Digital Skills Scotland: evaluation report

An independent evaluation report for the Tech Partnership and the JPMorgan Chase Foundation by Steve Matthews

25 March 2017
# Contents

Foreword .................................................................................................................................................. 3

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 3
   1.1 Digital Skills Scotland .................................................................................................................. 3
   1.2 This Evaluation .......................................................................................................................... 5

2. Performance, Impact and Effectiveness of Delivery ........................................................................... 8
   2.1 Performance .................................................................................................................................. 8
   2.2 Impact ........................................................................................................................................... 11
      Skills .............................................................................................................................................. 11
      Confidence .................................................................................................................................... 15
      Employment .................................................................................................................................. 15
   2.3 Effectiveness of Delivery ............................................................................................................. 17
      Learner Satisfaction ......................................................................................................................... 18
      Learner Engagement and Recruitment ......................................................................................... 19
      Course Delivery and Assessment ................................................................................................. 21
      Employer Engagement ................................................................................................................... 24

3. Key Issues and Learning .................................................................................................................... 27
   Timing ............................................................................................................................................... 27
   Location .......................................................................................................................................... 27
   Focus ............................................................................................................................................... 27
   Meeting a Variety of Needs .............................................................................................................. 28
   Target Audience and Outcomes ....................................................................................................... 28
   Delivery Model ................................................................................................................................ 28
   Employer Engagement ...................................................................................................................... 29
   ‘Collateral Benefits’ .......................................................................................................................... 29

4. Conclusions ......................................................................................................................................... 30
   The Future ......................................................................................................................................... 31
   Options for Sustainability ............................................................................................................... 31
   Recommendations ............................................................................................................................ 32

Annex 1: Depth Interview Participants .................................................................................................. 33

Annex 2: Course Marketing Materials and Slides from Course Introduction Presentation ............... 34

Annex 3: Detail on Employment Outcomes and Verified .................................................................... 36
Foreword

One of the most urgent challenges facing communities around the world is the need for increased economic opportunity and more widely shared prosperity. At J.P. Morgan, we believe we are uniquely positioned to help invigorate the economy and help solve pressing economic, social and environmental challenges in the communities where we live and work. We try to deliver on this responsibility, using our strength, global reach, expertise and access to capital to support and invest in our communities.

This project was made possible with funding from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation. However, the views presented in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent the views of J.P. Morgan or of the JPMorgan Chase Foundation.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of the independent evaluation of Digital Skills Scotland, a tech skills and employability training programme that aimed to make entry-level tech jobs in Glasgow and Edinburgh more accessible to local people looking for work.

1.1 Digital Skills Scotland

Digital Skills Scotland was an intermediate level digital skills training (with relevant vendor qualifications), employability development and job search programme that aims to make entry-level employment opportunities in help desk support roles and web-related activities accessible to people who are out of work. Traditional entry routes (apprenticeships, vocational qualifications, or degrees) were not seen to be meeting the full range of industry needs, while individuals lacked awareness of opportunities and the skills required.

Based on practice developed through its work with tech sector employers in Wales and elsewhere, the Tech Partnership worked with employers in the Glasgow and Edinburgh areas to identify skills needs that were creating recruitment challenges and then specified the learning outcomes for a training course that would help local job seekers ‘bridge the gap’ to gain access to such roles.

Glasgow and Edinburgh were chosen at the request of the JP Morgan Chase Foundation, the project funder, which was keen to support people facing various forms of labour market disadvantage into tech employment in an area where the company has a significant presence. In addition to providing immediate benefits to project beneficiaries and employers, it was hoped that the project would generate new learning about how access to tech careers that could be widened to the benefit of local communities and the economy.

In May 2016 YouTrain Ltd were selected to develop and deliver Digital Skills Scotland. They developed a new course offering to meet the learning outcomes specified by the Tech Partnership, settling on a trainer-led programme with the content and structure described in Figure 1.1 (below). Delivery started in August 2016 and ended in late December.
**Figure 1.1: Digital Skills Scotland Content and Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Week 1** | Tuesday: Induction and Employability Skills  
Wednesday: Introduction to MS Office suite, MOS Outlook  
Thursday: MS Office suite, MOS Outlook |
| **Week 2** | Tuesday: MOS Outlook day  
Wednesday: Employability / Employer Visit Day  
Thursday: MOS Outlook exam. Then commence MOS Word or other learning of choice (to be undertaken by learners through supported e-learning) |
| **Week 3** | Mon-Fri: CompTIA IT Fundamentals course |
| **Week 4** | Mon-Fri: Introduction to CSS & Content Management Systems inc Word Press |
| **Week 5** | Wrap up / exam resits / ongoing support – continuing up to 6 months or until people have move into employment / further training / education |

Source: Final Programme Review, YouTrain, 12 January 2017

Distinctive features of the final approach included:

- It was ‘short and sharp’, aiming to provide a focused intervention to quickly help to ‘bridge the gap’ in terms of entry-level tech skills and work readiness. Being less of a commitment than a long course, the programme would be accessible to a wider range of people.

- It offered certification – industry-standard certification when available and feasible – with the idea that this would provide the kind of evidence that people needed to demonstrate the skills that employers want. It was felt that the best way of evidencing industry-relevant tech skills was through Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification, and that, within the suite of application exams, MS Outlook was best suited to industry needs. Together with CompTIA Fundamentals certification, this would provide an entry into help desk support roles and demonstrate IT/digital skills more generally. Learners were also given access to self-directed LearnKey e-learning for other MS application modules and certified tests, if they wished or were able to take their learning further. In the absence of a suitable third-party qualification, a YouTrain CSS web language and Content Management System certification would add value.

- It offered a choice between help desk skills and web skills, allowing people to specialise in the subject that most interested them in terms of employment destinations. In practice, nearly all learners chose to do both.

- There were employability elements of the course that included tutor-led classroom sessions, one-to-one support when (for example, a learner had a job interview coming up), visits to tech companies and talks by tech sector companies on their sector and employment opportunities within the sector. Given delays, it was agreed that a jobs fair (as envisaged in the original delivery model) with tech sector employers at the end of the project did not take place (as had been the case in a similar project in Wales).

- There would be roughly equal delivery volumes in Glasgow and Edinburgh, but, in the end, take up was much higher in Glasgow than Edinburgh.
YouTrain marketed *Digital Skills Scotland* by distributing marketing materials, online and via social media (Facebook and Twitter), and through third parties such as Scotland IS, Skills Development Scotland, Partnership Action for Continuing Employment, the Department of Work and Pensions (job centres).

Key quantitative measures of success relating to outcomes like course completions, progression into employment and learner satisfaction, were agreed by the Tech Partnership and YouTrain. The service was also promoted through JobTrain, a division of YouTrain that meets Apprentice resourcing needs by matching candidates to companies looking to recruit.

### 1.2 This Evaluation

Steve Matthews Research and Consultancy was commissioned to conduct an independent evaluation of *Digital Skills Scotland* in September 2016. The evaluation method is summarised in Figure 1.2 below. After an initial review of project documentation and discussions with the Tech Partnership and YouTrain, a Project Logic Model was developed with the aim of making explicit how the project activities would deliver the required outputs and outcomes and have a wider impact in the community and the economy. Based on this, the key research tools were developed and used in the fieldwork, which consisted of an e-survey of project beneficiaries and depth interviews with learners, ‘stakeholders’ (primarily representatives of the Tech Partners and YouTrain) and employers who were involved in the project.

**Figure 1.2: Evaluation Method Overview**

The e-survey ran from October to December 2016 and was completed by learners usually as they completed their programme, or shortly afterwards. The response rate was high, with 50
learners taking part (93% of programme completers and 76% of those who started). The survey sample, which represents 50 out of the 54 people who completed the programme, had the following characteristics:

- 90% were male
- 75% were 25 or under
- 78% were qualified to Level 3 or above
- 35% had Level 4 or above qualifications
- 13% came from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and 4% were East European.

The fieldwork concluded on 6 January 2017 and, along with YouTrain’s Programme Review report (12 January 2016) and subsequent emails, provided the data that is analysed in this report. Dr Jonathan Pratt peer reviewed the research tools and a first draft of this report, and managed the e-survey. Full details of those who took part in depth interviews can be found in Annex 1 of this report.

**Project Logic Model**

Figure 1.3 below presents the evaluator’s Project Logic Model (or Theory of Change) for Digital Skills Scotland. This sets out how the project logic is based on the selection of appropriate candidates, who receive employability skills development support and digital skills training, as well as job search support. As a result of this, unemployed learners should become more employable in entry level jobs in help desk support and digital marketing roles, and able to secure employment in these areas. The ultimate impact of the project should be that unemployment levels in the target audience are lower than they otherwise would have been, and employer skills shortages are reduced.

The model is underpinned by the following assumptions:

1. Addressing the perceived gap in skills, employability and job search will make the difference in unemployed learners securing the target employment.
2. The provider’s service is the right one to achieve this effect, in terms of, for example, course content, course delivery and other support.
3. The ‘right’ candidates can be identified and engaged, ie: unemployed people with sufficient existing skills to be able to achieve on the programme, as well as the appropriate motivation and level of interest in the target job roles.
4. Appropriate employers can be engaged as employers of programme completers and to support employability skills and job search activities.
5. Labour market conditions make the intervention an appropriate one, ie: unemployment is not so high as to make the target roles attractive to ‘over-qualified’ people, and employer skills shortages are high enough to make engaging with the programme worthwhile for employers.
Figure 3.1: Project Logic Model for Digital Skills Scotland

This report
The analysis in this report includes a consideration of whether the theory reflected in this Project Logic Model actually held in in practice in the way that Digital Skills Scotland was delivered on the ground. The report starts in Section 2 with an initial assessment of how successful the project was in terms of its stated aims and key measures. Next, there is an assessment of how effective delivery of the project was and the issues and challenges that actual delivery on the ground raised. Section 3 then considers what has been learned from Digital Skills Scotland and how the lessons learned could be relevant to future projects and programmes. Finally, Section 4 sets out the evaluation’s key conclusions.

Dissemination
The report will be disseminated as follows:
> Dissemination to and discussion with the Scottish Employer Board
> Dissemination to and discussion with Skills Development Scotland, who set priorities for skills investments
> Dissemination to and discussion with the Scottish Government, who fund employability programmes
> Production of a summary report – for wider dissemination to Local Enterprise Partnerships and Charities
> Promotion of the summary of the evaluation on the Tech Partnership website
2. Performance, Impact and Effectiveness of Delivery

This section reviews how well Digital Skills Scotland performed against its key measures; considers how effective the project was in terms of its impact and delivery, and explores a number of issues and challenges that delivery raised.

2.1 Performance

The project reached a very diverse range of unemployed people from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances, although it is disappointing that the proportion of females was not higher, despite efforts to engage women1. While there were no specific targets by gender for participation in the programme, YouTrain did undertake marketing activities which they felt would be especially helpful in engaging women2.

YouTrain did not feel that the project had developed any new practice in how to engage women in tech skills and employment opportunities, but feel that the experience has rather confirmed longstanding challenges that apply to tech and STEM more widely. These include perceptions of the sector, its image and language that some may find off-putting, and more practical challenges that women in particular may face, including care responsibilities and other issues that impact on women's participation in the labour market.

Data provided by YouTrain and from the evaluation e-survey found that:

> 11% of those who completed the programme (6 learners), 15% of those who started, 15% of course applicants were female, and half of the 12 drop outs were female3
> 75% were 25 or under (75%)
> 13% came from a BAME background and 4% were East European
> Most had qualifications at Level 3 (78%) or Level 4 (35%).

Beneficiaries’ differing labour market characteristics further illustrate the wide range of people who were supported by the project:

> 36% were looking for their first job
> 16% were looking for a job after career break
> 44% were looking for their next job
> 72% had been unemployed for more than 3 months and 24% for more than a year4

---

1 Gender imbalance has been a consistent feature of employment in tech jobs. See, for example: https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/tmt-pred16-tech-women-in-it-jobs.html

2 Marketing of the course included via Glasgow Women’s Library, One Parent Families Scotland, various community centres/ mother toddler groups, leaflets in 33 libraries in Glasgow (also e- flyers) and Working Links (single mothers unable to work at present time), All partnerships were asked to be particularly aware of any female who was interested in IT (ie Princes Trust / BEMIS etc).

3 Information on gender provided by email by YouTrain on 26 Jan 2017. Subsequent data from the evaluation e-survey.

4 One person said they were already in work and looking for a career change.
Overall, the project performed well in terms of its stated key performance output measures, which are summarised below in Figure 2.1:

> **7 out of 9 targets were achieved or exceeded outright**, including overall learner satisfaction, which is very high at 98%.

> **Learners completing was not achieved, but was close.** Given the developmental nature of the project, not quite hitting this target is not necessarily a major concern, as we are more interested in what can be learned than the precise number of outputs per se.

> **The learners progressing to employment target had not been** hit at the time of writing, but it is still too soon after the project end to say whether this target will be reached.

### Figure 2.1 Project Performance Against Specified Key Output Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Output Measure</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Achieved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Applications to the programme</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learners completing the programme</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>✓ ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Applicants referred to alternative support</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learners achieving a vendor qualification</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Learners achieving relevant employment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Learners continuing into further education and training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5⁵</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Percentage of learners satisfied with their training</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Percentage of learners reporting an improvement in confidence</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>86%⁶</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Percentage of learners reporting an improvement in job skills</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Achieved 94%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MS Office**

**Web Design & Maintenance**

**Improve PC hardware and networks knowledge**

Sources: Final Programme Review, YouTrain, 12 January 2017, further information provided by YouTrain email on 26 Jan 2017, and Digital Skills Scotland Evaluation Learner E-survey (2016), base for measure 8 = 49 learners, measure 9 = 50 (total survey respondents = 50)

On the face of it, the figure for learners achieving relevant employment is below the required level (27, as opposed to 30). However, as many learners only completed the programme in late December, just before the Christmas break, and data was collated very soon after, in early January, it is reasonable to assume that this number will increase in subsequent weeks. YouTrain reported, for example, that progression to employment from the earlier cohorts was of

---

⁵ 2 progressed to an FE college and 3 to other employability / support programmes.

⁶ The evaluation e-survey asked two questions about confidence: one relating to confidence in the workplace, and the other about confidence at job interviews. Both were reported as having been improved by 86% of learners. The difference between 86% and 90% is not statistically significant, so this is taken as achieved.
the order of 50%. In Higher Education, for example, student employability is assessed six months after course completion.

Furthermore, YouTrain report that in addition to the 27 people already in work after completing the programme, 3 were being considered by employers for Apprenticeship opportunities after being put forward by JobTrain (a division of YouTrain).

In addition to the specified targets set out in Figure 2.1 (above), YouTrain report that retention of learners once recruited was high: 66 started the programme, with 54 completing. Furthermore, the target of 40 learners achieving a vendor qualification was exceeded significantly, as shown in Figure 2.2 below, which also includes achievements of the in-house certificate that YouTrain devised in the absence of a relevant vendor qualification for web-related skills. A total of 83 vendor qualifications were awarded, along with a further 48 in the web technologies certificate created by YouTrain in the absence of a relevant vendor qualification.

**Figure 2.2: Certifications Achieved**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Office Specialist – Outlook (Vendor Qual)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CompTIA IT Fundamentals (Vendor Qual)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Web Technologies (YouTrain Certificate)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: information provided by YouTrain by email, 26 Jan 2017.

Despite the original intention to split the programme equally between Glasgow and Edinburgh, delivery was mainly concentrated in Glasgow, where YouTrain had established a new office, with only smaller numbers in Edinburgh (in one cohort at the end of the project), where the course was run on a third party’s premises (the Rathbone Employability Fund centre). Figure 2.3 below sets out learner numbers by cohort and location, and the numbers progressing into work from each, which YouTrain are confident will increase during the first months of 2017.

**Figure 2.3: Delivery Location, Timing and Learner Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Learners Started</th>
<th>Learners Completed</th>
<th>Progressed to Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>16/8/16</td>
<td>15/9/16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>20/9/16</td>
<td>21/10/16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>18/10/16</td>
<td>16/11/16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>31/10/16</td>
<td>25/11/16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>14/11/16</td>
<td>16/12/16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>28/11/16</td>
<td>22/12/16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Final Programme Review, YouTrain, 12 January 2017 and further information received from YouTrain by email on 30 Jan 2017.
Although we only have data for one cohort from Edinburgh, the proportion and number of learners not completing for the Edinburgh group was higher than for any of the Glasgow groups. The impact of the project in terms of progression into employment is discussed in detail in section 2.3 below.

2.2 Impact

The programme had a significant impact on participants and beyond. The main areas of impact were in terms of skills, confidence and employment.

Skills

People’s skills were improved, and they felt more confident about work and finding work. Digital Skills Scotland was a ‘short and sharp’ intervention to bring people closer to available entry level tech employment opportunities quickly. As a result, it could not be expected that the course would work for complete IT beginners who lacked at least the fundamentals of basic IT user skills. This is reflected in participants’ own assessment of their skills before the course started (see Figure 2.4 below). All said they had experience of Word Processing and the majority had experience of MS Outlook (86%) and e-learning (86%). The majority also had some experience of dealing with PC hardware and networks (86%). Whilst a significant number only rated their experience as basic level, around half classified themselves as Intermediate or advanced IT users (including in terms of PC hardware and networks).

Figure 2.4: Participants Skills Before the Course Started

The evaluation learner e-survey suggests that, from the learners' perspective, the project succeeded in delivering the desired impact. Learners felt strongly that, while they felt they already had quite good IT skills, Digital Skills Scotland brought about significant improvement of these tech skills and in terms of finding work, confidence and employability (see Figure 2.5 below).

94% identified that they had improved their MS Office skills. 84% felt they had improved their web design and maintenance skills. And well over half felt that the course had improved their skills a lot in both areas.

**Figure 2.5: Impact of the Course on Participant Skills**

![Impact of the Course on Participant Skills](image)


The majority of participants also reported that they felt well prepared for entry-level help desk and web-related roles, which was a central aim of the project. This suggests that, from the learners' perspective, a key aim of the project was met, namely to 'bridge the gap' between people seeking work and an area where the Tech Partnership had identified that there could be significant employment opportunities for individuals and recruitment challenges for employers. As Figure 2.6 below shows that 82% (36 out of the 44 who answered) thought that they course had prepared them relatively well for work in either help desk or web content management roles...
However, given that the prime focus of the course was on helping people to gain access to these types of role, it is perhaps unusual that this number was not even higher. 36 out of 50 respondents to the survey gave a score of 7 or higher for this question. This may be explained by the fact that, as YouTrain have explained, the plan to offer specialisation in either skills for help desk or web was dropped because learners tended to be interested in both and do both. Not ‘specialising’ may have reduced the focus on one type of role over another. Another reason could be that course marketing materials (see Annex 2) referred more to job opportunities in the tech sector, or digital sector and referred to ‘digital skills’ and ‘IT skills’, which it was felt would be more appealing than references to help desk or web. However, YouTrain are clear that the focus on help desk and web roles was made clear in the selection process and the second slide of the introductory presentation (see Annex 2) to students identifies the course objective as being, ‘To help you find employment using your digital skills - CompTIA IT Fundamentals (Helpdesk) / Web Technologies (Marketing)’. Finally, employment outcomes suggest that, even if there was a degree of confusion over terminology, the course did largely have the desired effect, given that around 17 out of the 27 who progressed to a job (63%) went into a helpdesk or digital marketing role and 21 (78%) going into some kind of IT role, given that a further 4 people went into IT technical roles (for more details see Figure 2.8 below).

The programme was initially designed by YouTrain to enable participants to achieve an end user IT certification (Microsoft Office Specialist (Outlook) was selected), followed by two options – CompTIA IT Fundamentals or Introduction to CSS & Content Management Systems. It became clear early on in the programme that individuals who had been selected as being suitable for the programme wanted access to all parts of the programme. Feedback received by YouTrain indicated that, for some, this would enable them to reconfirm that the selected path they had chosen was the correct one, whilst for the majority it enabled them to also gain valuable knowledge in other areas of IT, which they felt could only be of benefit to them. The impact of this change from the programme delivery perspective was to increase the number of trainer-led days per participant from 12 to 20.
Another reason behind learner views on their preparedness for help desk or web roles also seems to relate to how the course was presented to learners, both in terms of content and the kind of employment routes it might support. In many of the depth interviews learners did not always recognise that the training was to support help desk roles and some felt that that sort of work was probably not for them. Many were also interested in job opportunities that were neither help desk not web related, ‘admin’ being an example of this.

So it seems that while MOS (Outlook) and CompTIA It Fundamentals were chosen to provide basic IT knowledge relevant to starting out in a help desk role, this was not always clear to the learners.

“I did the MS Outlook, CompTIA and web modules, but hadn’t associated any of these with helpdesk roles.”
Learner

“I didn’t do the help desk stuff, just MOS Outlook, the CompTIA and HTML.”
Learner

Some learners seem to have done the course so as to develop their general IT skills and to get certification for this, with the aim of improving their employability for a range of roles. A downside of this is that it may have somewhat diluted the original focus of the project, which was quite specifically to ‘bridge the gap’ between unemployed people and entry-level help desk and web roles. However, placing less emphasis on these specific roles may have also had the effect of ‘drawing in’ more people to an opportunity that they would otherwise be less inclined to consider.

A further indicator of the positive impact that the programme has had is that learners expect to use the skills developed on the course:

> 92% thought it likely that they would put their learning into practice;
> 49% considered it very likely that they would apply their learning; and
> 22% already had put their learning into practice.

The learner survey also suggested that the impact of Digital Skills Scotland would ripple out into the community and local economy beyond the immediate confines of participants’ intended work destinations. Figure 2.7 (below) shows how people felt the skills acquired were likely to be used in other contexts: helping family and friends, and supporting a community / interest group were the main contexts, but self-employed work also figured strongly.

### Figure 2.7: Application of Skills Outside Intended Job Destination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How and Where</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Already</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help family and friends</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a local community or interest group</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win work as a self-employed person</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Confidence

Aside from tech skills per se, the programme had further impact on learners in confidence related to employability:

> 86% felt that it had improved their confidence in the workplace (53% felt that course had done a lot in this aspect);

> 86% felt the course had improved their confidence in job interviews (45% a lot); and

> 97% felt it had helped them identify suitable future opportunities (51% a lot)

Depth interviews supported the idea that the programme had played an important role in boosting people’s confidence in developing their skills and finding work.

“I feel I’m getting a lot closer to a job now. YouTrain staff have been very supportive on job search – they go out of their way. You don’t know how to bridge the gap between being out of work and in work. You learn where to look, how to present yourself, what’s available.”

Learner

“I found a job at [company name] and applied on the Monday, and then had an interview on the Thursday. The YouTrain team put in extra hours to get me ready, with a mock interview and talking through the kind of questions that might come up. People in the employability support team really know their stuff – with real industry and HR experience. They went the extra mile – at short notice in my case.”

Learner

Employment

Given that Digital Skills Scotland focused on helping people looking for work into jobs, employment outcomes are perhaps the key indicator of the impact the programme had. Reporting deadlines for this evaluation report were such that not all employment outcomes would have become apparent at the time when the report was written, coming as it did so soon after the end of the programme and the Christmas period. No cut-off period was set for the reporting of employment outcomes, although, as has already been mentioned, a period of 6 months after completion of a course is used in other contexts.

The employment destinations of those that had secured a job by 2 March 2017 are listed in Figure 2.8 below. At the time of writing, the programme had not yet reached its target for participants to achieve employment, with only 27 in jobs against a target of 30. However, YouTrain believe it is highly likely that this will be achieved once employment outcomes have had time to become apparent. The usual practice in measuring employment outcomes is to allow a period of the order of six months after people have completed a course.
## Figure 2.8: Employment Destinations of Learners

| Employer                        | No. | Role                                                                 | Apprenticeship?          |
|---------------------------------|-----|                                                                     |                         |
| PCR                             | 2   | IT first line support (x2): helpdesk support analyst                | Level 3 IT              |
| Ralph Lauren                    | 1   | Customer service: website administrator                              | No                       |
| Santander                       | 1   | Customer service agent (phone)                                       | No                       |
| NCR                             | 11  | IT help desk: helpdesk analysts                                      | Level 3 IT (after 3-month probation period) |
| Standard Life                   | 1   | IT Operations: IT technician                                          | Level 3 IT              |
| My Server Guy                   | 1   | IT support: junior systems administrator                             | Level 3 IT              |
| Skills Development Scotland     | 1   | IT support: Service Centre Helpdesk 1st Line Support Analyst         | Level 3 IT              |
| Department of Work and Pensions | 2   | Customer service: 1 administrative officer & 1 other not known      | No                       |
| Teleperformance                 | 1   | Helpdesk customer care adviser                                       | No                       |
| Boots                           | 1   | Driver                                                               | No                       |
| ICS Learn                       | 1   | Learning Content Developer                                           | No                       |
| The Slug and Lettuce            | 1   | Kitchen porter                                                       | No                       |
| ECM Core                        | 1   | Software Development Apprentice                                      | Level 3 IT              |
| Support Key                     | 1   | Apprentice systems engineer                                           | Level 3 IT              |
| Scotmid                         | 1   | Customer service assistant                                           | No                       |
|                                 | 27  |                                                                      | 17 Apprenticeships      |

Source: Final Programme Review, YouTrain, 12 January 2017 and information provided by email on 30 Jan 2017, updated with further information by email from YouTrain on 2 March 2017

A further indication of the likelihood of employment targets being reached is that, at the time of writing, a further 3 were being considered by employers for apprenticeship opportunities. YouTrain also reported that most of those who had not yet secured work were actively engaged in job seeking and were in continued, regular contact with YouTrain staff.

YouTrain confirmed that participants had entered employment in a number of ways: some were placed by JobTrain; some were confirmed verbally by YouTrain staff and noted; and in many cases YouTrain provided a written reference for an individual when references were taken up to confirm an appointment. Full details of records kept by YouTrain are provided in Annex 3 below.
The list of employer names is impressive and indicative that candidates who had completed the course were attractive to prestigious companies and public sector organisations. Four further key points stand out from the employment destination data:

1. It is not yet known whether the programme can deliver the 30 participants into jobs target. Of the 54 that completed the programme, 27 had already found jobs at the time of writing and YouTrain expected that the total of 30 would be achieved later in 2017.

2. Employment destinations do not map fully onto those originally intended (as specified in the project scoping work) of help desk and web content management roles. However, 17 out of the 27 who progressed to a job (63%) went into a helpdesk or digital marketing role and 21 (78%) going into some kind of IT role, given that a further 4 people went into IT technical roles.

3. Digital Skills Scotland in the main served as a bridge for unemployed people to access Level 3 IT Apprenticeship jobs. 17 of the 27 jobs achieved were apprentice posts. While this might perhaps be expected for entry-level roles, there is a risk of ‘deadweight’ (if the candidates concerned could have accessed an apprentice post anyway). This was explored with YouTrain, who were clear that none of these individuals would have been able to secure an apprenticeship place without having first completed the programme. Most of those who secured employment also attributed their success in finding work, at least in part, to the course: 4 of the 11 who had found work when the e-survey closed in late December said the course was essential to the finding a job, and 5 said it had helped somewhat.

4. Depth interviews and prior attainment data from the e-survey suggest that many of these new apprentices already had qualifications at Level 4 and above. This suggests that people with Higher and Degree qualifications may need a course like Digital Skills Scotland to gain access to entry-level roles. Despite this involving a qualification which is at a lower level, the outcome – finding a job with career prospects – is still very positive to someone who has been unemployed for some time.

It is possible that YouTrain’s resourcing division, JobTrain, which specialises in resourcing Apprentices, was always likely to make such Apprenticeship opportunities available. While this may be true to some extent, it is also clear that some people found their own jobs without the advocacy of JobTrain. More generally, the involvement of JobTrain seems to have brought significant added value to the project in other ways, apart from helping people find suitable employment opportunities.

The fact that some job outcomes were in non-tech roles (such as administration and driving) could be regarded as both a strength and weakness of the programme. On the one hand, it demonstrates that the programme generated employment outcomes beyond the original brief in terms of employment progression job roles and sectors, perhaps enabled by the increased confidence and personal skills that the programme helped to develop. Seen more negatively, the employment progression data could also suggest that the project has not fully met the brief in its partial failure to connect some people to help desk posts and web-related tech roles.

2.3 Effectiveness of Delivery

Quantitative and qualitative data collected as part of the evaluation enables a more detailed picture of performance to be built up of Digital Skills Scotland, in terms of learner satisfaction and the different project activities of learner engagement and recruitment, course delivery and assessment and employer engagement.
Learner Satisfaction

The course was very well received by learners. Overall learner satisfaction was very high: 98% of learners were satisfied with the course, rating the course at 7 out of 10 or higher (see Figure 2.9a below). The average (mean) rating was 8.6. This is a very high level of satisfaction both in relation to commercial customer satisfaction surveys and based on the evaluators’ experience of other skills projects in the past.

A further indicator of how well the course was viewed by participants was their willingness to recommend it to others (see Figure 2.b. 96% felt it likely that they would recommend the course to friends or colleagues wishing to develop their digital skills. The average (mean) score was 8.94. This provides further evidence of a very high level of satisfaction when compared with commercial customer satisfaction surveys and based on the evaluators’ experience of other skills projects in the past.

Figure 2.9a: Overall Learner Satisfaction  Figure 2.9b: Likelihood of Recommendation

![Graphs showing learner satisfaction and likelihood of recommendation](image)


Likelihood of Recommendation measures can be converted into a net score. This is interesting because people who give a product or service a high or low score are more likely to tell their friends or family than those who rate it in the middle. Those who give a high score (9 or 10 out of 10) are considered ‘Promoters’ and those who score it 6 out of 10 or below are called ‘Detractors’. The Net Promoter Score\(^7\) score is the difference between the proportion of Promoters and Detractors, and if this is positive, then a product or service is more likely to grow by word of mouth.

The ‘Net Promoter Score’ for Digital Skills Scotland is 63, a strongly positive rating, suggesting that any future offer of the programme would benefit from a high degree of advocacy from previous learners. This is likely to be an advantage in a locally focused initiative of this type, in that ‘word will get around’ quickly that a good offer is available.

\(^7\) For more information visit, for example: \(\text{https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_Promoter}\) and \(\text{https://www.netpromoter.com/know/}\)
Learner Engagement and Recruitment

YouTrain promoted Digital Skills Scotland to learners in a number of ways:

- Marketing material distribution
- Online / social media – YouTrain website / Facebook / Twitter
- Through third parties like Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE), the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP, job centres)
- Networking Events, including a presence at SDS Apprenticeship Shows in Glasgow and Edinburgh
- JobTrain – YouTrain's resourcing division

Information provided by YouTrain and depth interviews suggest that JobTrain referrals and the Apprenticeship Shows (especially the Glasgow one) were the most effective routes to engage learners in the project. Although some learners were referred by job centres, partnership working for learner recruitment seems to have had its frustrations and there were communication issues that probably led to suitable candidates not being made aware of the opportunity through this route. It is clear from this experience that it can take a lot of time and effort to get the message across and build a productive working relationship with some job centres. Tech Partnership Scotland Board Members also referred some learners to programme.

One issue that stands out is that the project was far more successful at recruiting learners in Glasgow than in Edinburgh. One explanation for this is that YouTrain had a much stronger base in Glasgow, having established a well-equipped, new office in an accessible city centre location. The delivery team also felt that the Glasgow market in terms of participants was probably better suited to Glasgow, which they felt had more people with relevant characteristics looking for the kind of work opportunities that Digital Skills Scotland could provide access to.

Learner engagement and recruitment was a success in that more than the required numbers of people applied (299 versus a target of 200) and were placed (66 versus a target of 60) on the programme. Of these 54 completed the programme, with only 12 of the original 66 not completing the course.

YouTrain analysis of those who dropped (see Figure 2.10 below) suggests that there were three broad reasons behind the 12 drop out. Firstly, there were three who found jobs while on the programme. There were two for whom ‘life events’ (a bereavement and a house move) made continued attendance impossible. Three stopped coming for reasons which are not known, although one may have decided the course wasn’t for them after failing an exam (and did not want to continue despite encouragement from YouTrain staff). Finally, four people who were enrolled after being referred from the Jobcentre in Edinburgh failed to attend from day 1. When people dropped out without explaining why attempts were made to contact them, but without a response.
**Figure 2.10: Reasons for Participant Dropout by Cohort**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>No. of dropouts</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secured employment in first week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 secured employment in first week, 1 did not return after first week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 family bereavement, 1 moving house and decided not right time, 1 left after failing exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 secured employment within first 6 days, and 1 stopped attending in the first week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 Jobcentre referrals who did not attend from day 1. DWP cannot share further data on them (eg if found work).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: information provided by YouTrain by email on 26 Jan 2017.

A third of those (ie 4 people) who dropped out were in the one Edinburgh group, suggesting that recruitment and retention was good overall in Glasgow, but less so in Edinburgh. Feedback from YouTrain suggests that Edinburgh was a more challenging place to deliver Digital Skills Scotland than Glasgow. The same marketing channels as in Glasgow were used (including Scotland IS and the Tech Partnership website), but attendance at the Edinburgh Apprenticeship Show was much lower than it had been in Glasgow and Jobcentre Plus, a recruitment partner to the project, fed back that it was hard to find suitable people in Edinburgh, given that unemployed people there were often ‘further away from the labour market’. This seems to have been borne out by the fact that none of the four people referred to the course by the Jobcentre actually attended.

Applicants who were deemed unsuitable after an initial interview were referred to other types of support:
- 37 to SDS, job centres and other agencies;
- 6 to other entry-level IT programmes;
- 25 given advice on job search techniques and referred to job sites;
- 2 referred to other, non-IT providers; and
- 12 advised on the general funding and training options that might be available to them.

Learners and those involved in delivery felt that the initial applicant interview process played a key role in ensuring that suitable people – with the right motivation, interest and existing skills - were placed on the programme and drop out kept to a minimum. The fact that only around 1 in 5 applicants were placed on the programme suggest that selection criteria were applied quite strictly.
“I would recommend the course to people if they have the right level of skills, but you need some prior experience and aptitude. Some of the older participants seemed to struggle at times. If you know what you’re doing, it’s fine… You need some functional understanding. It’s quite a ‘skill hop’, especially at the start, and it’s very much a ‘crash course’, but the staff go the extra mile to help you.”
Learner

Course Delivery and Assessment

Digital Skills Scotland was delivered using a tutor-led, face-to-face delivery model mainly to groups of around 10-12 participants at YouTrain’s premises in Glasgow. Most learners went on to complete assessments for the Microsoft Office Specialist – Outlook and CompTIA It Fundamentals vendor certificates, and also achieved YouTrain’s Modern Web Technologies certificate, in the absence of a relevant vendor qualification.

“A lot of the course helps you bridge the gap between where you are and finding a job. The employability stuff helps with job applications and the technical content is what employers are looking for. I now have a job as a systems engineer at a server engineering company, and so am applying what I learned. A lot of the CompTIA content is relevant to the security aspects of the job, as are the MS Office elements. I’ve also used some of my new Office skills for personal things and now have a much tidier Inbox!”
Learner

“I’m really grateful for the support I’ve had through the programme. A major benefit is the way you cover so much material in such a short space of time, which means that you have a lot of certified learning to offer employers – not having certificates can be a barrier to getting considered.”
Learner

“The course is helping to ‘bridge the gap’ between looking for and finding work, not least because it’s boosted my confidence. It also helps to show your commitment: employers can see that you’ve not just been sitting around in the house. You’ve been out doing something, building on what you know and making career plans. They can see you’ve got the motivation to get better and get stuff done.”
Learner

Learner feedback on all elements of the course was very positive, and is summarised in Figure 2.11 below:
Table: Learner Feedback on Different Elements of Digital Skills Scotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOS Outlook</td>
<td>The focus on Microsoft Outlook was generally welcomed. Some already had experience of this application, but lacked an awareness of its widespread use in industry or had only used free personal email applications like yahoo mail or gmail. People generally felt that the training had opened their eyes to all the things it could do and readied them for work in a company or public sector body from day one. People saw real employability value in having official Microsoft certification, and some went on to other application certificates too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CompTIA</td>
<td>Learners also appreciated the value of the CompTIA IT fundamentals modules, even when they felt they already had a lot of knowledge in this area and despite the high volume of course materials that needed to be covered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Web Essentials</td>
<td>YouTrain’s Modern Web Essentials was also well received: those who had some knowledge were able to broaden and deepen it, while the less experienced felt they received a valuable introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability Support</td>
<td>There was also very appreciative feedback on the employability and job search support. Learners generally found feedback on CVs by an HR specialist very valuable, and most reported that they learned valuable input on covering letters. They also gained many practical tips to improve their performance at interview, and those with an interview coming up tended to get one-to-one coaching and a great deal of encouragement from YouTrain staff. Those who had secured employment were understandably especially appreciative of this aspect of the programme, and tended to indicate that staff had ‘gone the extra mile’ in helping and supporting people. People also found careers talks by local employers very useful in building their understanding of what tech jobs are available and how to get into them. These seem to have engaged participants and got them interested in the sector as a whole, while also giving them very practical insights into the mechanics of getting a job:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I told the group I spoke to about competency-based interviews, which are very common in the IT sector. I explained how people are asked questions about a time when they have demonstrated a particular skill and had to explain the scenario…This is something that the YouTrain person took on board and said they would build into the employability work of the course.”

Employer

“I underlined to the group the importance of building a personal network: anyone in the industry can be really helpful in getting an employee referral, so it’s important to use tools like LinkedIn as people make contacts.”

Employer

One suggestion made by a learner for improving the employability element of the course was to give more of an overview of all the different jobs and companies in the sector, while another wondered if an element of customer service training might be relevant to help desk roles.
The way in which the programme was delivered worked very well, with learners identifying the following key benefits of the approach:

> Having an **attendance-based** course in a group was very motivating and encouraged connection with peers, while also instilling discipline and creating a professional working environment, which was very friendly and supportive, but also business-like. Most people really enjoyed the group aspect of the course: people helped and encouraged each other and new friendships were forged.

> Tutors **encouraged self-directed learning**, but backed this up with active individual support and high-quality learning materials. People found the tutors to be motivating, approachable, knowledgeable, supportive and very active in checking for individual support needs. This meant that individuals could focus on issues that were more of a priority for them in a supported way, but peer-to-peer learning was also encouraged.

*The course was a real boost to the confidence. It was so enjoyable, relaxed and friendly. I look forward to going every day. It was much better than school and university. It felt more like friends helping you than teachers teaching you. The group side of things was great – all like-minded people.*
Learner

*“The content overall was all useful. I didn’t know Outlook in the depth that was covered and learned lots. I knew a lot of the CompTIA content but found it useful to have brought together and cover things I didn’t know. Other people were blown away by it. The coding was good – one of my relative weaknesses. I learned new short cuts and new ideas.”*
Learner

> There was a relatively high degree of **differentiation and individualisation** in the way the course was delivered, important given that some people felt their IT skills were already quite good, if also uneven. This meant that some learners were given access to extra self-directed learning resources and were enabled to take further vendor qualifications as part of the programme, with the additional cost of this absorbed by YouTrain.

*“I loved every minute of it – the tutors were great, etc, all in stark contrast to my experience of primary and secondary school. This course was amazing, all very casual and relaxed with people who are really interested in you, but also quite professional. The style of delivery was great, not a case of there only being one right answer – other ways of doing things were valued. It was good to get a brief and be allowed to get on with it independently, but also get advice when you needed it.”*
Learner

Assessment worked well. Even if some of the official tests were a bit daunting, people felt well prepared (despite the odd glitch in test preparatory software) and felt they achieved a good score.

*“Delivery and assessment was great: you did things at your own pace, and you did the exam when you were ready to take it. You had as much time to do the exam as you needed. You never felt you were falling behind – you could do it on your own terms.”*
Learner
There appear to have been differences between the delivery of the project in Glasgow compared with Edinburgh. Edinburgh seems to have been a much more challenging environment for the provider to operate in. Only one group was run. Recruitment was much harder and drop out relatively high. CompTIA was not offered in Edinburgh, after discussion with the trainer and learners led to the conclusion that it would be better to focus on MOS certification. Some of the Edinburgh course was delivered in Stirling, given that YouTrain’s centre there was registered for MOS testing (lunch was provided and travel costs paid). Learners were offered the opportunity to do a CompTIA course in January, but at the time of writing no one had taken up this offer.

**Employer Engagement**

The original consultation activities took place with over 200 employers in Glasgow and Edinburgh - through face to face meetings in each of the two cities, a telephone survey, an email campaign, an online survey and through discussions with local partners and their networks. The purpose of the consultation was to identify employers short term recruitment needs and skills shortages. It was also seen as an opportunity to engage employers who might be interested in engaging with the delivery of the programme

Employers were also engaged through the Scottish Board, who had a review and discussion of the programme at each of their meetings. Employers on the Board were active in promoting the programme through their networks, such as Scotland IS, and in referring learners.

Employers were actively engaged in the delivery of the programme to support the employability aspects of the programme – whether by providing careers talks, advice on job searching or company visits.

There were strengths and weaknesses to the way that the project engaged employers in delivery and as companies who might be potential employers for people completing the programme. The key strengths from the employer engagement perspective were:

> The involvement of YouTrain’s resourcing division, JobTrain, which, with its access to suitable candidates and matching process, was the largest single source of candidates for the programme and seems to have played a key role in enabling access to some Apprenticeship opportunities with its clients.

> The involvement of a number of local business leaders (enabled by the Tech Partnership’s Project Manager in Scotland) who gave talks to participants on tech sector employment opportunities and what employers were looking for. These talks seem to have a gone a long way to de-mystify the sector and help learners think about how they might fit into it. Even those learners not interested in tech jobs felt they learned useful things.

There were also some relative weaknesses:

> It proved relatively hard to engage employers at the scoping stage of the project in Scotland, when compared with similar initiatives in Wales and England. Consultation responses were lower than usual and, although demand for suitably skilled people in entry-level help desk and web roles was identified, this did not translate into companies who would actively get involved in the project itself.

> More could have been done to increase employer engagement during the project. In particular, given time pressures, it was agreed that there would be no end-of-project careers event, as had originally been planned, to introduce learners to businesses. This had been done with great success in a similar project in Wales. The short duration of the project could also have militated against the involvement of employers who were not ready to take part.
when the project was live given the nature of their recruitment cycle and other short-term priorities. As a member of the delivery team pointed out, “The right employer at the right time will go for it, but the timing has to be good for them”. One of the employers interviewed for the evaluation suggested how a more strategic, long-term approach might deliver improved outcomes for learners and businesses:

“I understand that students are being encouraged to go out and find their own work opportunities. This might be tough for people with little experience and few contacts. So it is probably worth thinking about how YouTrain could partner with large companies who could take on a number of suitably qualified people for entry-level jobs or placements. They’d still have to go through the company’s selection process, but the training provider could have people lined up. Just cold calling organisations may not be very fruitful, so corporate partnerships might be the best way…Companies could commit to taking on one or two individuals from the preparatory course. This would give them the kind of experience they can draw on and add to their CV.”

Employer

“It might have been helpful to have more specific job opportunities – including Apprenticeships – that are coming up. People are more likely to apply if you put the opportunity in front of them, and it gives you an idea of the kinds of jobs that are coming up that you can go for.”

Learner

While there could be benefits to the idea of ‘lining up’ job opportunities, as suggested in these two comments, YouTrain felt that, as well as supporting learners to find employment, they also wanted to encourage learners to continue with their own search activity. They argued that it was important to promote personal responsibility and ownership, and provide people with an opportunity to put into practice the job search skills they had gained on the programme.

On the issue of increasing employer involvement along the lines suggested, YouTrain highlighted that discussions took place with all the employers who were involved to explore how their involvement in such programmes could be increased, both at the time and in future. They were invited to interview the programme candidates in line with their then and future job opportunities, albeit it without the longer lead-in time would have been more helpful to the companies concerned.

One of the employers involved felt that some employer networking and engagement opportunities had been missed, but this view also seems to indicate that marketing activities such as those delivered in association with bodies like Scotland IS did not reach all of the intended audience:

“We’re a very active recruiter and use a lot of programmes to recruit people, but we knew nothing about Digital Skills Scotland. Better engagement with the tech sector across the central belt of Scotland would be a good thing. A more direct engagement with tech companies to research who hires from these programmes and actually engaging more would be desirable. Engaging companies through organisations like Scotland IS would make sense – they have a very proactive communications vehicle to promote new things.”

Employer
The association of the project with the JPMorgan Chase Foundation was very beneficial: the name gave the project a degree of kudos and associated it with a major local employer. This made getting a funded place on such innovative project more attractive to learners. It had originally been hoped that local staff of the company would have been able to take part in some of the employability activities, but this was not in the end possible.

The scale of the project, involving quite small numbers in a short period of time, probably had a lot to do with the degree of employer engagement which took place. The project was developmental and short term in nature, whereas employers may be more likely to operate on much longer time horizons for the kind of recruitment involved at this level.
3. Key Issues and Learning

The foregoing analysis raises a number of key issues that could explain the project’s performance, impact and delivery, and provide useful pointers as to what has been learned. These are:

Timing

Although the project delivered on most of its key performance measures, it did not fully achieve the two key targets of people completing the course and people progressing into suitable employment. Time pressures go a long way to explaining this. There were delays at the start of the project in agreeing the final project specification and signing the contract. Then time was required for YouTrain to secure appropriate premises in Glasgow for course delivery and identify a third-party venue for the groups planned in Edinburgh.

This meant that recruitment and delivery then had to be compressed into the period between two major holiday periods (summer and Christmas), given the project completion date. This also created problems in terms of evaluation, given that this report was produced before all the anticipated employment outcomes were achieved. The experience of the project highlights the need for allowing sufficient time for such an initiative to be set up and delivered and for delivery to take place at a time of year that works best for learners and employers.

Location

The difference in take up between Glasgow and Edinburgh suggests that the success or otherwise of initiatives of this type is heavily place dependent. While ostensibly two of Scotland’s main cities would have appeared to be fertile ground for this type of initiative, in practice there were significant differences, in terms of, for example, local labour markets (with more suitable candidates in Glasgow and a higher level of interest) and scale (Edinburgh’s population at around 0.5m is much lower than Glasgow’s, of 1.2m). This underlines the importance of considering local factors in local initiatives of this type: every place will have its own particular challenges and opportunities.

Focus

Somewhere between the scoping and delivery stages of the project the focus on skills for help desk and web-related roles seems to have broadened into a wider IT skills focus suited to a bigger range of job outcomes. Not all learners understood or recognised that the course was intended to enable people get into help desk roles. Instead, they tended to see a number of useful IT / tech skills which would help them access a range of jobs, and not just in tech.

This probably had advantages in terms of recruitment (making it easier to attract people less interested in help desk roles, for example), and also had the potential to expose people to opportunities they might not otherwise have considered. It also meant that the course could

---

*The evaluator has proposed that this report is updated with additional information on outcomes later in 2017.*
potentially connect people to a wider range of jobs involving IT to a greater or lesser extent, and improve career decision making, whatever their preferred career direction, by increasing people’s knowledge of tech opportunities.

However, it may also have diluted the original focus of the project, which was to offer a ‘short and sharp’ course on very specific labour market needs and deliver better employment outcomes compared with more general employability offers.

**Meeting a Variety of Needs**

Although the individuals engaged in the project were predominantly male, they represented a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances in terms of age, prior educational attainment, ethnic background and nationality, and career- and life-stages. This suggests that ‘short and sharp’, focused interventions like *Digital Skills Scotland* can meet the needs of a wide variety of groups who are looking to get back into work.

**Target Audience and Outcomes**

The project raises interesting questions about what is a suitable target audience for this type of programme and the kind of employment outcomes it should be producing. Most job destinations were jobs as Level 3 IT Apprentices, which may be very well suited to entry-level tech roles in many contexts.

However, this will only make sense if those accessing such opportunities would otherwise have been excluded from them and the programme was instrumental in helping them to ‘bridge the gap’ by acquiring new skills, vendor certifications and employability skills. This seems to have been the case in this project and it is interesting that the programme was also of value to unemployed graduates, as well as those with lower levels of educational attainment.

**Delivery Model**

Delivery of the programme has clearly been well received by participants, and it has also been effective based on what they report about how their skills have improved and given that many have secured employment.

An important aspect of this success seems to be the way in which the programme was delivered. A lot of effort was front-loaded into learner engagement and selection, making sure that only those with the right level of interest and motivation were recruited. It was attendance based, which enabled peer-to-peer learning, built up a sense of camaraderie and mutual support, while also modelling a working environment and requiring high standards. The teaching was individualised and differentiated to make it effective for a range of learning styles and intended outcomes, with plenty of scope for supported, self-directed learning. There was also a high standard of pastoral care and individual support, meaning that people felt very supported.

Taken together, the delivery model represents a body of teaching and learner support practice that could be relevant to other contexts and programmes.
Employer Engagement

It seems that the project would have benefited from a greater focus on employer engagement, although the short project timescales would have made this challenging, and the Tech Partnership’s experience of employer consultation at the scoping stage suggests that interest may have been somewhat limited. With more time, there could have been scope to work more strategically with a greater number of companies with an interest in recruiting people into entry-level roles. This would also have generated valuable input to the evaluation, given that it was only possible to interview the three companies who had been involved in giving careers talks to learners.

‘Collateral Benefits’

There is always a danger that interventions of this type become over-focused on narrowly-specified outputs and outcomes, such as course completions, jobs and qualifications achieved. While these are clearly very important and have been the main focus of this report, we should not lose sight of the broader benefits of Digital Skills Scotland. We have already seen that the project has produced ‘collateral benefits’ above and beyond the original focus of getting people into tech jobs. Learners indicated that their new-found skills would also be used in helping friends and family, working in their community and in enterprise, for example. The confidence and personal wellbeing of people who have been unemployed for some time has also received a welcome boost in the process.
4. Conclusions

*Digital Skills Scotland* performed well in terms of its stated key performance measures: 7 out of 9 targets were met or exceeded, including learner satisfaction, which was very high at 98%. While only 54 learners completed the programme against a target of 60, the shortfall is relatively small. The volume of learners is high enough for meaningful learning and reflection, which is a key focus of such a developmental project. It is too soon to know whether the target for learners progressing into employment has been hit, but the current total of 27 people into jobs, against a target of 30, seems likely to increase. Delivery in Edinburgh did not provide the volumes of learner completions and progressions to employment that were originally expected. The possible reasons for this have been explored in section 3 of this report.

The project has had a positive impact in four ways:

1. Learners’ tech skills were clearly improved in a number of areas;
2. The project also improved people’s confidence significantly, both in terms of people’s feelings about being effective in the workplace and performing well in job interviews;
3. Many learners did progress into relevant employment after completing the programme; and
4. The project will deliver additional social impact beyond just improving people’s employment-related skills and job prospects: most learners will also apply their new skills to help family members and their local community, and some will use them in self-employment.

While it remains to be seen whether the target of 30 people into jobs will be fully achieved, it seems likely that performance overall would have been better had there been fewer delays and more time to deliver the project; if candidate recruitment in Edinburgh had been less challenging; and if employer engagement had been greater, with more firms keen to recruit people completing the programme.

Ahead of more information about employment outcomes becoming available and assuming that ‘deadweight’ is not an issue (as discussed in section 2.2 of this report), it seems likely that *Digital Skills Scotland* has potential to act as a ‘bridge’ for unemployed people to access Level 3 IT Apprenticeship jobs. In so doing it could also widen the talent pipeline for employers recruiting into a range of entry level IT-related jobs – not just help desk and web content management, as specified in the original project brief. This could be valuable in the event of policy drivers in Scotland making higher volumes of apprenticeships more desirable.

It also seems that people’s enhanced and certified tech capabilities, coupled with improved employability skills, could bring a wider range of opportunities – including non-tech roles - within reach, as evidenced by the 4 people who went into customer service roles.

The original project logic that a course like this can help people access IT support / help desk roles seems to have been validated to a great extent; the idea that it can connect people to web content management-related jobs does not.

YouTrain’s approach to delivering and assessing the programme seems to have worked very well, based on glowing testimony from the project’s very diverse population of learners. Although the required learner volumes were not quite achieved, the selection process does seem to have largely got suitable people onto the programme. Delivery and assessment worked well, and was such that different learner needs could be met and participants were generally enthusiastic and appreciative of the support – often very individual – that they received.

The project would have benefitted from a greater focus on engaging employers, although delays and tight delivery timescales militated against this somewhat, and this seems to have been a
challenge going back to the project scoping stage too. It would also have benefitted from a longer period of time being available to develop and deliver the project, and to engage with employers, given that employer engagement is usually seen as a long-term process.

The Future

The kind of approach embodied in Digital Skills Scotland does seem to have the potential to be applied elsewhere, especially given the success of similar work in Wales. While mainstream public funding could be very challenging to secure in the current climate, it could be the kind of intervention that would be well suited to responses to largescale redundancy programmes in specific areas, for example, or in local areas where there are especially acute skills shortages or high levels of unemployment. Similarly, as one stakeholder pointed out, structural economic factors like increased automation could in future increase the need for people of all ages and from all sorts of work and educational backgrounds to retrain and change career.

Employment outcomes generated by the project suggest that there could also be a role for an offer that serves to ‘bridge the gap’ for people wanting to do IT Apprenticeships but lacking some of the tech and employability skills, and industry certifications that employers value. This might become especially important if there were a policy drive in Scotland to increase Apprenticeship volumes.

If the approach embodied in Digital Skills Scotland gained traction, there could be value in widening its scope to meet other employer needs. Stakeholders suggested that possible subject areas might include other vendor qualifications, digital media and cybersecurity. Learners suggested that a Linux element be added, given that a lot of big companies use it. It may even be possible for there to be a ‘pick and mix’ approach based on known employer needs in a given area.

Options for Sustainability

Securing ongoing funding for a programme like Digital Skills Scotland is likely to be challenging in the current climate. However, it is possible that the following approaches could be explored further with the relevant organisations:

1. Offering the Digital Skills Scotland approach to local task forces charged with developing local responses to large-scale redundancy programmes, as and when these arise. It is possible, for example, that major relocations of operations from the UK to mainland Europe could drive a need for such initiatives in the medium term.

2. In the shorter term, there is potential for the Digital Skills Scotland approach to be replicated in local and regional employability and skills initiatives funded with European monies.

3. National policy may provide further appropriate ‘funding levers’ that could potentially be relevant to a wider roll out of the Digital Skills Scotland approach. The UK’s new Industrial Policy, which was the subject of a Green Paper in January 2017, for example, places a strong emphasis on addressing skills shortages faced by employers. An approach like that embodied in Digital Skills Scotland could be promoted as a method of helping to address

---

the well-documented skills shortages in tech through local and regional initiatives using funding that may flow from the final Strategy.

4 Given the apparent effectiveness of the approach in enabling employment outcomes, it is also possible that an offer based on Digital Skills Scotland could be made available on a self-funding basis to more wealthy individuals who are able to pay. If employer support can be secured (see 5 below), it may be possible to offer funded, subsidised or re-funded (once someone is employed) places, making it more accessible to poorer individuals.

5 The approach could also potentially be developed as a recruitment and workforce planning aid to employers facing skills shortages and needing to recruit into entry-level roles and ‘grow their own’ by developing people with potential who start in entry-level roles. One the labour supply side, the offer could be packaged as a ‘tech taster’ to people who would not otherwise consider tech roles, broadening the pool of potential recruits for companies in the process.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings it is recommended that:

1 The good practice developed in the Digital Skills Scotland model is disseminated more widely, given that adoption of such practices could have a positive impact on other employability schemes and tech skills and employment initiatives.

2 The potential for a new ‘pre-apprenticeship’ programme, based on the Digital Skills Scotland model is explored with the relevant stakeholders and employers, given the apparent potential to improve access to apprentice tech jobs by those who otherwise might not consider the opportunities or have the relevant skills to be considered.

3 That further development of the Digital Skills Scotland model is explored with employers, given that it appears that embedding employers more in the programme would improve outcomes and increase impact, and make it possible to consider how the tech skills sets involved could potentially be broadened into new areas.
Annex 1: Depth Interview Participants

Our thanks to all who participated in depth interviews were conducted between late November 2016 and mid-January 2017.

Employers

> Brian Ferrie, Edge Testing
> Ian Foreshaw, Amazon
> Jamie Laing, FanDuel

Course participants

> Kenny Baxter
> Shaun Coghill
> Kieron Heron
> John Hewitt
> Murry Ilgunas
> Lisa McLean
> Lauren Moy
> Martin Parker
> Ross Russell
> Jeff Simonson
> Lorraine Welsh

Project stakeholders

> Anne Douglas, YouTrain
> Louise Findlay, YouTrain
> Joanne Laing, Tech Partnership Representative in Scotland
> Mhairi Quinn, YouTrain
> Caroline Stuart, Chair of Tech Partnership's Scotland Board
> Helen West, Tech Partnership
Annex 2: Course Marketing Materials and Slides from Course Introduction Presentation

YouTrain is delighted to offer you Digital Skills Training Programme in association with the Tech Partnership.

Want to start work this year?
Get your CV ready today!
YouTrain’s IT training courses will help you get into your first job or move to a new one!

SUPPORT & OPPORTUNITIES

- 26 weeks part-time cohort programmes within 3 months
- 3 hours per week
- 100% free, no additional costs
- No employment guarantees
- Your existing qualifications will be considered

LOCATION

Programmes in 15 areas across 3 programmes:
- Dorset
- Hampshire
- Wiltshire

- The funding from the £3 billion, £1 billion will be used to support your unemployment status.
- You are the key to this training.
- We are looking for people who are serious about learning and who will support the programme.

Programme details:
- Digital Skills: Microsoft Office Specialist +
  - 40 hours
  - £240

- CompTIA Fundamentals certification:
  - 50 hours
  - £240

- Full programme: 250 hours
  - £900

- AND that's not all...
- You will also have access to a range of IT skills and our continued support with job searching to help you find your ideal job.

Every Programme Features:
- Digital skills certification
- Microsoft Office Specialist
- CompTIA Fundamentals certification
- An Introduction to HTML, CSS, & Content Management Systems
- Additional industry experience

Some of the Companies We Work With:
- Talon
- REVO-IT
- PCR
- NORTON FRASER
- EMERSON PAUL
- AQUARIUS
- SOFTPLC
- LC
- NCR
- BURBERRY

START YOUR TECH CAREER NOW!
YOUR FUTURE IS WAITING. GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUTRAIN TO FIND OUT MORE

TOLL-FREE: 01765 470 416 | enquiries@youtrain.com | www.youtrain.com
INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL SKILLS PROGRAMME

YouTrain Ltd

A JOINT COLLABORATION WITH THE TECH PARTNERSHIP AND JP MORGAN

OBJECTIVE – TO HELP YOU FIND EMPLOYMENT USING YOUR DIGITAL SKILLS
- CompTIA IT Fundamentals (Helpdesk) / Web Technologies (Marketing)

4 – 5 week programme

Employment outcomes were verified by either:
- Verbal or written confirmation (email) from learner
- JobTrain confirmation of successful interview process
- Reference requests - verbal and written

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Number</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Employment Confirmation Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>employment secured through JobTrain interview opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Helpdesk</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ralph Lauren</td>
<td>verbal confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Santander</td>
<td>verbal confirmation and written reference request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>employment secured through JobTrain interview opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Helpdesk Analyst</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Standard Life</td>
<td>employment secured through JobTrain interview opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My Server Guy</td>
<td>employment secured through JobTrain interview opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teleperformance</td>
<td>verbal confirmation and written reference request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boots</td>
<td>verbal confirmation and written reference request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ICS Learn</td>
<td>employment secured through JobTrain interview opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Slug and Lettuce</td>
<td>verbal confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ECM Core</td>
<td>employment secured through JobTrain interview opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Support Key</td>
<td>employment secured through JobTrain interview opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scotmid</td>
<td>verbal confirmation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**:
- 63% (17 out of 27) went into Helpdesk / Marketing roles following completion of programme
- A further 15% moved into clearly defined IT roles
- Total of 78% of candidates who moved into employment moved into IT roles (22 / 27)
- 22% moved into roles outwith IT