three year programme – how are we doing?

As you will see from the headline figures and detailed findings of this report, the first two years have gone extremely well. We are ahead of most targets - in some instances, significantly ahead. Most importantly, GEM has had a positive impact on the people with whom we engage, giving them hope and opportunity, and in many instances, transforming their lives.

This report highlights the significant impact of the intensive 1:2:1 support delivered by the Navigator Developers employed by our Delivery Partners which, combined with the advice and guidance of the GEM team employed by GGT, the expertise of GCC, and the willingness of employers to actively participate in the project, has created an innovative delivery model that successfully engages with the previously disengaged; and along the way GEM has strengthened relationships between VCSE sector organisations and with GCC.

What's next?

This report, kindly produced by our partners at the University of Gloucestershire, provides us with useful pointers for areas of improvement, for example in relation to In Work Support – a gap we must address to ensure sustainability of employment for GEM participants. This and the many other learning points highlighted in this report will, wherever possible, be taken on board and introduced.

At the time of writing we await the decision of Big Lottery on whether the coming 12 months will be our last or if the project will be extended beyond 2019. This decision will determine what we should do next – develop a post-GEM sustainability plan or further enhance our delivery model for a second phase of GEM. Whichever it turns out to be, supporting project participants will always be front and centre of everything we do.

Whatever the funding decision we can be confident that, together, we are building a stronger and longer-lasting legacy for the project by ensuring that the collaboration and sharing developed through GEM continues in the future for the benefit of all.

Vikki Walters,

Strategic Lead for Disability Employment, Gloucestershire County Council

Mark Gale,

Chief Executive, Gloucestershire Gateway Trust

Executive Summary

The Monitoring and Evaluation framework for GEM encompasses both an outcomes (summative) and process (formative) evaluation. The summative evaluation examines the outcomes and impact of the project with the aim of determining overall effectiveness. The formative evaluation focuses on processes linked to planning, management and delivery of the project, and extent to which planned activities are carried out. These are incorporated in a cyclical approach through which data are continuously gathered, analysed and disseminated.

GEM outcomes against targets

To date, the GEM project has engaged 821 participants, well on target for the total 881 by the end of the project, with 523 exited and 298 still on the programme. Of these 45% are women and 44% are registered unemployed. In terms of BBO outcomes, 55 of these participants have exited into Further Education or training (target 76) and 176 have moved into employment or self-employment (target 76). The project has exceeded its targets for a number of participant groups, including people over 50 and under 25; those with a disability or learning difficulty; people from BAME heritage and those from single adult households with dependent children.

Distance travelled in participants outcomes

Outcomes survey results reaffirm that GEM continues to positively impact on the personal functioning and motivational attributes of participants, helping to give them a sense of purpose and the opportunity to learn new things, gain the confidence and motivation to access new opportunities, and to experience improvised resilience, positive functioning and coping strategies.

GEM is also shown to be improving in its delivery of all psycho-social outcomes as the programme progresses, from well-being through health to skills, to engagement and financial literacy, with all 13 distance travelled questions showing a higher magnitude of change between before and since responses in 2018 compared to the equivalent survey in 2017. A self-reported change of +50% was recorded by participants for feeling that they are making difference to their life and the life of others as a result of GEM representing a +28% shift in the outcome change parameter from the 2017 baseline. When taken alongside other statistical BBO and GEM outcomes, this reinforces the effectiveness of the theories underpinning the GEM approach.

Using the results to update the GEM forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) model demonstrates a 53% improvement in the prospective societal return of GEM, indicating that every £1 invested in the programme has generated a range of psycho-social benefits for participants to the value £2.39.

Process evaluation

The evaluation has identified a number of assumptions underpinning the GEM approach, which may indicate why the project has achieved such profound outcomes for its participants, and for the county. These are:

- the quality of the partnership with Voluntary and Community Sector delivery partners, rooted in the communities they support and who have experience of working with the target groups for the project;
- the intensive one-to-one support of the Navigator Developers that puts participants at the heart of the project, responding to each individual on their terms and at their pace;
- proactive efforts to engage the business sector and develop opportunities for participant engagement;
- the value of the principles of co-production, which lie at the heart of the GEM programme.

In terms of process, many aspects of the programme are working well and there is a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment. The flexibility to respond to the needs of GEM participants was highlighted, as was the need and willingness to work collaboratively to support participants in their journeys. Some external issues were recognised as problematic, including accessing necessary support from other agencies; issues with the introduction of Universal Credit; and the potential of some participants only to find short term or short hours employment.

Some frustrations with internal processes were also apparent including paperwork, evidencing programme impacts that are not captured in BBO outcomes and issues concerning organisational costs and the Extra Mile Fund. Whilst these have not adversely affected participant outcomes, they are worth monitoring with respect to relationships within the programme. The Participants Council provides participants with a voice and the ability to influence the programme and should be recognised as an important part of the programme.

Considering the findings in the broader employment context, the issue concerning supporting participants not only in the transition to employment but during their employment seems critical. The need to continue to challenge recruitment practices and support diversity and inclusion was recognised as important and ongoing. The network of Navigator-Developers and delivery partner organisations has developed well and sharing of information, expertise and resources is set to continue.

Action to support future work in GEM

In the event of additional funding opportunities, the findings imply that it might be useful to:

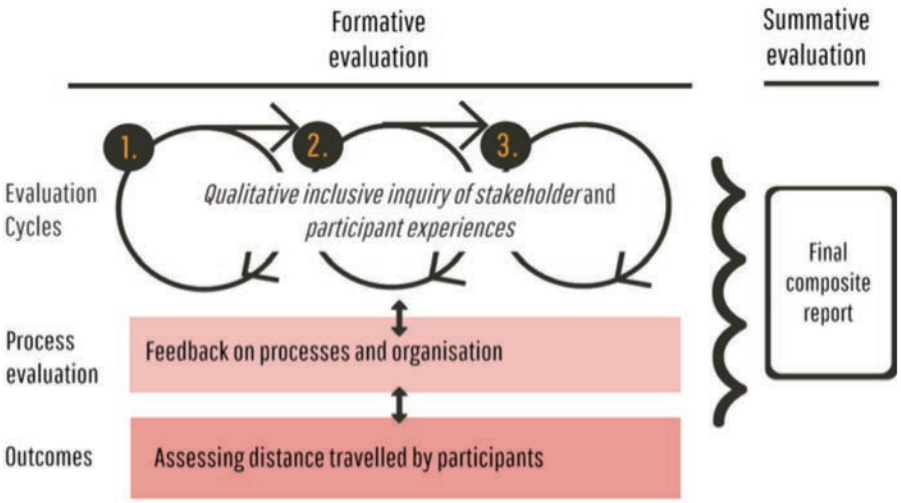
- Extend and deepen the success of GEM in generating psycho-social outcomes for participants through increased opportunities for meeting, socialising and networking; gaining new skills; volunteering and improving self-esteem.
- Deploy or adapt the Programme to deliver additional opportunities in areas outside the main centres of population and to further assist the funding of courses and training programmes for harder to reach groups, both socially and geographically.
- Consider a 'Vital Next Steps' programme for those exiting the programme to help ensure that the momentum and progress gained for participants through GEM isn't lost and will be more likely to be sustained. This could usefully include the offer of some personal performance coaching, which like GEM is goal and action orientated.

GEM Navigator Developer Ione Sime with a Young Gloucestershire GEM participant

1.0 Introduction

This report builds on the previous interim evaluation report of June 2017. The overall Monitoring and Evaluation[1] framework for GEM encompasses both an outcomes (summative) and process (formative) evaluation. The summative evaluation examines the outcomes and impact of the project with the aim of determining overall effectiveness. The formative evaluation focuses on processes linked to planning, management and delivery of the project, and extent to which planned activities are carried out. These are incorporated in a cyclical approach through which data are continuously gathered, analysed and disseminated (Figure 1).

Figure 1: GEM evaluation model



1.1 Outcomes (Summative) Evaluation

The Outcomes evaluation is underpinned by The Theory of Change (ToC) developed during the early stages of the project in which elements of the original GEM outcomes map prepared at the bidding stage has been modified slightly to reflect the wider stakeholder input and detailed consideration by the research team.

The ToC (Figure 2) highlights four distinct but overlapping conceptual pathways along which the short to medium term and longer term outcomes are located, including:

1. wellbeing, health and participation
2. employability and material improvement
3. business support and networks
4. joined up delivery and cohesion

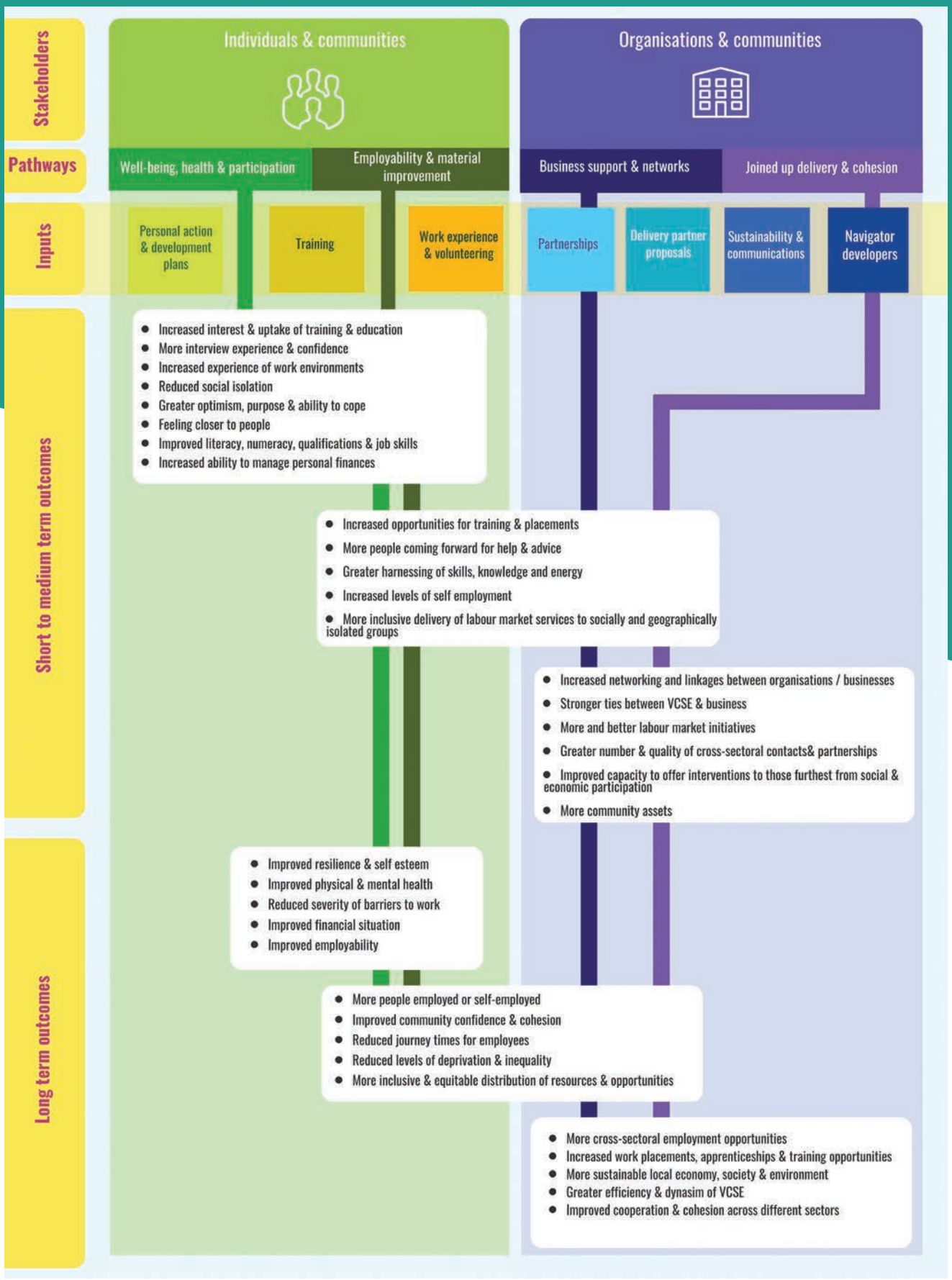
These four pathways provide a means of operationalising the evaluation in providing a clear set of themes which are materially important.

As part of the ongoing evaluation process in respect of the summative evaluation participant data is routinely being captured via monitoring statistics and an outcomes survey. The most recent iteration of the survey was administered between April and June, 2018, during which time 113 responses were received.

The outcomes survey is designed to assess changes over time as perceived by participants in the GEM programme. This is achieved via the use of a number of indicators that are designed to measure change in the identified GEM outcomes.

[1] See the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Report of May 2017 for full details of the approach.

Figure 2: GEM Theory of Change



1.2 Process (Formative) Evaluation

The first interim report identified a number of assumptions regarding what makes the project unique and more likely to succeed where others have failed. These are:

- the quality of the partnership with Voluntary and Community Sector delivery partners rooted in the communities they support and who have experience of working with the target groups for the project;
- the intensive one-to-one support of the Navigator Developers that puts participants at the heart of the project, responding to each individual on their terms and at their pace;
- proactive efforts to engage the business sector and develop opportunities for participant engagement;
- the value of principles of co-production.

As part of the continuing cyclical evaluation this section of the report draws on data gathered from:

- project monitoring statistics;
- discussions with 26 participants:
  - interviews with 11 participants
  - group chat with 10 participants
  - discussion at with 9 participants at a participants' coffee morning in Cheltenham 22/8/18
- feedback from 24 Navigator Developers/staff:
  - two focus groups held at N/D meeting Stroud 29 May 2018 (12 Navigator Developers, 2 Opportunity Hunters, 1 Quality Manager)
  - 10 phone and 1 email interviews
  - Coffee morning in Gloucester 15/8/18 (5 Navigator Developers and 2 Opportunity Hunters)
- telephone interviews with 20 delivery partners;
- an interview with one Opportunity Hunter and one Manager.

2.0 Outcomes Evaluation

This section of the report presents findings from the GEM monitoring statistics and the retrospective outcomes survey completed by participants engaged in the GEM project. The latter data is limited to the period April to June, during which 113 responses were received.

2.1 Overall project outcomes against targets

To date, the GEM project has engaged 821 participants, well on target for the total 881 by the end of the project, with 523 exited and 298 still on the programme. Of these 55% are men, 45% are women, slightly off the target 50:50 split; similarly, slightly more participants are economically inactive rather than registered unemployed (56:44). The project has succeeded in engaging many of its target groups, in some cases exceeding these targets, for example, people over 50 (18%, target 16%), under 25 (29%, target 16%), with a disability of learning difficulty (52%, target 20%), from BAME heritage (15%, target 5%) or from single adult households with dependent children (13%, target 5%). To some extent, this reflects the client group of the specialist VCOs engaged.

In terms of BBO outcomes, 55 of these participants have exited into Further Education or training, going a significant way towards the final target of 76. The BBO outcome of 76 people moving into employment or self-employment has been significantly exceeded, with 176 participants, more than twice the target, in this category.

GEM also collects statistics on other outcomes, including numbers who have accessed childcare (27), financial inclusion support (148), self-employment or enterprise start up support (32); and numbers who have undertaken an actual or practice interview (241) or volunteering or work experience (269).

The GEM Project helped single parent Beth find employment in a new industry

Going the Extra Mile

Evaluation findings

The GEM Project understands that everyone is unique, with different needs and requirements, impacting on their step into the world of employment, education or training.

The GEM Project is jointly funded by the Big Lottery Fund and European Social Fund.

September 2018

Target groups engaged

People targeted	Actual	Target
Men : Women	55% - 45%	50:50
Unemployed : Economically Inactive	44% - 56%	50:50
Aged 50 or over	18%	16%
Disability or learning difficulty	52%	20%
BME	15%	5%
Single adult household with dependent children	13%	5%
Lack basic skills	39%	50%
Aged below 25 years of age	29%	16%

From Q3 18 Claim

821 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED

TOTAL 298 PARTICIPANTS ON PROGRAMME

523 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS OFF PROGRAMME

Claimed On Annex L 684

BBO outcomes

	Actual (Target)
Moved into Further Education or Training	55 (76)
Moved into Employment or Self Employment	176 (76)

Other outcomes

	n
Accessed childcare	27
Accessed financial inclusion support	148
Self Employment or Enterprise start up support	32
Undertaking actual or practise interviews	241
Undertaking volunteering and work experience	269

90% of participants reported themselves to be either 'very satisfied' or 'really satisfied' with the GEM programme

Every £1 invested in the programme generated a prospective societal return of £2.39 (May, 2018)

★ The findings show a strong appetite for the GEM model amongst the target groups in the county, and indicate that it is plugging an important gap in provision that will be greatly missed should the programme end at a time when not all potential has been tapped.

gem

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UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Qualitative feedback

Working well

- Participants are progressing well (volunteering, employment or training)
- Collaboration and support
- Links with local opportunities and programmes
- Providing a flexible, tailored approach
- Participants' Council
- Extra Mile Fund

'The N/D network is brilliant, people have lots of knowledge, skills – you can ask questions, there is a wide range of organisations, people with different knowledge and skills'

Challenges

- Geographic inequalities (transport, employment, social isolation)
- Complexity of individual and personal needs
- Wider systemic issues (benefits, services)
- Pressure to deliver results
- Evidencing impact (soft outcomes)
- Short term jobs, difficulty re-entering GEM
- Funding issues (Extra Mile Fund, organisational costs)
- GEM management processes (meetings, inductions)

Participants

'GEM has helped me more than I ever expected. I hope this project continues to help others'

'The last six weeks have been so positive and I'm really excited to continue to grow and move forward'

'My life has completely turned around. I am so happy and so is my family'

Participants reported:

- Increased confidence
- Greater self-esteem
- Reduced sense of social isolation

OUTCOMES

Sense of competence, engagement & purpose (50%)

Reduced barriers to receiving help & advice (46%)

Improved resilience & self esteem (40%)

The evaluation data reaffirms that GEM continues to positively impact on the sense of purpose and the opportunity to learn new things, confidence and motivation to access new opportunities, and improvised resilience, positive functioning and coping strategies of its participants

About the evaluation: The Monitoring and Evaluation framework for GEM encompasses a process (formative) and outcomes (summative) evaluation. The process evaluation focuses on processes linked to planning, management and delivery of the project, and extent to which planned activities are carried out. The summative evaluation examines the outcomes and impact of the project with the aim of determining overall effectiveness.

Notes: Data derived from 26 GEM participants; 24 Navigator/Developers/staff; 20 delivery partners; one Opportunity Hunter and one Manager; 113 survey responses. Data accurate as at September, 2018.

2.2 Results of outcomes survey analyses

Results of the survey analyses are shown in Table 1. Results from the before and since statements (scored on a scale of 1-5, 5 indicating more agreement) are transformed into proportions to conform to the SROI framework, with differences presented in terms of percentage change in column 6 (Change %). The order according to the self-reported change in outcome statements since starting GEM is given in column 7 (Change order 2018 / May 2017). The top six statements exhibiting higher levels of self-reported change are shaded grey.

This approach helps to demonstrate the type of outcomes that GEM has addressed during its second year of implementation, as well as those in which it is proving most successful. It also affirms to ToC model (Figure 2) when set aside the statistical BBO and GEM outcomes.

It is also useful to note the types of outcome where GEM has proved consistently successful in delivering for participants since its inception, or those where it has become more (or less) successful in delivering these over time. The table therefore includes the equivalent change recorded from the analysis of retrospective data collected in April and May 2017 (column 8, Change %), thus demonstrating the trajectory of change being affected by GEM as the programme continues, and the associated areas where it having a greater (or lesser) impact as time goes on.

Two areas of consistency between the 2017 and 2018 results are particularly evident: the impact of GEM in improving the competence, engagement and purpose of participants through offering them a chance to learn new things, and the removal of barriers to receiving help and advice.

These scored highly on both occasions, not only demonstrating the consistency of GEM in improving personal and motivational attributes, but also showing a correlation with these psycho-social outcomes and GEM outcomes for those accessing advice and support, thereby providing validation of the survey itself, with only marginal differences shown between 2017 and 2018 survey completions for two of the highest scoring questions.

In fact, competence, engagement and purpose also accounts for a new 'top spot' for outcome change affected by GEM, with a self-reported change of +50% being recorded by participants for feeling that they are making difference to their life and the life of others as a result of GEM. As such, this represents a +28% shift in the outcome change parameter, from the previous baseline of +22% recorded in 2017. This is a significant achievement which, when taken alongside statistical BBO and GEM outcomes, indicates the effectiveness of the theories underpinning the GEM approach listed in 1.1.

More generally, the analysis reaffirms that GEM continues to positively impact the sense of purpose and the opportunity to learn new things, gain confidence and have motivation to access new opportunities, and improvised resilience, positive functioning and coping strategies of its participants, all longer term outcomes identified in the ToC model (Figure 2). Thus, the impact of GEM on the personal functioning and motivational attributes of participants is both required and significant and can be linked to both BBO and GEM outcomes.

A GEM participant takes part in a drystone walling taster day

Table 1: Retrospective outcomes survey results

Qn1	Statement	Theory of Change Outcome	Before2	Since2	Change (%)	Change order '18 (May '17)	Change (%)3	% Difference from '17
5	I often got a chance to learn new things	Improved sense of competence engagement and purpose	0.32	0.78	+44	3 (3)	+42	+2
4	I found it easy to obtain help and advice in relation to employment or training	Reduced barriers to receiving help and advice	0.31	0.80	+46	2 (1)	+44	+2
11	I regularly volunteered or got involved in community activities	Increased levels of interest and take up in training, volunteering and educational / vocational opportunities	0.29	0.63	+32	5 (9)	+22	+10
6	I felt that I was making a difference to my life and/or the life of others	Improved sense of competence engagement and purpose	0.28	0.80	+50	1 (4)	+22	+28
8	I generally felt very positive about myself	Improved resilience and self esteem	0.28	0.71	+40	4 (6)	+29	+11
12	I felt ready to take up a new opportunity in terms of my skills, knowledge and attributes	Improved employability through job-ready knowledge, skills and attributes	0.34	0.77	+40	4 (7)	+27	+13
15	I would try something even if there is chance it might not work	Improved confidence and motivation to engage with and access new opportunities	0.36	0.70	+32	6 (10)	+22	+10
9	I felt generally healthy and have good energy levels	Improved physical and mental health	0.33	0.65	+29	8 (11)	+16	+13
16	I could do pretty much anything that I set my mind to	Improved positive functioning and coping strategies	0.33	0.66	+31	7 (8)	+23	+8
14	I often met socially with friends, relatives or colleagues	Reduced social isolation	0.39	0.64	+23	9 (14)	+11	+12
13	I am often bothered by feeling on edge, or by having trouble concentrating	Improved physical and mental health	0.50	0.63	+15	10 (13)	+12	+3
10	I found it easy to manage my own finances	Improved financial literacy and ability to manage finances	0.46	0.63	+15	10 (15)	+9	+6
7	I had a wide range of skills to help me at work, in training or in my daily life	Improvement in life and work skills	0.37	0.74	+34	5 (10)	+22	+12
Mean change			-	-	+33	-	+23	+10

Notes: 1 2018 survey item numbers. 2 Mean score i.e. the average. 3 Since May 2017.

The second point to note from the analysis is that GEM is improving in its delivery of psycho-social outcomes right across the board as the programme progresses, from well-being through health to skills, to engagement and financial literacy. All 13 questions show a higher magnitude of change between before and since responses in 2018 compared to 2017, with a mean change parameter of +23% in 2017 comparing to +33% in 2018.

Especially notable is the improvement in work and skills with self-reported change increasing from 22% in year one to 34% in year two of the programme; increasing opportunities afforded to participants to meet with friends and colleagues (+11% increasing to +23%) and self-reported improvements in both physical and mental health (a year on year improvement of 13% and 3% respectively).

Together with greater improvements in financial literacy recognised by participants in the second year of the programme, health and social isolation in particular show an improvement in outcome delivery previously shown to be lagging behind slightly. This may in part reflect the increase in opportunities for participants to meet and get to know each other, such as those afforded by the participants' council meetings and participant coffee mornings which have been a feature of year two. However, it can be noted that participants did report being in a better place with regard to these attributes (i.e. their scores for 'before' were higher) than prior to joining the programme anyway, especially true in the case of mental health and financial literacy.

Survey results were used to populate a forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) model for GEM in May 2017, which at the time indicated that every £1 invested in the programme had generated a range of psycho-social benefits for participants to the value £1.57, in turn equating to benefit-to-investment ratio (BIR) of 1: 1.57.

Results from the 2018 retrospective survey were used to update the forecast SROI model, a summary of which is given in Table 2. This demonstrates a 53% improvement in the prospective societal return of GEM, which the BIR rising to 1: 2.39.

Navigator Developer Anna with a participant for a mentoring session

Table 2: GEM Forecast SROI Impact Map

Outcome (Qn item)	Change Score (2018)	Dead weight	Attribution	Financial Proxy	Proxy Value (£)	Drop-off rate	Present Value (PV)4
Improved sense of competence, engagement and purpose (5/6)	0.47	0.07	0.56	Value attributed to positive functioning for volunteers based additional median wages earned2	2,9403	0.25	£1,602,087
Reduced barriers to receiving help and advice (4)	0.46	0.07	0.56	Unit cost of approved social worker (ASW) for community social care	1,3803	0.25	£736,000
Increased levels of interest and take up in training, volunteering and vocational opportunities (11)	0.32	0.15	0.49	Value of volunteering in England	1,497.63	0.25	£444,356
Improved confidence and motivation to engage with and access new opportunities (15)	0.32	0.07	0.56	Value of improved confidence in young people	2154	1	£27,450
Improved resilience and self-esteem (8)	0.40	0.07	0.56	Cost of Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem	1,2404	1	£197,893
Improved financial situation of target participants (7, 10)	0.25	0.15	0.49	Valuation for improved emotional wellbeing arising through the Common Assessment Framework	6494	1	£51,770
Improved employability through job-ready knowledge, skills and attributes (12)	0.40	0.15	0.49	Employment Incentive costs	3,8004	1	£484,994
Improved physical and mental health (9, 13)	0.22	0.07	0.56	Cost of reduced health care to maintain good physical health (based one A&E and 4 GP visits p.a) plus Mental health service costs per individual (anxiety and depression) @ £942 averaged over 5 years	£4203	0.25	£107,232
Improved positive functioning and coping strategies (16)	0.31	0.07	0.56	Well-being valuation of improved autonomy and control	1,4004	1	£173,156
Reduced social isolation (14)	0.23	0.07	0.56	Annual value attributed to meeting friends and relatives more frequently	13,3333	0.25	£3,555,466
Improved financial literacy and ability to manage finances (10)	0.15	0.15	0.49	Average cost of 2 hours financial advice	3004	1	£14,358
Improvement in life and work skills (7)	0.34	0.15	0.49	Cost of employability skills training in regular sessions with counsellor/ coach	1,6504	1	£179,001
Total							£7,573,764
Investment in GEM (Grant)							£3,165,200
BIR							2.39

2 Discounted to 3.5% following UK HM Treasury standard. 3 Per person p.a. 4 Per-person. 5 Based on living wage rate of £7.20 per hr) multiplied by average number of hours per week volunteers undertake in UK = 4.

2.2 Qualitative findings

The metrics of outcome change derived from the survey are combined with qualitative responses which provide some further depth and colour to the results. Prior to completion of the survey participants are requested to note what they perceive to be working really well on the GEM project; what would help make things better for the participant (in relation to GEM) and anything specific about how GEM has, or has not, worked for them. A summary of the responses for each is given below, which should be considered in the context that 90% of all responding participants reported themselves to be either 'very satisfied' or 'really satisfied' with the GEM programme, with the latter accounting for 64% of the sample.

With respect to the things working well for participants, two elements stand out. Firstly, the support they receive from their own Navigator Developer, and secondly the confidence they have gained in both personal and professional areas of their life, including things like taking on new challenges, attending interviews and meeting new people.

Clearly the 1-1 support afforded by the programme is valued in itself, which extends to the quality of the relationships with Navigator Developer being experienced, as well the provision of advice and information, which is also highly valued. Further, the outcomes statistics indicate that such valued relationships have instrumental as well as intrinsic value. This is a testament to both the design and structure of the GEM programme, and the skills and dedication of the Navigator Developers themselves. And the opportunities afforded by GEM are clearly welcome, not only in terms of the professional and vocational opportunities which they otherwise may not have had access to, but also the opportunities to converse, build relationships and meet new people, within and beyond the programme.

2.2.1 Indicative quotes

'GEM has really helped me, I wouldn't have known where to go for the training I needed.'

'I have really gained in confidence as I am volunteering in GEM and related projects.'

'At the moment, the goals we have set are being met, what we set out to achieve is working nicely and I feel there is nothing else that could make my progress better.'

'[GEM] has helped me more than I ever expected. I hope this project continues to help others.'

'Sometimes life isn't all about gaining qualifications but to have the support and confidence building from GEM [which] has played a very big part in my life.'

'My life has completely turned around. I am so happy and so is my family.'

'The last six weeks have been so positive and I'm really excited to continue to grow and move forward.'

'[The] 1-1 support has been really fantastic... I've improved a lot and have been able to take vital next steps as a result of the GEM project.'

'I hope that the project carries on beyond next year as there is a lot more people out there who face similar barriers to me [who] really need this kind of help'

Given the very high levels of satisfaction reported by participants not many issues are highlighted in terms of things that could be working better for individual participants. However, at this mid-term point a few are worth noting. One is the perception of there being fewer opportunities outside of the main centres of population, with suggestions of there being more opportunities developed for participants in places like Cirencester and Bourton on the Water (this issue also arose in the process evaluation, see 2.3.9 above). Other suggestions included improving the publicity of GEM to agencies across the county, so that people are fully aware of how GEM can help. The job centre was noted in this respect as were job seekers who have little or no internet access.

Other notable issues raised included the provision of greater access to funding for participants, for things like books, course fees and transport, and the provision of aftercare for participants who have completed the programme, to ensure that momentum isn't lost (similarly, this issue was noted in the process evaluation, see 2.3.3 above).

James has learning disabilities but just wanted to be part of a team - through the GEM Project he found a job he loves with Specsavers

3.0 Process Evaluation

This section of the report presents the findings from the process evaluation.

3.1 Overview

As with the first interim report, feedback from participants, Navigator Developers and delivery partners has been very positive. Even where challenges have been identified, these have generally been framed within an understanding that the project itself is overwhelmingly highly valued.

> The ethos of the project is really great, it's a service that should be expanded, gives people hope (Navigator Developer).
>
> The project is working with over 800 people – that's a lot of people being supported. You have to find your way with each participant, they are all different, and GEM allows that flexibility to work with the whole person. The outcome is not often that these people get a job – they are the furthest away, have lots of other issues that need addressing before they can think about work (Navigator Developer).

Overall, there is still great enthusiasm for commitment to the project; of the 55 people we spoke to, only one was critical of the project as a whole (from an organisation that has left the project because it was not sufficiently client-focussed, too paperwork heavy, and there were delayed payments).

For this round of conversations, there was more emphasis on outcomes achieved and concern for the sustainability and legacy of the project than previously, which is to be expected at this stage of the project.

3.2 What is working well

3.2.1 Tailored, one-to-one support

As previously, what came out top is how much the intensive and tailored one-to-one support that GEM affords is highly valued by delivery partners, Navigator Developers and participants alike.

> 'When I came to this place my papers were not right, so it took me time, I could not work or do anything at all. I have been out of the system for 14 years. When I got my papers I didn't know where to start … I was in the dark, I had no experience, I could not go for interview because I had lost my confidence. [I was introduced] to the GEM project. I didn't know what GEM meant, but as we went along, as [my Navigator Developer] took my hand, tried to call here and there, tried to call offices for me saying she had somebody who was interested in work, filled forms in for me, conversed for me because I was not good in my communication … So then I knew that GEM was Going the Extra Mile. The project is going the extra mile for those people like us who have lost the way … Most important is the person' [the N/D] (participant).
>
> 'I was street homeless for a while and am now in supported accommodation. GEM has been a godsend to me. I'm being supported to start my own business in the New Year doing gardening work, and being a volunteer … helps me feel useful and part of something positive, I really have nothing but praise for them (participant).'
>
> 'To start off with, it was incredibly difficult and hard, trying to get myself back up to do anything after I had a breakdown… Having someone who understands you're not just being a fraud and that you can't cope with situations easily. I was a manager for 30 odd years and I've dealt with most things … When it happens to you, you get in this hole and it's so difficult to get out the hole, it really is. And just having somebody who understands, someone to talk to once a week, at the end of the phone, it really does help' (participant).

'The key thing people always feedback is the value of having someone alongside then who treats them like a human being. Long term unemployment means they have little self-confidence and are in a vicious cycle of poverty' (Navigator Developer).

'When I do the questionnaire with participants, every single one says it's the one-to-one, having just you, they can talk to just you about the things they want to do' (Navigator Developer).

This finding was echoed in the analysis of qualitative data from the participant survey (see 3.2 below).

3.2.2 Extra Mile Fund

The Extra Mile Fund is greatly appreciated by Navigator Developers and participants (but there were some criticisms – see 3.3.4 below).

'The Extra Mile Fund is great – it is so flexible, you can get in principle agreement very quickly and the money comes through quickly' (Navigator Developer).

'Funding to pay for bus fares to attend a course is significant for them and opens up possibilities for once. One of my participants came to a course for parents (return to work when kids are at school), she got funding to attend a TEFL course. She is now self-employed as a TEFL teacher and is running a course for us for GEM on English language with employability skills' (Navigator Developer).

'Last summer they paid for me to do a Lingua course to teach Arabic, I hope they will pay for me to do an interpreter's course in October' (participant).

3.2.3 Outcomes

All of the partners spoken to say that they are doing well progressing towards their outcomes and are pleased to see that the monitoring statistics show projected targets are being met and in some cases exceeded. There was also acknowledgement that the work was filling the gaps left by Government cut backs.

'Successes are that participant with severe marginalisation have been able to go in to volunteering and training/ have set up their own businesses. It has built confidence and reduced fear. If the GEM Navigator Developer is ever stuck for where to signpost people to then there is a great fit with other large programmes running at the time within our organisation' (Manager).

3.2.4 Participants' Council

This has been established and is developing well. It needs a constant stream of new participants to be involved, because the successful ones leave when they get employment and exit the programme. Participants' Council (PC) members spoke about the Council as being very friendly, genuinely feeling that it is run by and for participants (supporting staff have been able to gradually step back: 'my role is getting smaller and smaller because they do it all themselves, brilliant' (manager). It is valued as a good way to influence the programme. One example is PC members developing an initial confidence building course for new participants. Another is developing a course for employers. As one PC member said:

'I am registered blind … I've been with GEM one and a half years and I have just finally got a job … employers are a bit hesitant, they don't know much about what it means to employ someone like me … I've been through a lot in terms of employment, low confidence, low self-esteem, not being accepted for work, having an interview just because you're on the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, but it's more of a box-ticking exercise – I've been there. I'm hoping to stay involved with the PC … We were doing this team thing about what courses could people do when they first start GEM, and I'd half-jokingly said, 'what about a course for employers?' So that they realise the capabilities we actually have. That was taken further, I was really surprised … We are having a say in this'.

However, one Navigator Developer commented that this was perhaps not the most effective way of getting feedback, because people were not always around for long, so there was little continuity, and meetings were always in Gloucester, making it hard for some to attend. Participant coffee mornings have been set up, with the aim of hearing concerns and also recruiting new PC members. Several participants said they would be interested in meeting other participants to share stories and to network.

3.2.5 Support from others in the GEM project

The support is greatly appreciated and was mentioned frequently in interviews with Navigator Developers and delivery partner managers. This includes friendly, timely responses from GEM office, the range of knowledge and expertise readily shared across the team of Navigator Developers, support from the Quality Manager and the work with employers by Opportunity Hunters.

> 'The support from GEM is great – other Navigator Developers, the people in the office, Di (Quality Manager) – there is always someone there if you're stuck, you don't feel left high and dry' (Navigator Developer).

> 'The N/D network is brilliant, people have lots of knowledge, skills – you can ask questions, there is a wide range of organisations, people with different knowledge and skills' (Navigator Developer).

> 'NDs have different skills, different experience, different knowledge, which is invaluable. Sending out an email – you can guarantee someone's going to have an answer or point you in the right direction' (Navigator Developer).

3.2.6 Soft outcomes

Some Navigator Developers were asked to give stories (which is in line with the suggestion to gather case studies of softer outcomes). A couple are highlighted here:

> 'One participant with a learning disability was also transgender, but found it hard to get people to take her gender seriously because of her learning disability. She is now working with Dramatic Change directing plays for people with learning disabilities and developing a film about her transgender experience'.

> 'One of my participants is volunteering at Bike Access Project in Stroud, his family said he has never really engaged with anything before, but here he is in his element. They've devised an AQA certificate in bike maintenance for him. Hopefully he'll be able to volunteer there independently. He is really enthusiastic, says it is the best thing he's ever done … Volunteering should be more highly valued. There is an assumption that employment is the best outcome, but three quarters of my participants are never going to get a job. Volunteering is valuable in its own right, not just in terms of 'distance travelled' but also what it gives to society'.

GEM Navigator Developers meet regularly to share advice

3.3 Challenges and issues

3.3.1 Tension

As in the previous report, many Navigator Developers talked about the tension between supporting individuals, achieving outcomes and dealing with a challenging external environment. Working with people who are the furthest from the labour market brings challenges. As the monitoring statistics show, over half of participants are economically inactive rather than registered unemployed, and over half have a disability or learning difficulty. Several Navigator Developers commented that it was difficult to separate employment support from everything else in participants' lives:

> 'We're dealing with human beings, and some of them are quite broken. Many people need professional help that GEM does not have the capacity to give – psychiatric help, not employment support' (Navigator Developer).

> 'People have anxiety, depression, poor physical and mental health, dysfunctional families, living on the bread line, eat rubbish. Getting a job is not the first thing they need' (Navigator Developer).

> 'My participants are described as 'furthest away from the job market' for a reason – sometimes it is a major achievement just getting out of the house' (Navigator Developer).

> 'A great many potential GEM participants have complex needs that make it very difficult to engage in the process of change e.g. get well, find stable accommodation, become debt free, form supportive social networks, believe in the potential for change, engage in purposeful activity, and so on, before they even begin to think about volunteering, work experience and ultimately to look for work' (manager).

People spoke about the need get the balance right between support and moving people on, and some felt it was unclear how far Navigator Developers should go to fill gaps left in other services that should be supporting participants. One Navigator Developer had been told that she was not a lifestyle coach and had been encouraged to exit participants without BBO outcomes. There was a little uncertainty about when to exit participants if they had not achieved BBO outcomes. Some felt there was pressure to exit after 6 months, but often life events meant temporary disengagement; progression was rarely a straight line. One Navigator Developer spoke about the feeling that there had been a change of emphasis from supporting participants to achieving results for the funders.

Others spoke about participants' problems with benefits, the Job Centre and DWP. One spoke of participants being petrified of earning any money in early steps towards self-employment in case this triggered an early transition onto Universal Credit, which they understood would mean 6 or 7 weeks with no benefits and a reduction in disability allowance. One Navigator Developer told the story of a participant who had declared earning £40 to the Benefits Agency, and this triggered a review. He tried to throw himself of a bridge and is now sectioned and an inpatient. This had been fed back to the GEM management. There was the offer of an advice session about Universal Credit, but participants were even too scared to attend. It was understood that someone would come and talk to the participants about their concerns and feed this back to DWP.

3.3.2 Capturing evidence

Several of those we spoke to talked about how much GEM had benefitted participants, but in ways that could not be captured as BBO outcomes on the exit paperwork. These extended quotations highlight in detail how far some people have progressed, but not in ways that constitute BBO outcomes, or that reflect the time invested. Some of these have been captured in the distance travelled questionnaire, and there is discussion about gathering case study stories for these softer outcomes. The examples below show just how far people's lives have changed and what it takes to help participants reach the stage of being able to access financial inclusion support or to apply for volunteering or jobs.

> 'For 23 years I got in a bit of a rut and with help now I've got my own bungalow and I was in a bed and breakfast before' (participant).

> 'There are positive things happening for participants that we don't have the opportunity to recognise with the box ticking and paperwork. I have one participant who's been offered three jobs and subsequently been sacked from all of them. For the last couple of weeks I've seen her almost every day for at least an hour, just to get her to fill in her Universal Credit journal, just to get her to look online …, because she's just incapable of putting one foot in front of another without someone to walk her through it. And when we started, when I was trying to get her to write an email, I'd have to get the email up and do it step by step by step to get the email

started, and then I'd say, 'what are you going to say?', and she'd say 'I don't know, how do I start an email?', and I'd say, 'well who are you writing an email to?', 'I don't know', and now she will write the email largely on her own. This seems such a minimal thing, but when every step of the process is such a huge task. She's been offered a job for 25 hours a week, they've now dropped it to 3 hours a week, that's all they can guarantee her, so she's going to get exited from the programme … but that little bit of progress for her was significant, and although she's got a job, I feel the paperwork does not represent what's happened there' (Navigator Developer).

'A lot of the people I work with have mental health issues, drug issues, offending, homeless, etc., mixed bag. I find I'm spending a lot of time at pre-engagement stage. I can't sign them up, partly because I don't know if they'll stay with me or whether we'll get a work outcome, but I'm actually doing a lot of these softer skills stuff with them – helping them with a housing application, bank accounts, … It's a huge piece of work, getting them to engage regularly, getting them to listen, go away and do what I advise … But I'm a bit hesitant to complete the paperwork – and then they go off on a big binge, buy some weed with their ESA, and then they're recorded as somebody who hasn't succeeded. Because we want a positive outcome, it makes me more hesitant to sign people up, but also a lot of the good stuff that we do around financial capacity, having a bank account, using online applications, all that stuff doesn't get recognised. It might take someone 6-8 meetings to walk them through a job application. This is a big step forward, but you can't really sign them off as actively job seeking. In terms of distance travelled, they've moved hugely – they've started turning up regularly to see you, they chat to you when they meet you on the street … all good – but not recorded anywhere, huge in terms of recognising they have an addiction problem, but it's not a BBO outcome. We're not capturing this' (Navigator Developer).

3.3.3 Support for participants moving into employment

Linked to the issues above is the question of support for participants moving into employment. We understand that this is an issue the GEM OMC is considering for future funding and we would support this. Several Navigator Developers spoke of difficulties experienced by participants once they have begun employment, often losing jobs in a very short space of time, but if they have been exited from the project they cannot return.

'My organisation works in a long term way, people can stay as long as they want, GEM requires you to sign them off and say goodbye. Often, you're their main support and they want to come back to you. Also, people who get jobs then lose those jobs in a short space of time. You've got to sign them off, what do you do then, they're then finding themselves in exactly the same position'? (Navigator Developer)

'We have to exit people when they get work, but it might be temporary, and they can't come back. It's good for the stats to exit people, but some people need longer term support, like bus fares for first week/month – they're supposed to get this from Job Centre but that's hit and miss, staff there don't always tell people what they're entitled to and are more focused on sanctions' (Navigator Developer).

3.3.4 Extra Mile Fund

Although many Navigator Developers spoke positively about the Extra Mile Fund, there were some who had had problems. One delivery partner manager spoke of expenses being outstanding for 18 months due to defrayal issues, leaving the organisation being owed money. Another spoke of being encouraged to apply, putting in an application and then not hearing anything. One Navigator Developer commented that it was difficult to make sure that things purchased through the Extra Mile Fund such as equipment and clothing for employment were only used for that purpose.

3.3.5 Administrative costs

There were still complaints that the GEM funding still did not cover the administrative costs of hosting a Navigator Developer, despite an increase to 15%. Expenses for attending GEM meetings were not payable; 'The biggest issue is that the project is not covering its full cost. 15% on overheads is not sufficient when you think about travel, insurance, etc. This is not full cost recovery and runs a loss' (delivery partner manager).

3.3.6 Referrals process

For some Navigator Developers, the referrals process had improved; 'Things have got better now regarding relationships and referrals from Job Centres, DWP – they understand us more now'(Navigator Developer).

However, still for many the referrals process

was problematic. Some felt they were still being referred people who were unsuitable for GEM:

> 'Sometimes it feels like we are a dumping ground for DWP, some referrals are not ready to think about employment education or training' (Navigator Developer).

> 'We get some referrals from an agency who … are pushing people on to us and this seems like a cop-out. They push people on to GEM as a mean to tick a box and some of these people are difficult to get an outcome for and have been with them for years. Employment is not always an achievable goal' (delivery partner manager).

Others felt that information was lacking about potential participants referred from other organisations but recognised that GDPR made the sharing of some information difficult. One delivery partner manager felt it was difficult to refuse referrals from DWP or the GEM office, but sometimes they are unsuitable: one lived a 42-mile round trip away, with no expenses for travelling to meet them; another referral was very disruptive.

3.3.7 Paperwork

Several people spoke about the paperwork but accepted it is a necessary requirement of the funders. Many said the paperwork at times gets in the way of the work itself, either through time needed, or having to chase documentation (birth certificates, proof of unemployment given that online Universal Credit information does not give a breakdown of benefits, distance travelled questionnaire). Sometimes people felt it is excessively petty (i.e. the logo) and makes them feel they are not trusted to do the work.

3.3.8 Working with employers: diversity and inclusion

Although progress has been made in increasing awareness of GEM in the business community, there are still significant challenges in terms of helping companies to understand the business sense of diversity and inclusion. Recruitment practices are often fixed procedures: competency-based interviews, criteria-referenced questions, situational-based problems often exclude people who could do the jobs well but differently. In addition, there is work to do to support staff to work with people who are differently abled. This is a steady process of education and it is what will leave a legacy of the project through the Exemplar Employer Award (which now has about 30 employers).

3.3.9 Geographic issues

There are specific challenges facing Navigator Developers and participants in rural areas, including transport, fewer employment

GEM participant Phoebe has high-functioning autism, and found employment at Hubble Bubble cafe, who recently became a GEM Exemplar Employer

opportunities, isolation. Many of the opportunities are focused in the main conurbations; 'We're out on a limb, there are few jobs, and little public transport and everything happens in Cheltenham or Gloucester' (Navigator Developer).

3.3.10 Navigator Developer induction process

Several Navigator Developers who started later than the first cohort perceived a lack of a formal induction:

> 'I joined when the project was a year old, there was no training for me, BBO doesn't fund training. It's really hard to understand all that is required, paperwork, Egress, etc. The office did their best, a session with file structure, but it's hard to pick it up, I make errors in paperwork, it's time consuming. We need an induction course. New NDs come in all the time' (Navigator Developer).

> 'It would have been helpful to have been shadowed on first meeting with a participant and get feedback' (Navigator Developer).

3.3.11 Meeting management

Several Navigator Developers felt that the ND meetings were not as useful as they could be; they felt like information giving exercises which could be done in other ways that made better use of time. People would prefer to use the time for sharing good practices. It was suggested that maybe ND meetings could be themed (one example was how to write an exit report).

3.4 Findings from Wider Stakeholder Interviews

An additional element of the evaluation cycle in year two comprised interviews with some wider stakeholders who are a little further removed from the core GEM activities. The aim of the interviews was to explore some of the issues around the wider engagement of stakeholders in GEM, and how these are being delivered through existing services and joint initiatives. Eleven interviews were undertaken over the course of spring and summer 2018.

The extent to which GEM is filtering down into wider services in the county is of particular interest to the GEM management team, and to the project funders. Interviews were also undertaken with four members of the GEM management team, to triangulate the findings but also to combine perspectives with those closest to the coalface of GEM.

The interview was organised around four main areas: participation in GEM and how you rate its success to date; GEMs role and influence in business support and networks in the county; the ways that it might be fostering joined up delivery and partnerships; and - looking over the medium-longer term - how it might influence the sustainability of the local economy.

Questions were targeted around the interviewee's knowledge of and involvement in GEM, thus the interview schedule was viewed more as a guide to the conversation. All questions were derived from the outcomes map developed as part of the Stage 2 bid and the interviews took around one hour to complete.

A broad range of interviewees were targeted, who were a step away from being centrally involved in GEM and could thus give a wider perspective – and perception – of GEM and how it was working. As a result the detail of responses was limited in places, especially in relation to specific targets and relative successes of GEM. Nevertheless, the following summary provides a perspective that would not have otherwise been captured.

Interview findings are organised thematically in order to headline and capture the spirit of the perspectives gathered. They are of course inter-related and are not ordered by importance. Some repetition may be found in terms emerging of themes and issues between this and the previous section, which serves to further reinforce the salient points for consideration by the GEM management team, and provides an additional form of triangulation across different elements of the evaluation cycle. The summary is necessarily parsimonious so as to distil some memorable headlines for use by the GEM management team in the final stage of the evaluation cycle, and in any related publicity or communication.

3.4.1 Flexibility and Inclusivity

GEM delivers an element of flexibility around the needs of participants not seen in the county before. It is centred around the concept of flexibility rather than eligibility. GEM is also the only programme open to people who are economically inactive but not claiming benefit (current statistics show a 44 to 56 split of unemployed to

economically inactive). The client group represents a broad spectrum and the programme doesn't pre-judge people, treating them all as individuals. However, although the programme is open and flexible, a challenge remains in engaging those who are really disengaged, such as the homeless and ex-offenders, an area which would demand further resources.

Nevertheless, the usefulness of GEM in the context of mental health generally was headlined strongly. This again relates in part to programme flexibility but the ways in which GEM is able to reach out to those with mental health issues is unique, and supports other findings where participants report of having previously experienced constant referrals in the system

3.4.2 Bureaucracy and administration

Almost all referred to this as being burdensome and time consuming, but not surprising given that it is ESF. This has been compounded by the fact that while Big Lottery have had to adhere to ESF rules they have also retained some of their own requirements. It has also been compounded by the ESF-BL reporting requirements, which have changed periodically throughout the programme, further impacting on the capacity of managerial staff that can be dedicated to delivery. To date around a third of the management team's time is estimated to have been spent on the administrative, reporting and the relatively severe auditing requirements of the commissioning bodies.

More positively, despite the paperwork being relatively heavy for all GEM partners, the majority are reported to be content with it, viewing it as another form of capacity building and skills development that they can take from GEM – despite having to adapt to changing paperwork requirements along the way. One partner was reported to have said that the paperwork helped to give them rigour and discipline, and a related outcome for the VCS is the development of a culture of accountability for the delivery of tangible outcomes against grant funding.

3.4.3 Referrals

Referrals were cited as another area where it was felt that GEM could in time make greater strides, more particularly external referrals with other agencies that are not directly involved in the project. The district councils and housing associations were mentioned. Appropriate management of referrals to stay focused on the core target groups was also mentioned, for example reminding organisations not to refer those with a solid track record of work.

Two years into the programme, the monitoring and evaluation is starting to build an evidence base around the power of the wider application of the one-one support model that lies at the core of GEM (traditionally restricted in Gloucestershire to those with mental impairment or disability) but it is likely to take another 2-3 years to embed this knowledge and recognition.

3.4.4 Volunteering

GEM has helped to raise the profile and importance of volunteering in participants' journeys, and also provided a structure for its recognition. Volunteering itself is not a discrete measured output of GEM, being counted with work experience, with a third of all participants recorded in this category. Nevertheless, the psycho-social outcomes that come from it are significant and have been captured elsewhere in the evaluation cycle. Further impacts on the wider VCS are noted throughout this section, particularly in relation to joined up working and networking.

3.4.5 Communication and Networking

The mechanisms for promoting networking in GEM are seen to be a success, including Nav Dev meetings and the participants council which have fostered the sharing of experience and learning across participants and delivery partners alike.

More widely, the networks that have developed and relationships built between partners as a result of GEM has not only increased the capacity of the VCS to deliver outcomes for vulnerable people in their community, but has simultaneously reduced competition between them for funding and increased their capacity to bid for larger funding pots. Through their GEM alliances they have developed a critical mass of skills and expertise. At a basic level it has also helped to make partners more knowledgeable about funding streams (NESTA was cited as an example) as knowledge is pooled and people talk to one another.

3.4.6 Partnerships and joined up delivery

GEM is clearly making people work together in unique and fruitful ways. The importance of not being competitive, but working together to ensure that participants get the offers and support that they need, has direct benefits for participants incidental benefits for the sector as a whole.

One example is the improved cohesion between GCC and the VCS in the county. GEM is successfully joining up all sectors in the county – public, private and voluntary – to bring together a support package to help vulnerable people into work. Through this GCC now have a better understanding of the contribution that the VCS makes and the value of local delivery. And symbiotically the perception of the local authority by the VCS has improved, with increased potential for cross-sectoral partnerships generally.

3.4.7 Legacy of GEM

At this point in the programme focus is shifting towards what happens when the current round of GEM funding comes to an end, and similarly the experience of GEM participants once they leave the programme. In consultation with partner organisations and via Navigator Developer meetings, the management team have implemented a what's next initiative and this has helped to consolidate the clear statistical and process success and learning from GEM. It has also highlighted the challenges, one being that fact that a participant can only be kept on the programme for up to four weeks once they have started work. Whilst access to specific support such as coaching is possible, a need for more systematic post-programme support has been recognised by all stakeholders consulted as part of the monitoring and evaluation.

It was also noted that there may be further work to do to ensure that the aforementioned organisational relationships developed as part of GEM are sustained when the programme finishes. More may need to be done to promote organisations, continue to help build up their reputations and foster joint initiatives between them, especially the smaller ones.

3.4.8 Local labour market and economic impacts

While it was anticipated that there would be discernible impacts on the local labour market and economy – some sectors were deliberately targeted based on predicted growth in the GFirst economic strategy - there is insufficient evidence to make any claims in this area. In any case real impacts are likely to be relatively low, not least because GEM deliberately targets people who have been out of work for quite a long time and they are often not counted as being out of work, for example if they have a long term disability (56% of all GEM participants falling into this category). So whilst GEM has filled an important gap in provision and there are 176 people in work who previously were not, impacts on the wider economy in terms of induced effects (income effects expenditure of salaries resulting from additional employment) and reduced social welfare payments as a result of GEM are likely to be small.

That said, it was acknowledged that there may be some latent potential in helping to foster self-employment through GEM. Support for this is built into the GEM model but the management team acknowledge that they may need to do further work with Navigator Developers in the final year of the programme to encourage self-employment. To date, 32 participants (just under 4%) have accessed self-employment or enterprise start up support. As previously acknowledged, the VCS has strengthened as a result of GEM and there is a perception of added value being generated through this via match funding. To date few GEM partners have considered themselves to be potential employers of GEM participants, which may constitute further latent potential during the latter stages of the programme.

3.4.9 Other issues

Although the management structure of GEM is widely considered a success, the importance of the Navigator Developer manager being on board was noted, as it is the partners who employ and manage the Navigator Developers, and not the operational management team. Regular meetings with Navigator Developer managers have helped to overcome this. Separately, the rules of the funding mean that funding cannot be used for staff training, which means that staff can fall behind on training that needs to be done regularly (such as safeguarding for example). This also has implications for the legacy of GEM in terms of the personal development of its staff, as Navigator Developers are unable to leave with vocational qualifications commensurate with their role.

Some useful aspects of sustainability were referred to in the interviews, such as people being able to work and spend where they live instead of having to travel, and medium term changes in community cohesion and employment retention as a result of GEM. This aspect is being proactively pursued through the Green Impact programme, selective material from which will be reported on in the final monitoring and evaluation report in conjunction with the core findings.

In line with findings from the core stakeholder evaluation, it was acknowledged that GEM could be more visible outside of the main centres of the population such as the Cotswolds, as also highlighted by some participants. While the set-up of satellite participant council groups has gone some way to addressing this more might be done in the final year of the programme to strengthen the significance of GEM in more remote areas of the county. Indeed the interviews generally highlight the need for communication with all stakeholders and this aspect might usefully be headlined in publicity and related events. The year-end event in 2017 was widely referred to, emphasising the importance of publicity for communication as well as the celebration of GEM successes.

GEM participant Milan with her Navigator Developer, Donna from Artshape, at the Changing Landscapes Exhibition

4.0 Deepening Inclusivity in the Evaluation

In line with the GEM principle of working with those furthest from the employment market, specific attention has been given throughout the evaluation to capturing feedback from harder to reach groups through an inclusive approach. At the time of developing the ToC, Anna Bonallack, director of the GEM partner Creative Sustainability CIC, was engaged to lead on this process given her experience and the fact that she was involved in GEM in a more participatory capacity than the research team.

Eight core principles of an inclusive evaluation approach were identified, as detailed in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, along with information relating to potential barriers to participation, practical solutions and creative approaches.

1. Methods used are sympathetic to individual needs, abilities and sensitivities which means a range of ways to engage are provided.
2. Participants are given choices and empowered to choose for themselves their preferred methods of engagement.
3. Participants are met where they are i.e. we adapt to their needs rather than participants adapting to pre-determined methodology.
4. Participants are equal stakeholders in developing outcomes, indicators, methods and will take part in developing these for a group or as individuals.
5. M&E is intrinsic to the process of development and is formative, encouraging reflection and informing decision making, rather than being an add on. The summative evaluation is also a shared responsibility.
6. Stakeholders are given permission to take risks, to have fun and take plenty of time for conversations to range and happen spontaneously.
7. What is evaluated should not be determined by the ease with which it can be evaluated.
8. The best information is often shared unprompted, possibly sometime after the event and should be highly valued.

While it was felt that the above principles had been adhered to as far as possible, the evaluation team decided to re-engage Creative Sustainability to strengthen this aspect, and to provide a fresh view and experience of inclusivity now that the programme had gained traction and the team had a better idea of the challenges and processes involved.

A summary of the recent work undertaken by the team at Creative Sustainability is provided below. This has involved the piloting of four approaches to engage harder to reach groups in more creative and ambitious ways.

4.1 Overview

Creative Sustainability (CS) began working with GEM participants on three pilots at the end of July 2018, with a fourth started around mid-September. They enrolled a number of different GEM participants from local GEM organisations Nelson Trust and Stroud Valleys Project to take part in different models, set out below, with some small difficulty in contacting participants over the summer holidays combined with staff holidays. At the time of writing, two of the models have progressed to a useful stage, one is mid-way and the fourth is at an early stage. Key principles that underpinned the pilots have been put into practice throughout and have been a very useful tool to remind CS and their Navigator Developer of the why and how.

There is no single way to record and share information across the pilots; indeed the outputs of them are essentially the reports. These will be discussed further in the context of the wider evaluation to see if any additional materials are needed.

4.1.1 Pilot One

This pilot was expressly designed for people with learning disabilities who will be undertaking formal qualifications and certification. It aimed to address the gap between formal evaluation that may be remote and meaningless to a participant but necessary for their progress in the GEM journey, with the need to support participants to understand their achievements and take more responsibility for their personal development across domains. Two young adults

with learning disabilities were engaged, both doing AQA certificates in Bicycle Mechanics. Like all certification this requires formal testing and checking against a list of requirements by the tutor, to be submitted to AQA for certification. Alongside this the participant, tutor and GEM Navigator Developer worked together in a scrap book, and for each requirement aimed to identify together opportunities for record making in the book, using simple drawings and diagrams, key vocabulary, photographs, quotes by them and others in the workshop to confirm achievements, alongside the certificate.

Two participants have completed AQA certification in General Workshop Skills and have co-produced their evaluation tools, recording their achievements alongside the formal list of AQA tests in a journal, using drawings, photos, witness reports and diagrams. Not only was the process enjoyable but it has given CS insight in to a wider set of skills and confidences for these two participants. CS will now assess their understanding of progress in the tasks and work with them to make choices about their next steps – this being the fundamental reason to use a method that connects them with their experience fully, so they can themselves can take more responsibility for promoting their own health and wellbeing.

4.1.2 Pilot Two

This pilot was designed for physically disabled participants, those with sensory impairments. It aimed to give participants the opportunity to note what really matters to them, what they consider to be progress and record it, leading to a greater sense of agency and control over their GEM journey. It also sought to address the issue of remote decisions made on outcomes and indicators that may not have any relationship with the reality of people's issues, needs and barriers to work, and the need to be able to adjust these during a project. CS set out to work with three GEM participants at a half day workshop with mindful photography practitioner Ruth Davey, to explore the use of mobile phones to record their GEM experiences – photos and voice recordings. Participants noted things that they might otherwise not find a space to report to their Navigator Developer, that may not appear to others to be significant or relating to formal outcomes. Ruth then aimed to help the participants edit material to make a short stills film with voice over that described their experience for that period.

The first of two mindful photography workshops took place at the beginning of September, with five participants spending a day outdoors, using their phones to record and frame the world around them in a measured, mindful way. All reported a significant shift in their thinking, confidences and attitudes to the process as a result, and an enthusiasm for taking an active role in understanding their development. For one participant the workshop has been a catalyst for taking up a photography course and for another it has improved her confidence such that she took up a volunteer placement when before that had been unthinkable. CS expect to see most, if not all, returning to the second workshop with a photographic response to their GEM journey. This pilot appears to be the most accessible, given the wide availability of cameras and simple editing tools, and so is most likely to be adopted by other agencies, and potentially, by being integral to working and engaging with groups and individuals, will guide and influence planning and delivery of services

4.1.3 Pilot Three

This pilot was designed for participants with mental health barriers to participation and for whom the GEM journey is most likely long and difficult, often having to revisit problems and getting 'stuck'. It aimed to give the opportunity to record and evaluate deeply personal, emotional change so that a participant can recognise and record progress, and see where change is taking place. In addition this method sought to identify where input is needed from other agencies and even if GEM is right for them at this time.

A small group worked with Saira Todd, counsellor and arts psychotherapist, to establish how to express their personal GEM journey. The intention was that participants would use drama, large scale and mixed media to describe their mental and emotional barriers to progress – what not being able to leave the house looks like, the colours of

anxiety and stress, and how to visualise a period of progress. They were then invited to share ideas and make a 'key' for themselves including photos of themselves in different states. Each participant were then invite to plot a physical manifestation of their journey and interventions on a long roll of paper, so that changes could be seen, talked about and interpreted.

CS proposed working on a visual system to describe emotions and moods that arose throughout their GEM journey but dry tested the idea on mental health experts and concluded that it was not an appropriate methodology, given there would be no follow up support available to people for whom the exercise raised mental health issues. They have instead planned a series of open creative workshops for October and advertised these to the wider GEM cohort in Stroud. CS hope to see four or five people over the course of a week and will support them to explore their GEM journey creatively, as they choose and with no prior decisions made at all. The team expect to have conversations that help develop the core premises for a Theory of Change, and to establish participant-led outcomes. This is the most likely output from this study and aims to satisfy the need to influence current commissioning arrangements and measures of performance.

4.1.4 Pilot Four

Alongside these three discreet pilots CS have been working with their Navigator Developer to explore ways of breaking down barriers to communication and co-produced evaluation with her participants, trying out different ways to gather and record information together. This has included reviewing the recommendations made in the 2017 M&E Framework report, including those that pertain to the resistance by Navigator Developers to trying new things, taking risks, getting creative and enjoying the process.

Having initially taken a fairly conservative approach to using the materials available the Navigator Developer at CS has gone some distance to understanding best practice. A formal spreadsheet to monitor the process with each participant has also been set up. Following some initial scepticism, the benefit in providing art materials and doodle pads during conversations with participants has been recognised. In such cases they tend to spend longer talking, are less distracted and offer a more interesting and valuable commentary on their GEM experience.

4.2 Next Steps

The team will have completed all the pilots by the end of October and have proposed meeting with the monitoring and evaluation team in November to examine the material created, discuss how to share findings, and to consider if and how the pilots will be repeated in other localities with a wider cohort of GEM participants.

GEM participants taking part in the Access Bike workshop in Stroud, which finds unwanted bikes, trains young people to fix them up and gives them to people who need them

5.0 Overview of findings

This section presents an overview of both the process evaluation findings and the participant data. It concludes with a section bringing these two areas together.

5.1 Outcomes Evaluation

- The monitoring statistics show that the project is meeting, and in some aspects exceeding, its BBO targets.
- Together with the survey findings, the updated SROI model provides a number of implications for GEM as the programme progresses, and in turn highlights the success of the Navigator Developer and delivery partner model. Its potential to improve the confidence and self-esteem of participants and its role in reducing social isolation amongst harder to reach groups is abundantly clear.
- The survey findings provide clear evidence of the outcomes being generated for participants across the two principal domains of the GEM outcomes map: psycho-social, well-being and health; and employability and material improvement. While GEM is meeting it targets with respect to employment and training, the personal impacts on the lives of participants are especially significant.
- The prospective value being delivered for the county through these outcomes has increased by 50% in the second year of the programme - from an estimated £5.0m to £7.5m, representing a forecast return on investment of £2.39 for every £1 invested through the GEM Big Lottery/ESF grant.
- The results confirm that GEM is continuing to improve the offer, participant experience and outcomes as the programme progresses, with all self-reported change scores increasing from the time of the previous survey in 2017. Particularly notable are the improvements to the delivery of health, skills and competence of participants.
- The findings show a strong appetite for the GEM model amongst the target groups in the county, and indicate that it is plugging an important gap in provision that will be greatly missed should the programme end at a time when not all potential has been tapped.
- In the event that funding is extended the results imply that it would be especially fruitful to:
  - Extend and deepen the success of GEM in generating psychosocial outcomes for participants through increased opportunities for meeting, socialising and networking; gaining new skills; volunteering and improving self-esteem.
  - It may be useful to deploy or adapt the Programme to deliver additional opportunities in areas outside the main centres of population and to further assist the funding of courses and training programmes for harder to reach groups, both socially and geographically.
  - Consider a 'Vital Next Steps' programme for those exiting the programme to help ensure that the momentum and progress gained for participants through GEM isn't lost and will be more likely to be sustained. This could usefully include the offer of some personal performance coaching, which like GEM is goal and action orientated.
- During the final months of the GEM programme the findings indicate that it would be especially prudent to focus on opportunities that help make a leap from volunteering to employment and provide further opportunities for participants to meet and get to know each other, and to meet other prospective employers and training providers not yet engaged for example, through roadshows and high profile celebration events.

5.2 Process Evaluation

- It is clear that many aspects of the programme are working well and that there is a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment. The flexibility to respond to the needs of GEM participants e.g. Extra Mile Fund was important, as was the need and willingness to

work collaboratively to support participants in their journeys. This aspect of the programme seems all the more important given the challenges in the wider external context, especially with regards to increasing resilience and self-esteem.

- Some external issues were recognised as problematic, including accessing necessary support from other agencies (DWP, mental health services, housing), given that many participants cannot start to think about employment until these issues are addressed; issues with the introduction of Universal Credit; the potential of some participants only to find short term or short hours employment. This last issue created an uncomfortable scenario in which for some the participant-Navigator Developer relationship was severed despite participants requiring continued support during their employment or a potential return to the GEM programme. Regarding support for participants, limits to the degree to which GEM could support participants in all aspects were recognised, some needing additional and ongoing professional services as part of a range of support.
- Closer to home, frustrations with internal processes were apparent including paperwork, evidencing programme impacts that are not captured in BBO outcomes and issues concerning organisational costs and the Extra Mile Fund. Whilst these do not appear to have disrupted participants' progress as indicated in the outcomes statistics and evaluation, they are an important aspect that can impact relationships within the programme.
- Considering the findings in the broader employment context, the issue concerning supporting participants not only in the transition to employment but during their employment seems critical. The need to continue to challenge recruitment practices and support diversity and inclusion was recognised as important and ongoing.
- The Participants' Council provides participants with a voice and the ability to influence the programme and should be recognised as an important part of the programme. Not all respondents felt it was necessarily the only or best approach to participant involvement and suggested other informal opportunities as useful additions.
- In terms of legacy, the network of Navigator Developers and delivery partner organisations has developed well and sharing of information, expertise and resources can hopefully continue. Similarly, the work on the exemplar employers can hopefully mark a change that will endure beyond the life of the programme. Many participants spoke of the desire to help others, and Navigator Developers felt that volunteering should be recognised as a social good in its own right, suggesting a broader benefit for communities as well as individuals on the programme.

6.0 Key action points

Based on the synthesis of the findings presented in this report, the following key action points are intended to provide stimulus for purposeful discussion – with the OMC in the first instance - and action that supports the continued development of the programme. They are based on doing more of what works and addressing those challenges that can support the success of the project and shape what may follow. To this end, we suggest the following areas for consideration initially:

6.1 Actions to support the current success could include:

6.1.1 Consider a more formal induction for new Navigator Developers.

6.1.2 Review Navigator Developer meetings to make the most of expertise within the group. In line with principles of co-production, consider using the time to share practices and expertise, possibly with themed meetings (e.g. how to write up a good outcome in the paperwork).

6.1.3 Consider developing clearer guidelines for referrals, who to accept, how often to see participants, and when to exit. However, it is also important not to be too prescriptive and to allow for diversity in context and people. Given this, these topics could perhaps be explored at more discussion-based Navigator Developer meetings.

6.1.4 In one interview, there was a suggestion that GEM could monitor the kinds of barriers to employment beyond the scope of the project that will affect GEM outcomes to see how systemic they are.

6.1.5 Consider ways to acknowledge the soft outcomes more formally.

6.1.6 During the final months of the GEM programme the findings indicate that it would be especially prudent to focus on opportunities that help make the leap from volunteering to employment and provide further opportunities for participants to meet and get to know each other. And to meet other prospective employers and training providers not yet engaged, for example through roadshows and high-profile celebration events.

6.2 Actions to support future work could include:

6.2.1 Extending and deepening the success of GEM in generating psychosocial outcomes for participants through increased opportunities for meeting, socialising and networking; gaining new skills; volunteering and improving self-esteem.

6.2.2 It may be useful to deploy or adapt the Programme to deliver additional opportunities in areas outside of the main centres of population and to further assist the funding of courses and training programmes for harder to reach groups, both socially and geographically.

6.2.3 Consider a 'Vital Next Steps' programme for those exiting the programme to help ensure that the momentum and progress gained for participants through GEM isn't lost and will be more likely to be sustained. This could usefully include the offer of some personal performance coaching, which like GEM is goal and action orientated.

6.2.4 We are aware that there have been moves to support participants once they start work, and this issue came up often in interviews with Navigator Developers and delivery partners. We would recommend looking at ways to ease the entry into the workplace, through providing necessary resources (clothing, bus fares, etc.) but mainly through working with those in the workplace to appreciate the issues and through mentoring of participants. Using the expertise of delivery partner organisations (e.g. National Star College's mentoring system) might be helpful.

6.3 Next steps for the GEM Monitoring and Evaluation

The experience and findings presented in this report also have implications for the design of the evaluation cycle in 2018-19. We aim to continue the mixed-methods approach of gathering different forms of data from a variety of stakeholders, along with pushing the boundaries of evaluation methods, which befits GEM's concern with harder to reach groups. In summary, the research team intend to pursue the following in the year 2018/19:

- Further iterations of core elements of the evaluation cycle:
- The participant outcomes survey (distance travelled, possibly supplemented by a third round of the retrospective survey in April / May 2019.
- Corresponding update of the outcomes survey analyses and SROI.
- Deep hanging out with participants and other stakeholders – perhaps with more emphasis on outcomes as opposed to process evaluation during the third year.
- Consultation with management to implement changes as a result of the findings.

This will be supplemented by some new elements of the evaluation cycle to reflect the Monitoring & Evaluation experiences to date, and the timeline of the programme:

- Peer Researcher interviews – piloted during the last year but not reported on here due to a lack of complete data.
- Inclusive evaluation exercises building on the useful piloting by Creative Sustainability, reported on in brief here.
- Participant case stories to deepen and strengthen the material gathered to date, and to help bring the GEM experiences alive as the programme draws to a close.

GEM Partners

Active Gloucestershire
Art Shape
Brandon Trust
Bridge Training
Carers Gloucestershire
CCP Caring for Communities and People
Commercial Foundations CIC
Co-operative Futures
Cotswold Communities First CIC (CCF)
Create Gloucestershire
Creative Sustainability CIC
Fair Shares Gloucestershire
Forest of Dean Citizens Advice Bureau
Forest Upcycling Project
Forestry Commission
Forwards
FRP
GL Communities
GL11 Community Hub
Gloucester & District Citizens Advice Bureau
Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS)
Gloucestershire County Council
Gloucestershire Deaf Association
Gloucestershire Enterprise Ltd
Gloucestershire Gateway Trust
Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
Gloucestershire Young Carers
GRCC
Inclusion Gloucestershire
National Star College
PATA
Prospect Training Services
Prospects Services - Gloucestershire Youth Support Team
Stroud and District Citizens Advice Bureau
Stroud Valleys Project
The Cheltenham Trust
The Churn Project
The Music Works
The Nelson Trust
The Wiggly Worm
University of Gloucestershire
Vision 21
Young Gloucestershire

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GOING THE EXTRA MILE

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