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| **ACCESS TO INDUSTRY****ENCOMPASS PROJECT****MID-TERM REVIEW** |

**SMART CONSULTANCY**

**APRIL 2019**

1. **Introduction and process**

This report provides a mid-point review of progress on Access to Industry’s EnCompass Project. This started in April 2017, and is currently funded for a 4 year period by Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP), Edinburgh Council’s Economy service, and Edinburgh Council’s Criminal Justice Service and the until the end of March 2021.

The review was a short and focused exercise based around 3 sets of discussions held in early April 2019. These were:

* a workshop with wider project stakeholders (listed in appendix 3);
* a discussion with 3 EnCompass staff delivering the project (listed in appendix 3);
* a mix of group and 1:1 discussions with 11 participants on the project, and 1 previous participant now volunteering to support the photography class.

In addition, a front-end briefing discussion with Access to Industry management was held, and a range of key background project documents and performance data was reviewed.

This report is short and focused as requested in the CCP brief.

1. **EnCompass programme – summary and context**

The EnCompass project provides a range of supports to people with one or a combination of issues that present challenges to progressing in the labour market. it is based on delivering a flexible and person-centred series of supports that recognises barriers can be either therapeutic or holistic in nature. Its core elements include a series of 1:1 supports and access to a range of classes provides within Access to Industry’s Community College and delivered by College tutors. Individual participants have flexible access to this menu, based on assessment of their needs and aspirations. They are also connected as appropriate to other relevant supports provided by partner agencies. Aftercare support is also provided to project participants.

Further details of the delivery model are contained in appendix 1.

The average annual cost of the project in the initial 2 year period was £238,968, with partner funding contributions as follows:

Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership - £88,652

Edinburgh City Council Economy - £84,180

Edinburgh City Council Criminal Justice Service - £66,136

1. **Review observations**

***Project relevance and fit***

The design and approach of the EnCompass project was developed from and remains very relevant to both the Edinburgh and Scottish policy context. It is cross cutting in its impact, advancing in particular the aspirations of employability, addictions, housing, criminal justice and health policies. It predates but very directly advances the Scottish Government’s ‘No-one Left Behind’ strategy – which specifically calls for improved integration between the employability, criminal justice, housing and health agendas. In this sense, EnCompass was a pioneering practical example of what is now a national policy direction.

The project is also a good example of the types of activities which help the aspirations for ‘inclusive growth’ which increasingly dominate the Scottish and local strategy context. As new economic opportunities emerge in Edinburgh, EnCompass seeks to ensure improved access to these for a group of people who would most likely be excluded – potentially giving them a ‘stake’ in developments which otherwise would have no relevance to them.

EnCompass is also directly relevant to the work of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, and should seek recognition as good practice in addressing many of the issues the Commission is addressing.

***Project design and delivery***

The design and delivery of EnCompass are strong. The model is well developed, and has benefitted from, and built upon, the learning and legacy of AI’s earlier programmes, and the expertise and experience the company had developed through these. It is an approach rooted in a good understanding of the policy context summarised above – that if we really want to ‘include’ previously ‘excluded’ people we need to start from where they are (not where we’d like them to be), recognise the need to understand and address a range of issues in their lives, and stick with them to get desired and sustained outcomes.

Particular strengths of the model are:

* the flexible nature of the project – enabling people to engage as best suits their circumstances at any particular time. The reality of varied engagement levels was apparent from participant consultations;

* the speed of response by EnCompass – with a recognition that ‘seizing the moment’ is often critical in engaging people. One participant noted that he had actually started on a class in which he expressed an interest on the same day he visited for the first time. The project does not operate a waiting list;
* the range of supports offered is varied and well respected – in addition these can change over time in response to demand. Within this, recognition of the need to balance employability and therapeutic supports is important to offering the holistic support package required;
* open ended engagement and the opportunity to re-engage – this again reflects and responds to the reality of the circumstances of many of the people EnCompass seeks to work with;
* an approach which seeks to engage with anyone in recovery and expressing an interest – with the recognition most people will ‘self-select’ if they want to stay involved
* a good balance of city centre delivery with connections to local networks
* the use of peer workers, commonly people who have previously participated in EnCompass or other AI projects

But of equal importance to the model is the commitment, quality, and expertise of the people delivering EnCompass. This includes directly employed AI staff and the tutors from Edinburgh College. Repeatedly the review consultations noted this, and its importance. This is about what staff do and how they do it. It is a critical strength of the project, which needs to be continually nurtured.

***Project targeting***

The project is clearly engaging with a wide and varied group of participants – in terms of issues faced, circumstances, initial aspirations, and age. This is reflected in the referral data contained in appendix 2. Whilst criminal justice is the main referrals source, substance misuse, and Jobcentre Plus referrals are significant. A further 10 referral routes with smaller numbers are also identified. These referral routes, and the participant discussions within this review, strongly evidence that EnCompass is reaching a challenging group of people that are often not engaged with traditional employability projects.

Referrals directly from homelessness routes are, however, relatively low. This is despite significant project effort to engage people through contacts and presentations at hostels and homeless units. These have not led to increased project referrals at this stage. There may be a number of reasons for this, notably concerns with the benefits implications of participating in an ‘employability’ project. Getting to participants at the right time in their housing ‘journey’ may also matter. Project staff continue to work on these issues with relevant housing agencies.

It should also be noted, however, that there may be some overplaying of this issue due to the recording of a ‘dominant’ referral point or presenting issue. The reality is that many people engaging through other routes may also have a housing related issue. For example, the project review report for the last quarter of year 1 noted that 23% of participants cited that they had ‘accommodation issues’.

***Partnership development and linkages***

The project is supported by a steering group which primarily includes representatives of the funding partners. The group has been in place prior to the project and is based around co-design principles. This ensures all of the key cross cutting issues are represented, and the fact that funding is supplied from a range of sources further embeds genuine partnership working. The funding partners engaged in the review process were all comfortable that the rationale for their investments were confirmed through practical project operation to date.

At an operational level, the relationship with Edinburgh College staff is strong, and EnCompass staff network with a wide range of agencies and organisations which also address the same issues participants face. This networking has benefitted greatly from the well-established position of AI has established through many years of service delivery in Edinburgh.

Two areas of potential weaknesses in networking and the project’s ability to signpost participants to wider service supports were specialist benefits advice and access to counselling. The former was difficult to source, whilst waiting lists for counselling were often a problem. These are issues for partners beyond a sole focus on EnCompass.

***Performance, targets, and recording mechanisms***

Full recorded performance data for the initial 2 years of EnCompass operation is contained in appendix 3. This clearly highlights that the project’s performance against the targets set is generally very strong. This includes engagement levels, and a range of progressions within the Strategic Skills pipeline. On almost all measures the performance of the project exceeds initial expectations, and in a number of areas by a very significant margin. Encouragingly these trends have largely been sustained in year 2 of operation.

It should be noted that these are **employability** focused outcomes, and the importance of this is central to confirming the logic of the EnCompass model. The project: is premised on not pushing too directly on these harder outcomes; engages a very challenging group; recognises therapeutic supports as of equal weight to those directly related to employability; does not set time limits on participant engagement and enables re-engagement; and enables flexibility on engagement intensity. These are all factors that many traditional employability interventions would consider barriers to realising a strong ‘hard outcome’ performance. This is a significant, and in ways a surprising finding. As well as being greatly to the credit of the EnCompass project, it may also have implications for a range of other inclusion focused employability interventions currently operating.

1. **Participant reflections**

The review process included a combination of group and 1:1 discussions with a total of 12 participants – 9 men and 3 women. It was clear from the personal descriptions of their backgrounds that the project was engaging with a very wide range of people with varied challenges and starting points.

**‘I’ve not come across any support like this before – it sort of sits in the middle of my life, helping me deal with my health issues whilst also helping me think about getting back into work’**

***Encompass Participant***

Key feedback from the discussions was:

* all the participants were very positive about the project, and were very vocal on how much it had helped them;
* specific benefits cited were increased confidence; improved management of conditions (notably addictions); the development of transferable skills; and the development of some routine. All suggested they were now significantly more confident about the future;
* participants felt they were in control of how they participated in the project, and that their individual needs were addressed;
* the flexibility of engagement levels was appropriate – some participants engage a lot (In part to fill their day), others less frequently. Some combined EnCompass attendance with other supports and services they were involved with;
* the range and balance of supports were considered positive – with both the 1:1 support and the classes very valued;
* delivery of the classes in the AI premises was important – a number of people indicated they would not have gone to a formal College setting for these. The nature of classes was also good – in reality they combined a group session with lots of 1:1 support;

**‘All the staff are great – they know things and are always encouraging you’**

***Encompass Participant***

* gaining accreditation was considered challenging but very valuable – it could be a great motivation and led to a sense of satisfaction when achieved;
* the social aspects of the project were also important – this helps further with confidence and addresses isolation. It was also for something that could help people consider getting a job more, as this interaction was nearer to a work setting;

* initial employability expectations and aspirations on joining the project varied – some saw this as a key reason why they engaged, others noted it was ‘not really on the radar’ at the start. Most have now got clear employability related aspirations – though for many these were still recognised as some way in the future
* comments on the staff were extremely positive – both the AI staff and the Edinburgh College tutors. This was about both the style and the substance of support received

**‘Quite frankly, if I hadn’t found out about this project I probably wouldn’t still be around!’**

***Encompass Participant***

**‘My confidence had gone completely – it’s coming back, but I’ve still a way to go’**

***Encompass Participant***

* all participants had no regrets on joining the project and had enjoyed the experience. All said they would recommend it to others, and more than half already had

1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

**Conclusions**

The headline conclusion of this review is that the first 2 years of EnCompass operation have been very successful. The strategic relevance of the project is strong and increasing, recorded performance is good (and on some indicators well in excess of initial targets), and the delivery model is well suited to participant needs. It has successfully addressed the much needed ‘bridge’ that maximises the connection between the inclusion and employability agendas. The project is supported by a strongly committed, skilled, and experienced staff team with clear and supportive leadership.

These observations are based on recorded performance and a range of consultations with stakeholders and staff. But most importantly they were entirely confirmed and reinforced in the discussions with project participants. It is difficult to overstate how consistently positive their comments were on how EnCompass was positively affecting - and for many transforming - their lives. And of equal significance, for a group of people who candidly admitted they had been starting from some very difficult circumstances.

**Recommendations**

In this context, the review does not suggest any significant future changes in future project operation.

In terms of **delivery**, the one key area is to revisit the relatively low incidence of people being referred directly from housing/homelessness sources. Improved access to specialist benefits advice, and quicker access for participants to counselling supports, would also be of value. But these are issues that require wider consideration by partners beyond the EnCompass project itself.

In **management** terms, closely monitoring engagement levels will be important. The popularity of the project is clearly a major strength; this is reflective of the quality of the service offer, and the speed with which supports are put in place for people joining. To date, the data highlights EnCompass has been good at accommodating higher than anticipated demand, but this logically must have its limits.

In **recording** terms the information collected and presented by Access to Industry is good and meets the requirements of funders. But in itself, it perhaps fails to tell the whole story of quite what the project is achieving. This is not in any way a criticism, is not uncommon, and is difficult. For example, it is not straightforward to capture in data the massive significance of a participant suggesting engagement with EnCompass probably ‘saved his life’. Many other participants consulted talked about the project and what they were getting from involvement as truly transformational. All ways to fully and consistently communicate this need to be explored – case study preparation should continue, and any other ways to capture people’s stories maximised. The use of the ‘Outcome Star’ system in collaboration with the ADP has stalled, and may be worth re-visiting. The project is also likely to be saving very significant amounts of money and reducing pressures on other public services. This is difficult to measure, but would merit applying some form of Social Return on Investment analysis.

In **strategic/funding** terms, the funding partners should fully recognise and consider the implications of the wise investments they are making in EnCompass. Maximising certainty and continuity in the longer term will secure many of the project’s key strengths. Partners should reflect on the procurement options to do this as soon as practical.

**David Smart**

**24th April 2019**

**Appendix 1 – EnCompass delivery model**

The EnCompass service delivery model is summarised in the diagram below.



The EnCompass project provides support as required at all stages of the Edinburgh Strategic Skills Pipeline through the following approach:



By pipeline stage, specific supports include:

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| --- | --- |
| **ESS****Pipeline**  | **Employability Service** |
| **1** | **Initial contact**: Referrals will be either individual or group in either Community or City Centre setting – to alleviate potential anxiety/confidence issues caused by unfamiliar settings. **Groupwork**: An alternative route to engagement and a ‘soft entry’ to wider services.**Assessment**: Key client/caseworker relationship building that provides an understanding of individual needs client insight into their own barriers.**Action & Care Plan**: Tailored to meet both employability and personal barriers. A baseline will be informed by use of Outcome Star and targets will set. Regular reviews will assess progress and identify further goals. |
| **2** | **Groupwork**: Building skills in time keeping; attendance; and confidence building through attendance in training.**1-1support**: Monthly Action Plan reviews of employability progression and barrier removal using Outcome Star. |
| **3** | **Community College**: Participation in core and skills based training and classes.**Employability**: Criminal record disclosure techniques, mock interviews, and college & work place visits will build towards volunteering; work placement; and external training.  |
| **4** | **Progression**: At near completion of employability goals, and at a stable stage in their recovery, intense weekly support towards an outcome.  |
| **5** | **Aftercare 1-1 support**: Contact to help maintain pastoral support in progression and recovery.  |

The project’s approach to progression is based upon a Recovery Orientated System of Care ensuring that the provision of wider services is as important as employability support. Consequently, a complimentary therapeutic service also provides the following supports:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Therapeutic** | **Support provided** |
| **Maintaining recovery**: | In-house groups: SMART, Edinburgh Leisure Gym and Walking Group. |
| **Improve Wellbeing**: | Wellbeing courses: Live Life to the Full (NHS course designed to improve mental health); mindfulness; yoga; and organic gardening.  |
| **Community Mental Health Support**: | Referral to NHS services including psychological and psychiatric support. |
| **Clinical Mental Health Support**: | Referral to counselling, spot purchase of mental health counselling services. |
| **Signposting**: | Wellbeing activity offered through other agencies and providers: mutual aid meetings; community support groups, ESOL programmes. |

**Appendix 2 – Performance data April 2017 to March 2019**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2017/18** | **2018/19** |
|  | **Total** | **%** | **Total**  | **%** |
|
| Criminal Justice/Prison | 90 | 38 | 116 | 48 |
| Self-Referral | 33 | 14 | 34 | 14 |
| Substance Misuse | 31 | 13 | 57 | 24 |
| Jobcentre | 25 | 10 | 5 | 2 |
| other | 19 | 8 | 10 | 4 |
| Hostels | 11 | 4 | 12 | 5 |
| Word of Mouth | 10 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Health and wellbeing | 7 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| SDS | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| School | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| College | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Social Work (non-Criminal Justice) | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Social Care | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Totals** | **239** | **100** | **242** | **100** |

**Engagements, outputs and outcomes**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Measure**  | **Target 2017/18** | **Actual****2017/18**  | **Variance**  | **Target 2018/19**  | **Actual 2018/19** | **Variance**  | **Target 2017-19**  | **Actual 2017/19** | **Variance**  |
| Number of new people engaged | 240 | 325 | +85 | 240 | 242 | 2 | 480 | 567 | +87 |
| Number of people going into work (sustained to 4 weeks) | 30 | 27 | -3 | 30 | 29 | -1 | 60 | 56 | -4 |
| Number of people achieving sustained progressions\* | 86 | 123 | +37 | 86 | 208 | +122 | 172 | 331 | +159 |
| **Types of Outcome Progressions Stage 4** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Jobs Sustained 13 wks | 20 | 25 | +5 | 20 | 17 | -3 | 40 | 42 | +2 |
| FE Sustained 13 wks | 18 | 33 | +15 | 18 | 38 | +20 | 36 | 71 | +35 |
| Employability Trg sustained | 18 | 55 | +37 | 18 | 124 | +106 | 36 | 179 | +143 |
| **Progression sub total** | **56** | **113** | **+59** | **56** | **179** | **+123** | **112** | **292** | **+180** |
| Jobs (4 weeks) - as above | 30 | 27 | -3 | 30 | 29 | -1 | 60 | 56 | -4 |
| **Stage 4 progression Total** | **86** | **140** | **+54** | **86** | **208** | **+122** | **172** | **348** | **+176** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Types of Output Progressions Stage 3** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Qualifications achieved | 65 | 63 | -2 | 65 | 144 | +79 | 130 | 207 | +77 |
| FE starts | 25 | 44 | +17 | 25 | 44 | +19 | 50 | 88 | +38 |
| Training Starts | 45 | 100 | +55 | 45 | 117 | +72 | 90 | 217 | +127 |
| Work Placements | 5 | 1 | -4 | 5 | 1 | -4 | 10 | 2 | -8 |
| Volunteering | 5 | 2 | -3 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 10 | 7 | -3 |
| **Stage 3 Progression Total** | **145** | **208** | **+63** | **145** | **306** | **+161** | **290** | **282** | **+8** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Types of Output Progressions Stage 2** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Participation in group-work | 200 | 1911 | +1,711 | 200 | 2920 | +2720 | 400 | 4,831 | +4,431 |
| **Stage 2 Progression Total** | **200** | **1911** | **+1,711** | **200** | **2920** | **+2720** | **400** | **4,831** | **+4,431** |

**Appendix 3 – review consultees**

***Stakeholder workshop***

Kate Kelman – Capital City Partnership

Mark Phillips – Access to Industry

Adele Hill – Access to Industry

Stacey Cuthbertson – Capital City Partnership

Erin Keeley-Messier – Access to Industry

David Williams – Edinburgh ADP

Susie Donkin – Economic Development and Talent Service, Edinburgh City Council

Carey Fuller – Criminal Justice Service, Edinburgh City Council

***EnCompass delivery staff***

Yasmin Bernard

Ali Davison

Magda Marciniak

Many thanks to all of the above and the 12 project participants for their inputs and time, and their preparedness to talk honestly about the project and their experiences. This was invaluable. The views expressed in this report are, however, fully the responsibility of Smart Consultancy.