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Maritime SuperSkills - Final Evaluation

A Final Report by Hatch Regeneris
22 August 2019



The MSS project is part funded by ESF

Liverpool John Moores University

Maritime SuperSkills - Final Evaluation

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1. Purpose of Report

Background

- 1.1 Maritime SuperSkills (MSS) is an ESF funded project funded under Priority Axis 2 (Skills for Growth) which aims to support employer led Trailblazer groups to develop new apprenticeship standards in maritime and to establish training pathways for Liverpool City Region (LCR) residents to progress their career within the local maritime sector.
- 1.2 The project has been designed and led by Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) and has been supported by Mersey Maritime (the local employer representative body for Merseyside's maritime sector) and four local training providers (Port Academy Liverpool (PAL) at Hugh Baird College, Wirral Met, The Engineering College (TEC) and the Northern Logistics Academy (NLA) at St Helens College).
- 1.3 Hatch Regeneris was appointed to carry out an independent evaluation of the project. This has been carried out in two phases:
 - A mid-term evaluation which reviewed the progress that had been made at the mid-way point of the project, and made recommendations for the remaining part of the delivery period. This was published in August 2018.
 - A final evaluation which assesses whether the project met its original objectives and what the impact of the project has been. This is the focus of this report.
- 1.4 The final evaluation has not revisited certain elements which were covered at length in the mid-term evaluation (e.g. a critical analysis of the project design and its consistency with policy priorities). Therefore, both the mid-term review and final evaluation reports should be read in conjunction with each other.

Scope of this evaluation

- 1.5 The final evaluation provides the following:
 - A review of progress and activities
 - Analysis of whether the project met its original targets, including all financial, output and result indicators.
 - Analysis of the effectiveness of project implementation to build a picture of how the project was delivered and managed and what has worked well and less well.
 - Analysis of feedback from employers involved in the Trailblazer process and from those Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) who were engaged to raise awareness of apprenticeships in the maritime sector.
 - Conclusions on whether the project has met its original objectives.
 - Recommendations for partners and stakeholders when considering the legacy of the MSS project and how its achievements can be built upon.
- 1.6 At this stage, two of the standards developed through MSS have been fully approved and are available for delivery, although these were only approved recently (May 2019 for Marine Technical Superintendent and July 2019 for Marine Surveyor). Therefore, at this stage it is too early to assess the take-up of the new standards and the potential economic impact of the project, which might take some time to emerge. However, we do analyse the critical factors which will determine the scale of impact and what stakeholders could do to maximise this.

Methodology

1.7 The final-term evaluation has involved the following tasks:

- Analysis of project performance data including outputs, results and project expenditure.
- Interviews with members of the project management and delivery team, the lead employers from each of the Trailblazer groups and a range of stakeholders (a full list of interviewees is provided in Appendix B).
- Online surveys of all those employers who participated in the Trailblazers and those SMEs who were engaged by the project to raise awareness of apprenticeships.

Structure of Report

1.8 The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a brief review of activity since the mid-term review.
- Section 3 reviews whether the project has met its original targets for outputs, results and financial expenditure by analysing project performance data.
- Section 4 considers whether the project has been successful in developing new apprenticeship standards for the maritime sector.
- Section 5 assesses the progress made towards establishing training pathways for Liverpool City Region residents to progress their career in maritime.
- Section 6 focuses on the employer engagement activity carried out by the project and whether MSS has had any impact on maritime employers' approach to training
- Section 7 assesses the achievements of the project in relation to outreach with local schools and inspiring more young people to pursue a career in maritime.
- Section 8 draws together the analysis and outlines the conclusions which can be drawn from the evaluation.
- Section 9 presents the key lessons and recommendations for future interventions.

2. Project Design

- 2.1 The mid-term evaluation provided a full critique of the intervention logic and delivery model of the MSS project. This is not repeated here; however, we provide a brief recap on the original rationale and objectives of the project, and the different strands of activity which have been delivered. This provides the context for the rest of the evaluation.

Context and Rationale

- 2.2 The MSS project was designed against the backdrop of ambitious targets from central government to increase the quantity and quality of apprenticeships. It introduced reforms to improve the quality of apprenticeships by replacing all of the old apprenticeship frameworks with new standards. These new apprenticeship standards would relate to specific occupations and would be developed by groups of employers known as Trailblazer groups.
- 2.3 LJMU, which already offered a number of degree courses relevant to maritime, recognised a gap in the availability of higher and degree apprenticeships for the ports and maritime sector. The MSS project was designed to address this by identifying where the gaps are and forming Trailblazer groups to develop the new standards. In parallel, LJMU would work with a number of local FE colleges and training providers (delivery partners) to map and develop progression pathways from Levels 3 and 4 through to the new higher and degree level apprenticeships. This would ensure training provision in LCR is aligned with the needs of the maritime sector, and that there are clear progression routes for learners.

Objectives

- 2.4 The MSS project had the following objectives:
- To create a professional and technical skills progression pipeline (Levels 4 to 7) in key occupations aligned to local growth sectors (primarily SuperPort)
 - To implement national policy in response to local need, and to improve the pace and take-up of higher and degree apprenticeships in the LCR
 - To address the widening skills gap in the LCR compared to the national average by building the capacity of both maritime focused employers and training providers to respond.

National vs Local Focus

- 2.5 Before describing the types of activities delivered by MSS, there is value in noting some tension between the national and local elements of this project. This was only covered briefly in the mid-term evaluation, however in our view it has been a challenge for the project and has implications for how similar interventions could be designed in future.
- 2.6 The original design of the project was intended to be a local solution to address a national need. While it recognised that apprenticeship standards need to be nationally relevant, the project aimed to maximise the involvement of local employers in the Trailblazer process. In practice, this was quite challenging for a number of reasons:
- The project was developing degree level apprenticeships, which are quite specialised and in a number of cases only likely to be employed by large organisations. It would therefore be a challenge to find large numbers of employers (particularly SMEs) to participate in the Trailblazers.

- It was originally intended that Mersey Maritime would draw upon their networks to recruit local employers. However, their involvement in the project was limited, meaning the PM had to rely on developing her own networks.
 - Two of the standards that were developed (Marine Surveyor and Harbour Master) were pre-existing Trailblazer groups that had been established in other parts of the country. These two groups therefore had limited representation of LCR employers (one in each group). In contrast, the Marine Technical Superintendent (MTS) group, which was established by the MSS project, secured the involvement of five local employers.
- 2.7 This meant that a large proportion of the core activities of the project (developing apprenticeship standards) involved working with employers from all over the country rather than LCR (particularly in the Harbour Master and Marine Surveyor groups)
- 2.8 This had knock-on effects on the more local elements of the project. For instance, it was intended that FE delivery partners would develop the progression pathways, which lead to degree level apprenticeships, by meeting with local employers in the Trailblazer meetings. This would have the added benefit that local employers and training providers would get to know each other and establish working relationships. However, consultees noted that the low representation of LCR employers on some of the Trailblazer groups may have weakened the incentive for delivery partners to attend.
- 2.9 The low representation of LCR employers also weakened the link with the local demand stimulation activities of the project. It was intended that by involving local employers in the Trailblazer process it would help to raise awareness of apprenticeships and that the participating employers would sign up a higher or degree level apprentice on one of the new standards. However, the low number of employers from LCR meant that the project was more reliant on the parallel awareness raising activities to stimulate demand.
- 2.10 It could be argued that the MSS project has therefore been delivering two projects in tandem:
- A national project focused on developing new standards for the maritime sector, requiring LJMU to work with employers from all over the country (albeit a number of these are from LCR).
 - A local project in the LCR focused on ensuring FE provision is more aligned with the needs of the maritime sector, while simultaneously raising awareness of apprenticeships among maritime employers.
- 2.11 Overall, we believe the MSS project has adapted well to this, however it has presented additional challenges compared to the original, intended approach which was for greater involvement of LCR employers.

Project activities

- 2.12 The project has delivered the following activities to meet the objectives:
- **Development of new standards and assessment plans:** this has been the core activity of the project. A dedicated Project Manager (PM) was appointed to identify which standards need to be developed, convene the Trailblazer groups and facilitate the process set out by the IFA from start to finish¹.
 - **Curriculum development:** in parallel to the development of the standards, the role of the four FE partners was to review their own provision in light of the new standards

¹ It was originally intended that the PM would be supported in this task by Mersey Maritime. However, in practice Mersey Maritime had very little involvement in this activity and the work was led by the PM.

and feedback from employers, identify gaps and develop new curriculums at Level 3 and 4.

- **Employer engagement:** employer engagement activities were focused on raising awareness of the apprenticeships which are available to SMEs in LCR's maritime cluster. This included a mix of events and direct one to one approaches to employers. It was originally intended that Mersey Maritime would play this role, however in practice it has been delivered by an employer engagement officer (see mid term evaluation).
- **Careers information and outreach work:** as part of their work developing the pipeline for the new standards, LJMU and delivery partners recognised the need for outreach work to stimulate interest in the maritime sector among young people and raise awareness of the career options available to young people. This has included working with a local primary school to arrange visits to the maritime simulators at the University, attending school career events and preparing curriculum materials.

2.13 This represents a wide range of activity, which aims to address both supply and demand-side challenges facing the maritime sector. Given the limited budget for the project (£738,800) there is a question as to whether the project set out to do too much with the resources available, and whether it would have been better to focus on one or two specific elements. However we recognise that it was necessary to design the project in this way in order to be consistent with the LCR Combined Authority (LCR CA)'s original call for projects.

2.14 The size of the project and its numerous strands also has implications for what the project could realistically achieve. Given that the majority of the budget was needed for the core activities of the project (developing apprenticeship standards), the project was only ever likely to achieve a modest change in employer awareness of apprenticeships or the careers choices of young people. Although again, we note that the targets set were proportionate and consistent with the call for projects.

3. Financial and Output Performance

- 3.1 This section provides an overview of the project in terms of contractual targets for expenditure, outputs and results, drawing upon monitoring data provided by LJMU.
- 3.2 The project had the following targets for output and results:
- 49 SMEs supported (output indicator CO23)
 - 38 SMEs completing employer engagement projects (result indicator R9)
- 3.3 As noted in the mid-term evaluation, these indicators only reflect the employer engagement activities of the project. A large proportion of the project's resources have been focused on developing the new apprenticeship standards, for which there are no suitable output or result indicators in the LCR's EU Structural Investment Funds strategy² or indeed in England's ESF Operational Programme. This largely reflects the innovative nature of this project and the fact this is the only example of where ESF has been used to fund the development of new apprenticeship standards. Therefore, the outputs do not reflect the progress that the project has made in terms of standards or curriculum development.

Performance against contractual ESF targets

- 3.4 Table 3.1 summarises the forecast financial and output performance of the project at the end of the delivery period and compares this with the adjusted target for the project. The original targets were adjusted due to the IFA timescales for developing standards being longer than anticipated. This also meant that the MSS project was able to develop more standards.

Table 3.1 Final expenditure and output performance			
	Targets	Achieved	% of profiled target
Revenue Expenditure (£,000)	738.8	644.4	87.3%
CO23: SMEs supported	49	51	104%
R9: SMEs completing employer engagement projects	38	39	102%

Source: LJMU. Note: expenditure and outputs for Q3 2019 has been forecast

Financial Performance

- 3.5 The table shows the project submitted claims for £644,400 of expenditure, which was £94,400 less than the project budget. A key reason for this was that some of the FE delivery partners did not submit any claims at all, while others only submitted partial claims. Cumulatively the lack of claims by the four FE delivery partners accounted for £72,400 of the total project underspend. LJMU also recorded a slight underspend (due to the period that the project was without an employer engagement and curriculum development officer) but still committed 97% of its budget.
- 3.6 As noted in the mid-term evaluation, the claims process appears to have presented a number of challenges for several of the delivery partners, most of whom had not previously delivered an ESF project and were therefore unfamiliar with the claims process and ESF requirements. We are satisfied that LJMU did everything they could to help colleges; the

² Although there was no specific output indicator directly related to the development of standards, the LCR CA's call for projects drew a link between this and the employer engagement activity

team hosted a number of claims clinics and made a number of visits to delivery partners to explain the process and to give them any assistance they require. However there appears to have been a lack of engagement by some partners' finance departments, while others were distracted by other issues such as college mergers, which meant they were too busy to familiarise themselves with ESF requirements.

- 3.7 It was also noted that the lack of claims by some of the delivery partners did not prevent them from playing an active role in the project. For instance, PAL was an active and highly engaged partner throughout the life of the project, but submitted claims for less than half of their allocated budget. Wirral Met did not submit any claims for their work on project but was also an active partner in the early stages. In other cases (e.g. TEC), the lack of claims reflects the fact that very limited activity was undertaken. This points to the importance of partner agreements being legally binding, with partner roles being made clear from the outset and agreed at a senior level.

Outputs and Results

- 3.8 The monitoring data shows the project team is forecasting a final figure of 51 CO23 and 39 R9, which will mean MSS surpasses both of its targets. This marks a significant improvement from the mid-term review, when the project had achieved only eight outputs and one result. Section 6 of the report identifies the factors which explain the change in performance, and analyses the feedback received from employers that have been engaged by the project.

4. Development of Apprenticeship Standards

4.1 This section assesses the success of the project in developing apprenticeship standards. This was the key focus of the project and is where the majority of resources have been allocated.

Key research questions

4.2 Key questions that we have set out to answer include:

- What have been the main achievements of the project, and was this in line with expectations? What has been its contribution to the training needs of the maritime sector?
- What has been the added value of MSS? Could the new standards have been developed without ESF funding?
- How effectively has the MSS project navigated the Trailblazer process and could anything have been done differently?
- What factors are likely to influence future impacts and what can be done to maximise future benefits?

Research Methods

4.3 The key research methods for this part of the research have included:

- consultations with steering group members and the lead employers from each of the three Trailblazer groups.
- An online survey of employers that participated in the Trailblazers. Invitations to complete the survey were sent to 26 employers in total, and we received responses from 14, representing a response rate of 50%.

Findings

What have been the main achievements of the project, and was this in line with the expectations for the project? What has been its contribution to the high-level training needs of the maritime sector?

4.4 Prior to the involvement of MSS, there were a very limited number of higher or degree level standards relevant to the ports or maritime sectors. As of July 2019, the MSS project has made significant progress towards the development of three higher or degree level standards:

- Marine Technical Superintendent (MTS, Level 7) which was approved for delivery in May 2019.
- Marine Surveyor (Level 6) which was approved for delivery in July 2019.
- Harbour Master (Level 6) which is awaiting approval of the end point assessment plan. Once this is approved this will also be available for delivery.

4.5 The project has also made initial progress with the development of a fourth standard (Naval Architect), although this is still in the early stages and MSS will not be able to see the

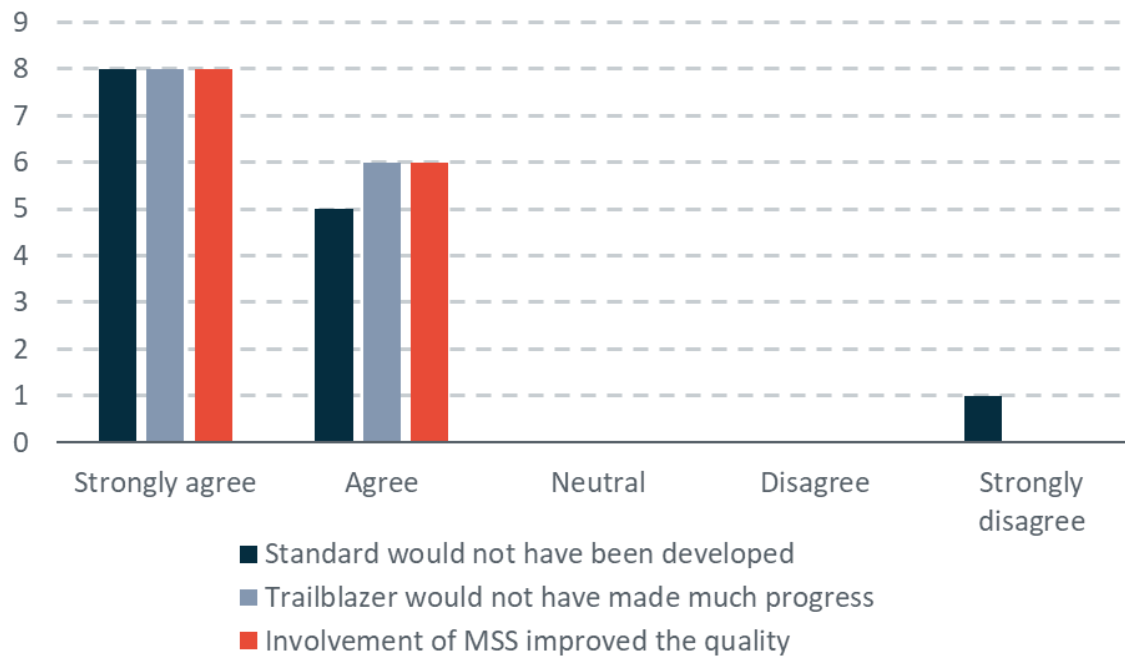
standard through to approval before the end of the delivery period. MSS also tried to make progress with two further standards (Ship Operations Manager and Port and Coastal Engineer) but these did not progress for reasons outside the MSS project's control.

- 4.6 Consultees from a range of organisations were very positive about the contribution the project has made to the maritime sector and its legacy. Although the project did not set itself specific targets for the number of standards it would develop, the progress it has made with the three standards was considered to be a significant achievement given the size of the project, and it would have been difficult for the project to have done more. A number noted that it has achieved a high profile within the sector. For example, the project was cited by Nusrat Ghani, the UK's Maritime Minister, at the 2019 Seaworks conference for the work it was doing to address the high-level skill needs of the sector.
- 4.7 Consultees also praised the ambition of the project and the fact that it had thoroughly explored the sector's need for new standards. They reported that it had successfully addressed all of the current gaps where it was feasible to do so (although other gaps may emerge in future). Key to its success is that it tapped in to the networks of the key organisations in the maritime sector from the outset. The steering group brought together a range of industry experts with good knowledge of industry needs. In particular, the chair of the steering group (the secretary for the Maritime Skills Alliance (MSA)) brought with him an excellent knowledge of apprenticeship developments in the sector, which allowed the PM and steering group to map progression pathways and identify the gaps.
- 4.8 The chair of the steering group also had extensive contacts within the sector which allowed him to plug the project in to the relevant networks. For instance, MSS took on the project management of the Marine Surveyor Trailblazer (which had been struggling to make progress) after the chair of the steering group attended one of the meetings and then introduced the lead employer to the PM of MSS.

What has been the added value of MSS? Could the new standards have been developed without ESF funding?

- 4.9 This question was explored as part of the mid-term evaluation, but is worth revisiting given that a large number of other Trailblazers have successfully developed apprenticeship standards without the need for public funding. It therefore raises questions about value for money i.e. whether ESF funding was really needed to develop the standards.
- 4.10 The mid-term evaluation gave a nuanced answer to this question: "*while there is a clear possibility that the standards could have been developed without the need for ESF support, there is no guarantee of this or how long it would have taken, which justified the need for the project*".
- 4.11 The feedback from survey respondents as part of this review suggest that MSS has been instrumental in progressing the standards, and that there is a high probability that at least two of the standards would not have been developed at all. Key findings include:
- All but one of the survey respondents agreed that with the statement: "*it is unlikely the apprenticeship standard would have been developed without the MSS Project*", with eight out of 14 respondents strongly agreeing with the statement. The only one who did not agree was from the Harbour Master group, who noted that the industry had already developed three ports related standards so it is likely that this one would have been approved given enough time.
 - All respondents agreed that "*the Trailblazer would not have made as much progress without the support of MSS*", with 57% strongly agreeing.
 - All respondents also agreed that MSS had improved the quality of the final standard, with 57% strongly agreeing.

Figure 4.1 Survey responses on the added value of MSS



Source Trailblazer employers survey, Hatch Regeneris

4.12 The survey also asked whether they knew of other organisations that could have led the process if the support from MSS had not been available. All but two of the responses either stated that they did not know of any, or that there are none. The other organisations suggested were as follows:

- An employer from the Marine Surveyor group stated that the Royal Institute of Naval Architects (RINA) or the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST) may have been able to lead the process with support from the Marine and Coastguard Agency (MCA) but noted that they are likely to have other priorities, do not have the required skillsets and would not have been able to develop the standards as quickly.
- A respondent from the Harbour Master group noted that the standard could have been developed by the same group that had developed other standards for ports and harbours, but that *“it would not have been developed anywhere near as quickly”*.

4.13 The survey findings were corroborated by the lead employers from each of the three Trailblazers, with key quotes including:

- *“We would not have got anywhere without Di. Her support was absolutely crucial”*
- *“We could not have done it on our own. It is a complicated process with strict requirements. I don’t think we would have got there if it wasn’t for Di and her team”*

4.14 Consultees highlighted a number of challenges which would have made it difficult for other organisations to lead the process:

- the administrative and bureaucratic burden that comes with Trailblazers which was cited as a key challenge in the maritime sector because of the large workloads of people that need to be involved (practitioners) and the tight profit margins.
- The added complexity that comes with developing higher and degree level apprenticeships.

- The small size and diversity of the sector, which means it is likely to be difficult to get trade bodies to lead the Trailblazer process
- A perceived unwillingness on behalf of large employers to spend time and money developing standards which will benefit the sector as a whole.

4.15 We therefore conclude there is strong chance that two of the standards would not have been developed without the support of MSS (MTS and Marine Surveyor). It is likely that Harbour Master would have been developed given enough time. However, the involvement of MSS has significantly reduced the timescales for developing all of the standards and also improved the quality of all three.

How effectively has the MSS project navigated the Trailblazer process and could anything have been done differently?

4.16 Table 4.1 shows the employers who responded to the survey reported the Trailblazer process has been managed well. Key points to note are:

- The Trailblazer groups had the right people round the table and could draw upon the relevant types of support.
- All participants felt listened to, and that they were able to influence the development of the standard. This has been a criticism of other Trailblazers which have been dominated by larger employers.
- There are high levels of satisfaction with the progress that has been made and with the quality of the standard which has been developed.

Table 4.1 Survey responses on the Trailblazer process

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral or don't know	Agree	Strongly agree	% who agreed
The employers in the group were representative	-	-		5	9	100%
The group could draw on expertise of professional bodies and trade associations.	-	1	-	5	8	93%
Group members had the right skills for the task	-	-	-	6	8	100%
Group members were committed to the process.	-	-	2	8	4	86%
The Trailblazer process and timescales were clearly explained	-	-	-	6	8	100%
The roles and responsibilities of the group were clear	-	-	1	8	5	93%
I felt like my views were listened to.	-	-	-	4	10	100%
I felt able to influence the development of the standard.	-	-	-	5	9	100%
There was adequate consultation on the standard with other maritime employers.	-	-	1	11	2	93%
I am satisfied with the progress which has been made.	-	-	-	6	8	100%
I am satisfied with the quality of the final standard and EPA.	-	-	-	5	9	100%

4.17 Respondents were also positive about the benefits of MSS leading the process and specifically the contribution of the PM (see Table 4.2). Key strengths of the PM which were noted in both consultations and survey responses included:

- Excellent project management skills, including organisation, tenacity, communication skills and always following up on actions.
- Her ability to learn new skills and knowledge quickly. She built a good understanding of the maritime sector despite having no prior involvement in the sector. But more importantly she quickly became familiar with the IFA processes, requirements and the language that were needed to get standards approved and was able to bring this to bear on the project.
- Her ability to involve all parties, to mediate and build consensus. This can be a challenge on Trailblazers with a range of employers, but the PM was able to ensure that each group was speaking as one mind.

4.18 The high calibre of the PM was noted several times as a critical success factor for the project and a key reason why the standards were developed so quickly³.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral or don't know	Agree	Strongly agree	% who agreed
The PM kept me updated on progress.	0	0	0	6	8	100%
The PM had the right skills and experience to facilitate the Trailblazer.	0	0	0	5	9	100%
The PM minimised the administrative and time burden on employers.	0	0	0	5	9	100%
MSS involvement made it easier to collaborate with other employers.	1	0	1	4	8	86%

Source: Trailblazer employers survey, Hatch Regeneris

What factors will influence future impacts and what can be done to maximise future benefits?

4.19 The development of the higher and degree apprenticeship standards are likely to lead to the following types of benefits:

- An increase in the skill levels of people who enroll on the apprenticeship, leading to an earnings premium over the working life of the apprentice⁴.
- An improvement in the productivity of the business that employs the apprentice. This can come about as a result of existing staff becoming better at their jobs and/or a reduction in skill shortage vacancies which can impose costs on a business.

4.20 The scale of the benefits that are generated by the standards will be determined by the level of take-up of the apprenticeships. As stated earlier in the report, it is too early to

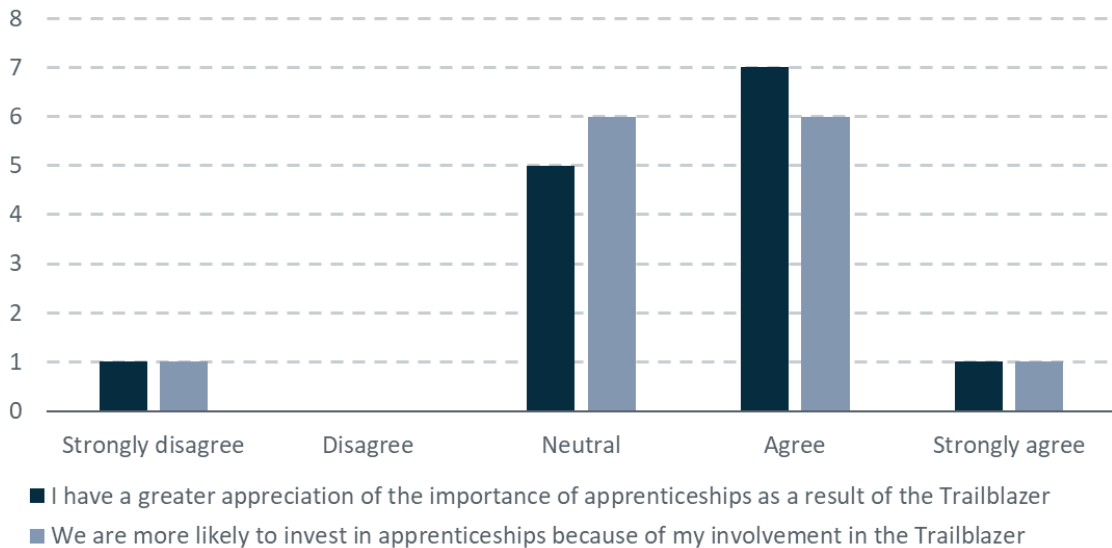
³ This was particularly the case for the Harbour Master and Marine Surveyor standards. MTS was the first standard to be developed and this took a longer time due to the PM familiarising herself with IFA processes which were evolving at the time.

⁴ Although there is uncertainty about the scale of these benefits, a 2011 study on behalf of BIS estimated the mean gross earnings premium from gaining a graduate level qualification to be £125,000 over the working life of the learner. This was higher for certain sector subject areas such as engineering.

assess this since one of the standards has not yet been approved for delivery and the other two have only been approved in the last few months. It will therefore not be possible to provide a robust estimate of the impact of the standards until they are well established and the level of take-up is more clearly understood.

- 4.21 The level of take-up will clearly be influenced by the scale and nature of marketing activities that take place to promote the new standards. Since it is likely to be mostly large companies that employ people in the roles covered by standards, there is likely to be less need for active demand stimulation measures than if a significant proportion of employment in the relevant occupations was in smaller businesses⁵. Larger companies are far more likely to recruit apprentices than smaller companies because they have greater capacity and skills to manage apprentice programmes (e.g through Human Resources departments).
- 4.22 A key challenge, however, is changing the image of apprenticeships and tackling some of the common myths and perceptions that exist in the sector. A large number of consultees reported there is still a common view within the industry that apprenticeships are for young people, that they cannot be used for existing members of staff, and generally only apply to low skilled positions. Several noted that people do not like the term ‘apprenticeship’ because of its connotations and questioned whether the new standards could be rebadged to increase take-up. This challenge is not unique to maritime, and suggests the need for much better marketing of modern apprenticeships at a national level which could help to change these attitudes.
- 4.23 Although we did not test this issue directly as part of the Trailblazer survey, there is some evidence to suggest that involvement in the Trailblazer helped to change perceptions of apprenticeships and made participants more likely to invest in apprenticeships in future. This suggests attitudes and actions can change once employers learn more about higher and degree level apprenticeships.

Figure 4.2 Survey responses on whether involvement in the Trailblazer changed attitudes or intentions regarding apprenticeships



Source Trailblazer employers survey, Hatch Regeneris

- 4.24 Consultees highlighted a number of small actions which stakeholders could take to raise awareness of the new standards, and make a small contribution to changing perceptions:

⁵ Chapter 6 looks specifically at the issue of how to address weak demand for apprenticeships among SMEs

- Trade press: articles in respected industry trade journals and magazines (eg Nautilus Telegraph) which would reach a wide readership. We understand that the project has already written articles for the trade press to raise awareness of the new standards. It may also help to write a further article in the future focusing on an employer/employee who is enrolled on the apprenticeship to help address some of the misperceptions. Although this would need to be led by one of the stakeholder organisations as MSS will no longer exist by then.
- Conferences and seminars: several consultees noted they regularly attend industry events where sector skills is on the agenda (eg the Seawork conference noted above and London International Shipping Week)
- Trade bodies and institutes: there is an important role for the trade bodies and institutes which have a strong influence over employers in their sector (Maritime UK, British Marine, British Ports Association, National Workboat Association, Society of Maritime Industries, UK Chamber of Shipping, MCA, IMarEST etc.) These organisations should be encouraged by Trailblazer employers and steering group members to promote the relevant apprenticeships for their sector and include articles or information in their newsletters. We note that articles have already appeared in the newsletters of the Merchant Navy Training Board/UK Chamber of Shipping, British Marine and the MSA.
- The networks of Trailblazer members and the steering group: given the large networks of the industry stakeholders that were involved in the Trailblazers, this can be an effective route for promoting the apprenticeships. Again, we note that this activity has already been ongoing and the PM has already received a number of emails expressing interest in the new standards.

5. Establishing training pathways

- 5.1 Another one of the core aims of the MSS project was to develop the pathways at Levels 3 and 5, which will enable LCR residents to build a career in the maritime sector and ensure employers can access the training they need. This section assesses the progress the project has made towards this aim and what needs to happen in future.

Key research questions

- 5.2 Key questions that we have set out to answer include:
- What have been the key achievements of the project and are these in line with expectations?
 - What have been the key main barriers and challenges which have prevented the project from meeting its objectives?
 - What can be done to build on the progress which has been made, and ensure there is a lasting legacy from the project?

Research methods

- 5.3 This element of the research has been reliant on the feedback from consultees, including LJMU, one of the FE delivery partners, members of the steering group and other local stakeholders (eg the Combined Authority). Since it has only been possible to interview one of the FE delivery partners, the findings may not be representative of the views of the other organisations or the specific barriers they have faced.

Research Findings

What have been the key achievements of the project and are these in line with expectations?

- 5.4 The original ESF application for the project did not set specific targets or expectations for this element of the project. The application stated that the project would “*develop a complete pipeline of maritime/logistics/advanced manufacturing skills progression from Levels 3 to 5 (advanced/higher apprenticeships) through to Postgraduate Masters Level 7 (Degree Apprenticeships)*” and that “*the Further and Higher Education training partners will map the proposed new standards (when approved) against existing provision, identify gaps and develop new curriculum materials in partnership with industry*”.
- 5.5 The mid-term evaluation noted that there had not yet been any changes in the curriculums offered by FE partners, but that the project had made progress towards ensuring local provision is more aligned with the needs of the sector. This included:
- Providers had a much clearer understanding of industry – the project had helped to bridge the gap between employers and training providers, and provided comprehensive information on the scope and structure of the maritime sector and its skill requirements.
 - Collaboration between providers has improved – all training partners reported having stronger relationships with each other and a clearer understanding of each others offer. But it noted further collaborative work was needed to plan future provision.

- 5.6 There does not appear to have been substantive progress made since the mid-term evaluation. As far as we are aware there has not been any changes to the curriculums of delivery partners as a result of the MSS project, other than the changes made by LJMU itself which will now offer the new standards.
- 5.7 We would question here whether it was ever realistic to develop a complete pipeline of skills progression for the sector. As we noted in the mid-term evaluation, some of the occupations covered by the standards are quite specialised and the size of the national market is limited. This is reinforced by data collected and published by the MSA which shows the number of starts on various standards and frameworks is very low. Nationally, this level of demand is only enough to support one or two specialist providers for some of these apprenticeships.
- 5.8 We would also note that the original bid implicitly assumed that the progression pathways in maritime are linear which would have made it much simpler to develop new curriculums. In practice it became clear quite early in the project that this is not the case, with multiple routes available for various apprenticeship standards which has made it more complex.

Table 5.1 Number of starts on maritime apprenticeships, 2014/15 to 2017/18

Apprenticeship	Type	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Able Seafarer/tug rating (Deck)	Framework	17	13		
Able Seafarer (Deck)	Standard		7	32	61
Able Seafarer/tug rating - engine room	Framework	5	3	9	7
Marinas and Boatyards	Framework		4	11	1
OOW <3000 GT Near Coastal	Framework		1		
Port Operations	Framework	12	56	83	20
Boatmaster	Framework	27	7	13	23
Sea Fishing	Framework	22	19	17	14
Workboat Operations	Framework	6	9	10	5
Scotland: Maritime Occupations	Scotland	0	27	30	22
Total		89	146	205	153

Source: Maritime Skills Alliance

- 5.9 However, consultees also reported there had not been any change in curriculums for the less specialised, 'entry level' activity, including provision at Levels 2 and 3. Therefore, on this measure, we conclude that the project has not met its original objectives for establishing training pathways.
- 5.10 This should not overshadow the progress that the project has made in terms of improving FE partners' knowledge of the sector. This is particularly true of PAL which has been the most engaged partner in the project. The consultee from PAL reported that the project had given them a much improved knowledge of the sector which they can use when they engage employers and learners in the future. In particular, the Progression Chart developed as part of the project has proven to be a very useful tool for understanding the needs of the sector and where PAL could contribute in the future.

What have been the key main barriers and challenges which have prevented the project from meeting its objectives?

- 5.11 We would note a number of barriers and challenges:
- 5.12 Firstly, there has been mixed levels of engagement with the project by FE partners. The delivery partners' formal and contracted involvement in the project ended around the time

of the mid-term evaluation. However, our report recommended that all training partners continue to attend steering group meetings and Trailblazer meetings, and continue in their collaborative efforts. Only PAL has continued to be a highly engaged partner, attending steering groups and playing an active role in the delivery of the project. The reasons for others not being actively involved are varied, but include the fact that some of the colleges have been undergoing mergers and so have been distracted by other matters. Changes in personnel also meant that some of the progress which was made with the FE delivery partners was lost, and the PM and her team have had to start from scratch, explaining the project to a new representative from the college. Both of these factors meant that some of the energy and enthusiasm which was generated in the initial phase of the project has not been sustained.

- 5.13 Secondly, it was noted that delays in ESF claims being paid by DWP made it much harder for the colleges to spend money developing curriculums. The uncertainty caused by these delays made it difficult to make the case internally that there was value in developing the curriculums and that the college would be reimbursed for it.
- 5.14 Finally, and most importantly, there is still significant uncertainty on the part of colleges about the level of demand from employers in the maritime sector and therefore the financial viability of new provision. PAL reported that jobs growth and recruitment in the sector is not visible when compared to other sectors such as health and social care where demand is clearly strong. This has led to some internal pressure within the college to focus resources on those areas where there is more certainty about demand. The diversity and fragmented nature of the maritime sector also raises particular challenges for colleges to understand exactly where they should focus attention.
- 5.15 While consultees could sympathise with this position, it was also noted that it is this type of thinking which has led to gaps in provision for more specialised, higher value provision in many areas of technical education. This is exemplified in the recent Augar review, which identifies provision at Levels 4 and 5 to be severely lacking in the UK (only 4% of 25 year olds hold a L4 or L5 qualification compared to 20% in Germany). The report notes that this *“translates into persistent skill gaps at technical level and also severely reduces opportunities for people who are unable, for whatever reason, to progress directly from Level 3 to Level 6”*. The report also finds that this is due mainly to the funding structures and incentives which exist under the current system, which encourage FE colleges to focus delivery on high volumes of learners at Levels 2 and 3 and makes the delivery of Level 4/5 provision too risky and/or financially unviable.
- 5.16 It is these concerns about funding and financial viability which lie at the heart of why provision has not changed. LJMU has now started to explore how this could be addressed through a successor project which we discuss in more detail below.

What can be done to build on the progress which has been made, and ensure there is a lasting legacy from the project?

- 5.17 There is a high level of support for an ongoing forum which involves local stakeholders and delivery partners after MSS has come to an end. This would most likely involve LJMU, PAL, the CA and the Apprenticeships Hub. Ideally this would also include Mersey Maritime and other FE delivery partners, although it is likely to be a challenge to secure their ongoing commitment.
- 5.18 This forum would:
- help to build on the relationships which have been established as a result of the project. Consultees noted several examples of how partnership working between LJMU, PAL and the Apprenticeship Hub has improved as a result of the project.

- be the main forum for discussing the strategic skills issues facing the maritime and related sector (as set out in the Skills for Growth Agreement) and how these could be addressed.
 - be a point of contact for the local maritime sector after MSS has ended. It was noted that the project has gained some profile within the local maritime cluster. There needs to be somewhere for businesses to go if they want to discuss skills issues.
- 5.19 Consultees were supportive of LJMU taking the leading role in this forum because of its high profile in the sector and its role as an anchor institution for both local learners and employers.
- 5.20 However, a forum is unlikely to be sufficient on its own to address the challenges noted above, specifically the uncertainty about the level of demand and the implications for the financial viability of new provision. As noted above, LJMU is in the process of designing a project which would address this challenge (Talent City). This project would create a sector skills forum for a number of different sectors with overlapping skill needs (manufacturing, maritime, construction and energy). The project would have a number of different strands of activity, but the main one in the context of MSS would be to address gaps in provision at levels 4 and 5 by working with colleges and training providers who have shown a willingness to offer courses but have concerns about its viability. Sector managers would then design the curriculum and teach it on their behalf. It is intended the project would be funded through LCR's Single Investment Fund, but with the aim of demonstrating that this provision is commercially viable. This will then provide the bridge between FE and HE to enable learner progression and address skills challenges.
- 5.21 At this stage the project is still being developed and it has yet to be awarded SIF funding. None of the consultees had a good understanding of the project so could only provide limited comments on whether this is likely to address the challenges noted above. However, most consultees were supportive of the concept and believed it was based on a sound rationale.
- 5.22 The key concerns raised relate to the level of employer demand at levels 4 and 5 in the maritime sector. LJMU are confident that the demand exists, and have built up an employer base of 450 regional and national companies from past ERDF and ESF engagement, which they would draw upon. However other consultees pointed to the low level of take up of apprenticeships in the maritime sector nationally, the large volume of SMEs in LCR's maritime cluster (who are less likely to employ apprentices) and the fact that it has been very difficult to assess the potential level of demand through past engagement with the sector. For example, a survey of LCR employers established that 30% planned to recruit an apprentice, but the numbers were negligible for the maritime sector.
- 5.23 In conclusion, we believe the proposals for Talent City are an innovative solution to the barriers which have prevented FE providers from responding to the needs of the sector. However, there is a clear risk that the level of demand from employers will be low. To maximise the chances of success of the project, LCR stakeholders will therefore need to explore measures which can stimulate demand for apprenticeships. This is a key focus of the following chapter.

6. Awareness Raising and Demand Stimulation

- 6.1 This section investigates the progress which has been made towards raising awareness of apprenticeships in LCR's maritime sector through its employer engagement activities. As noted above, the employer engagement activities have sought to raise awareness of apprenticeships generally, not just the standards which have been developed by MSS.

Key research questions

- 6.2 Key questions that we have set out to answer include:
- What have been the key achievements of the project and are these in line with expectations?
 - What methods have worked well for engaging employers and awareness raising?
 - What are the key barriers and challenges for stimulating demand for apprenticeships and what can be done to address these?

Research methods

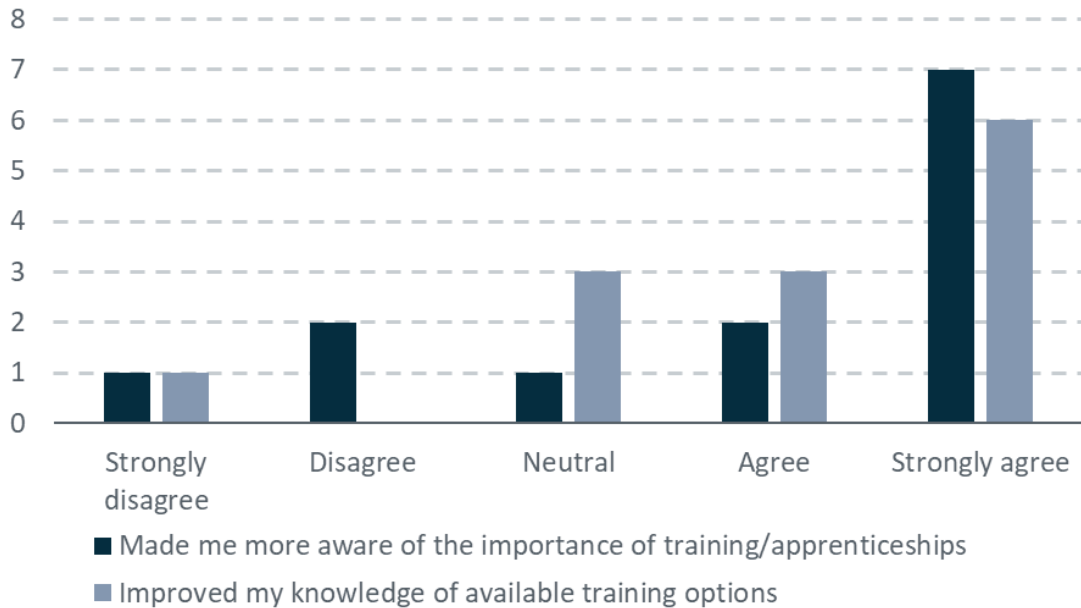
- 6.3 The key research methods for this part of the research have included:
- consultations with steering group members and the employer engagement officer.
 - An online survey of employers that were engaged by the project. Invitations to complete the survey were sent to 44 employers in total, and we received responses from 13, representing a response rate of 30%. While this represents a good response rate, there is a need for caution when interpreting the findings of the survey as the respondents may not be representative of all of those that received support or other maritime businesses which were not involved in the project.

Research Findings

What have been the key achievements of the project and are these in line with expectations?

- 6.4 As noted in Section 3, MSS has so far engaged 43 SMEs through awareness raising activities and undertaken training needs analysis for 35 SMEs. In both cases this is ahead of the target for this stage of the project. The project therefore looks set to exceed its targets for employer engagement. Although the targets themselves were modest, these were in line with the LCR CA's original call for projects and proportionate given the resources which were available for employer engagement.
- 6.5 The findings from the employer survey also suggest that the project activities have been successful in improving the knowledge and awareness of apprenticeships among those local SMEs that were engaged. Figure 6.1 shows that nine out of the 13 employers (69%) agreed that the session had improved their awareness of the importance of apprenticeships and the same number agreed that it had improved their knowledge of the training options available to them.

Figure 6.1 Survey responses on whether the employer engagement session had improved SMEs' knowledge and awareness



Source MSS Employer Survey, Hatch Regeneris

- 6.6 The findings also show that seven of the 13 SMEs who responded to the survey reported that their organisation had offered, or were planning to offer, more apprenticeships as a result of their engagement with the MSS project. Of those that provided further details, all were planning to recruit apprentices on to engineering or office administration standards.
- 6.7 While there is a need for caution in interpreting these results, the findings offer some grounds to suggest that pro-active, direct business engagement can help to change perceptions of apprenticeships and may also be an effective tool for stimulating demand. This has implications for future business engagement activities in the LCR (eg business support activities delivered through the Local Growth Hub), and for the future activities of Mersey Maritime when considering how to support the maritime sector.
- 6.8 In conclusion, the MSS project has made a small contribution to raising awareness of and stimulating demand for apprenticeships in LCR's maritime cluster, which reflects the size of the project and the available resources. Although the numbers engaged are not likely to be large enough to have a significant impact on future demand, the project has demonstrated that this has the potential to be an effective model for encouraging maritime businesses to invest in apprenticeships.

What methods have worked well for engaging employers and awareness raising?

- 6.9 All employer engagement activities have been led by the employer engagement (EE) officer who was appointed in August 2018. The officer had considerable experience and expertise, having worked for a local FE college where her role was to market apprenticeships to employers in the construction and engineering sector.
- 6.10 The project employed a number of routes for engaging employers:
- The project organized a one-off event in December 2018, although this was poorly attended.
 - Networking at events hosted by other organisations (eg the Propeller Club, Chamber of Commerce etc)

- Direct emails and follow-up calls
 - Online networking, particularly through LinkedIn.
- 6.11 Of the above, it was reported that LinkedIn was the most effective route for identifying and making initial contact with potential SMEs. Once the EE officer had established a relationship with a contact, she was able to identify other individuals through their networks on LinkedIn.
- 6.12 Once a contact had expressed an interest in the project, the EE officer would set up a meeting at their office where she would seek to learn more about their business and their current approach to training. She would then talk them through the progression chart⁶ which had been developed by the PM and tell them about the training options available to them. Meetings would conclude by agreeing next steps with the business owner or decision maker.
- 6.13 Feedback from the survey indicate that this approach was highly effective. All of the respondents agreed that the EE officer:
- had understood their business and its training needs by the end of the session
 - was knowledgeable about their training options
 - could demonstrate how apprenticeships could benefit their business, and
 - was able to answer questions and respond to their concerns.

Table 6.1 Survey responses on the employer engagement session

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	% who agree
The officer took time to learn about my organisation	0	0	0	2	11	100%
I felt the officer understood my organisation's training needs	0	0	0	2	11	100%
The officer was knowledgeable about training options for my sector	0	0	0	5	8	100%
The officer demonstrated how training options could benefit my organisation	0	0	0	6	7	100%
The officer was able to answer questions and respond to my concerns	0	0	0	5	8	100%

Source: MSS Employers Survey, Hatch Regeneris

- 6.14 The key success factors of the employer engagement activity are as follows:
- **The skills and experience of the EE officer:** consultees were very positive about the EE officer and what she had been able to achieve in the time available. They highlighted her drive, networking skills and previous knowledge and experience of working with employers as being key to its success. The EE officer herself reported that she was able to draw upon her past experience to anticipate the issues that SMEs would raise and address their concerns.

⁶ The progression chart was developed by the MSS project, with the input of the steering group and other stakeholders to show the nature of progression pathways in maritime. The chart was welcomed by a number of consultees as a very useful tool for communicating the sector to colleges, students and employers themselves (see the mid-term evaluation)

- **A tailored approach:** having one to one contact with consultees allowed the EE officer to establish a rapport with the SME, build up an understanding of their business and make recommendations based on their requirements.
- **Simple tools for demonstrating the range of provision:** The EE officer reported a lack of awareness among employers about the breadth of provision that was available for the maritime sector. The progression chart was reported to be a useful, easy-to-understand tool for demonstrating the range of provision and the pathways available in maritime, which a large number of the SMEs were interested in.

What are the key barriers and challenges for stimulating demand for apprenticeships among SMEs in LCR’s maritime cluster? What can be done to address these?

- 6.15 The EE officer reported the main barrier preventing SMEs from investing in apprenticeships are concerns about the costs, and uncertainty about the benefits for their business. The majority of businesses in LCR’s maritime cluster are very small businesses with few or no employees. Given the tight profit margins in the sector, any decision to recruit a new employee comes with risks because of the costs associated with recruitment, training and retention. These risks are heightened for apprenticeships where business owners have concerns about the inexperience of the apprentice, the costs of apprenticeship training and the requirement for 20% off-the-job training.
- 6.16 Therefore, any measures to increase take-up need to tackle this by demonstrating the business case for investing in apprenticeships. Again, this is a national challenge which is not unique to maritime. Some of the concerns about costs are a result of national policy and funding rules for apprenticeships which cannot be addressed by local stakeholders. Nevertheless, consultees highlighted a number of actions which could help to address businesses’ main concerns. These include:
- Using the pot of unspent apprenticeship levy in LCR to cover the costs of apprenticeships for small businesses, including the training costs and putting in place innovative schemes to minimize the burden on small businesses (eg shared apprenticeship initiatives). It was noted that the West Midlands Combined Authority had developed such a scheme which was working well and could be replicated in the LCR.
 - Finding and promoting examples of small maritime businesses from the LCR cluster which have recruited an apprentice and are now seeing the benefits.
 - Developing ‘idiots guides’ and simple briefing papers on the benefits of recruiting an apprentice, how to access support and navigate the process.
- 6.17 A key question that follows from this is which organisations are best placed to deliver these interventions once MSS has come to an end. Consultees identified a need for both top-down and bottom-up approaches which involved the following organisations:
- Sector trade bodies and institutes: these are the national organisations referred to at paragraph 4.24 who can exert considerable influence on their member organisations, particularly in sectors such as workboats and shipping.
 - The LCR Apprenticeship Hub: a key remit of the Hub is to promote apprenticeships to employers in LCR by showcasing examples of best practice and tackling persistent myths.
 - Mersey Maritime: this is the local cluster organisation representing LCR’s maritime sector. Mersey Maritime was a delivery partner in the project but has played a very minor role (see the mid-term evaluation).

- 6.18 While the Apprenticeship Hub has been a very engaged partner throughout the life of the MSS project and has built up a much better understanding of the industry, the representative reported that it is still very challenging to identify examples of businesses that have taken on apprentices that they could use in their promotional work. There is still very limited visibility of the apprenticeship training that goes on in the sector compared to others in the LCR, and the small team at the Hub makes it more difficult to build the networks and relationships which would allow them to uncover the successes and the good news stories.
- 6.19 A number of consultees identified a potential role for Mersey Maritime. This organisation has extensive networks in the sector and strong relationships with employers, leaving it well placed to address businesses' concerns and support them to take on apprentices. However, this organisation also has limited resources and a number expressed doubts about their current skills and capacity. It was noted that Mersey Maritime's main strength was as a networking organisation and they don't currently have the expertise to play a leading role on skills.
- 6.20 Nevertheless, it was noted that there are now more opportunities for Mersey Maritime to learn from other maritime clusters in the UK on how to be more proactive on skills. For instance, Maritime UK's Regional Council is bringing together all of the maritime cluster organisations from across Britain to help coordinate activity in support of Maritime UK's nationwide priorities. As part of this there are likely to be significant opportunities to learn from other cluster organisations about what has worked in relation to skills.
- 6.21 A notable example of this is the Cornwall Marine Network (CMN), which represents 300 members, and is seen as the leading cluster organisation for the development of skills. Crucial to its success is that it engages with over 90% of its members each year to talk about their training plans. These regular conversations help to build a good understanding of their members' businesses and a trusting relationship, which means their members are willing to take their advice on training solutions. CMN has also set up a programme of support to help businesses including training needs assessments, researching and booking courses on behalf of members, arranging events and venues and providing grant support.
- 6.22 CMN is currently the only maritime cluster organisation in the UK that has shown this level of commitment to developing the skills of its members. It would be unrealistic to expect Mersey Maritime to offer a similar level of support to its members in the foreseeable future as CMN has far greater resources. It currently employs 26 people and receives funding through EU structural funds and the Regional Growth Fund. Nevertheless, it provides a blueprint to work towards.
- 6.23 As a first step, consultees noted that a new cluster manager will be appointed to help develop the regional clusters, who will be based in Merseyside. While the remit of this cluster manager will be much wider than skills, this provides an opportunity to ensure that skills is more firmly on the agenda in the LCR. Longer term, it is only realistic for Mersey Maritime to take on a greater role if it has greater capacity and access to the skills and expertise needed for the role. Therefore the LCR CA may wish to consider how the organisation could be supported financially to take on this role, eg through the Shared Prosperity Fund which will succeed EU structural funds after Brexit.

7. Outreach

7.1 This section focuses on the project's achievements in relation to outreach with local schools, and its work to stimulate interest in the maritime sector among young people and raise awareness of the career options available. This was not a core activity for the project, and was delivered because delivery partners recognised the need for some outreach work to help develop a pipeline for the new standards. Therefore, it has not been covered in as much depth as the core elements of the project. However it was noted that the project had contributed to improving the resources available for developing young peoples' interest in maritime and have left a legacy on which to build.

Key achievements

7.2 The MSS project has developed a number of resources to help raise awareness of career opportunities in maritime and to provide primary schools with the resources they need to inspire an interest in maritime and to incorporate it in to the curriculum.

7.3 The main careers activity in this area has been led by Port Academy Liverpool and LJMU and includes the following:

- PAL has also developed various school liaison activities designed to inform, motivate and help candidates in making their post-16 or post Sixth Form choices. This includes presentations about careers in growth areas, subject taster days, work experience etc.
- LJMU have pulled together various teaching mater and resources about career options in maritime which have been made available on their website. They have also attended the Liverpool City Region Skills Show to raise awareness of maritime careers.

7.4 Teaching resources and activities developed as part of the project include:

- Key stage 2 activities, including a 'Sea to Store' challenge, an innovative STEM activity which aims to raise awareness of the sector through tracking the activities involved in providing goods for sale from around the world. Pupils get to create working models, replicate the actions of loading, moving and hoisting goods, examining the science behind these actions. These activities are delivered and supported by LJMU Primary Education students, and have received excellent feedback from local schools.
- The project has also signposted to 'Why Shipping Matters: an Introduction for Schools' programme which was created by the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers to provide an insight into shipping for primary school aged children. This took existing curriculum topics that will already be scheduled into a teacher's lesson schedule (for example, learning about magnets), and 'marinises' that lesson so the lesson on magnets now includes the construction of a compass. A PE lesson uses a semaphore game, a maths lesson looks at the values of commodities, an art lesson has pupils creating a collage of a vessel or seascape, and so on. All the materials are provided, including worksheets, PowerPoint, lesson plans and teaching materials to support teachers in the delivery of the content, so it is easy for them to incorporate this into their teaching schedule without any pre-briefings or training.
- Maritime simulator visits to the University run through the primary education and out-reach teams at LJMU

- PAL runs various "mini mariner" events aimed at local primary schools. This involves a range of activities covering shipping, maritime history and transatlantic trade.
- PAL and LJMU have worked with Daniel Adamson Ltd, who operate the Danny, the last remaining steam tugboat in the UK. They offer children the opportunity to experience a working vessel, learn about its history and how it is operated and maintained.
- School liaison activities run through PAL, including talks in schools, work experience, events and competitions and subject taster days in the college.

7.5 As a result of this activity it was reported that delivery partners have built strong links with local primary schools, particularly PAL which is working with local primary schools located very close to the port. Anecdotally, it was reported that this is helping to stimulate an interest in the opportunities on their doorstep.

Building on the legacy of MSS

7.6 A number of the above activities are likely to continue after MSS has come to an end (eg those activities run through PAL which is committed to building aspirations of young people in the local community). It was also noted that the KS2 activities mentioned above (eg Sea to Shore Challenge) will continue to be delivered by LJMU Primary Education students as part of their teacher training.

7.7 The primary education materials developed as part of the project also have a value outside the LCR and could help other areas with maritime clusters to inspire young people and provide them with the tools to embed this in the curriculum. There are a number of other examples of organisations which have developed materials. For example:

- the Ormiston Academies Trust has been awarded funding from the Edge Foundation to deliver vocational education which will blend theory in the classroom embedded in key curriculum subjects, with practical learning linked to the maritime industry.
- The High Tide Foundation in Tees Valley has a number of resources on its website about the maritime industry and how to build a career in the sector.

7.8 If these resources were combined with the materials developed by MSS and shared more widely with schools close to ports, they would potentially represent a very valuable resource for teachers to use to inspire an interest in maritime among young people and point them towards opportunities to build a career in the sector.

7.9 At the moment, there is no place for all of these materials to be pooled. However Maritime 2050, the national strategy for the maritime sector has identified a need for a national careers strategy, where these types of resources are likely to prove valuable. Therefore, the resources should continue to be made available on the MSS website until this strategy has been developed and the various resources have been brought together.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This report has provided the final evaluation of the MSS project. It aimed to assess whether the project met its original objectives and what the impact of the project has been. Due to the nature of the project and timing of the final evaluation it has not been possible to provide a robust estimate of the economic impact of the project (and therefore the value for money it has delivered). This will be determined by the future take-up of apprenticeships in the maritime sector. For this reason, the report has been intentionally forward-looking, and has identified factors which will influence the supply of and demand for apprenticeship training. This section provides our conclusions on the achievements of the project and whether this was in line with the original objectives.

Developing degree level apprenticeship standards for the maritime sector

- 8.2 This was the main focus of the MSS project, and we conclude the project has successfully met its original aims and objectives. By the end of the project MSS is likely to have successfully developed three new standards and made initial progress with one other. Although the ESF application did not set specific or measurable targets for the development of new standards, we are satisfied that this represents a significant achievement given the time and resources available to the project. In the absence of the MSS project it is highly unlikely that any of the standards would have been developed by now. And, in the case of Marine Surveyor and MTS, there is uncertainty over whether they would have been developed at all. The project has therefore made a significant contribution to the maritime sector, and leaves behind a legacy which has been welcomed by stakeholders.
- 8.3 The success of the project can be attributed to the drive, determination and organizational skills of the PM, but also to key individuals and organisations on the steering group who have helped MSS to map provision, identify gaps and connect them with other Trailblazer groups.

Establishing training pathways

- 8.4 The MSS project aimed to develop a “complete pipeline” of progression routes in the maritime sector from Levels 3/4 through to degree apprenticeships. This would involve FE partners identifying where gaps exist and developing new curriculum materials with industry.
- 8.5 The project has yet to meet this objective, although we would note that significant progress has been made towards developing a skills infrastructure which is more responsive to the needs of the maritime sector. In particular, it has given FE partners a much greater understanding of the structure of the sector and its career pathways and resulted in strong working relationships between a number of the delivery partners. This has prepared the foundations for achieving this objective in the future.
- 8.6 The key barrier which still needs to be addressed is the uncertainty about the level of employer demand for maritime training and therefore its financial viability. The small and fragmented nature of the sector makes it difficult for training providers to ascertain the level of demand, meaning new curriculum development is perceived as risky compared to other sector subject areas.
- 8.7 Our research heard two different perspectives on this, with different implications for how training providers should proceed in future:
- Demand-side challenge: this perspective argues that demand for more specialised apprenticeships at Level 3 and above is low, and not strong enough for new provision to be viable. Therefore, training providers in LCR should focus on

increasing provision at Level 2, which provide a route in to the sector, as well as the more 'high volume' Level 3 apprenticeships such as welding and engineering technician.

- Supply-side challenge: this argues that the demand is there, but a combination of financial disincentives and a lack of will on the part of some training providers to prioritise the maritime sector has prevented new courses being offered. It is this problem which the proposed Talent City project will aim to address.

8.8 We have not been able to provide a definitive answer to which of these views is correct, and in practice it is likely to be a combination of both. There are likely to be instances where there is latent demand for new provision, and we believe the Talent City is an innovative way of investigating this which should be supported. However, there are clear grounds for concern about the level of demand for apprenticeships in LCR, evidenced by the low number of starts nationally on existing standards and frameworks and the fact that there are only one or two providers in the country offering these apprenticeships. We therefore conclude that any future efforts to increase take-up of apprenticeships in LCR focus on stimulating demand as well as addressing supply side challenges.

Awareness raising and stimulating employer demand

8.9 Although the MSS project's output and result targets related to employer engagement, in practice this has been a parallel activity to the project's main focus on the development of standards.

8.10 The project looks set to exceed its targets and we conclude the project has met its objectives for raising awareness of and stimulating demand for apprenticeships in LCR's maritime cluster. Importantly, the feedback from the survey gives grounds to suggest that this could be an effective model for encouraging maritime businesses to invest in apprenticeships, with a high percentage reporting that they have a greater appreciation of their importance and several reporting that they have plans to invest in apprenticeships as a result of the project.

8.11 Looking to the future there are still significant barriers preventing maritime SMEs from employing apprentices, which will only be overcome by demonstrating the business case more clearly. There is a need for greater guidance on how to navigate apprenticeships and better promotion of success stories, where maritime employers have employed apprentices and are reaping the benefits.

8.12 However, we believe a sustained increase in investment in training is only likely to come about through intensive relationship building with employers in LCR's maritime cluster. This needs to build trust with each business owner by demonstrating an understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing their business and their training needs. We can find some evidence for the success of this approach from MSS's employer engagement work, which was focused on one-to-one engagement and understanding the specific needs of each business. We can also see the benefits from the experience of other maritime clusters such as the CMN which have a proven model for supporting the training needs of their members.

8.13 Mersey Maritime could potentially make a significant contribution here. This organisation has the networks and relationships, but currently lacks the capacity and expertise to play a more active role in the skills development of its members. The LCR CA may therefore wish to consider how the organisation could be supported in future to play a more active role in demand stimulation.

9. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- 9.1 The final section draws together the key lessons learned from the MSS project. We also set out a number of recommendations for the delivery of similar interventions in future. The section draws upon the findings of the mid-term and final evaluation.

Lessons Learned

ESF is not a practical option for funding this type of intervention

- 9.2 Although the project has been successfully met its primary objective of developing new standards, this has only been possible because LJMU was able to underwrite the project until the first payment was received from DWP (several months after the start of the project). The long delays in payment meant that there was a disconnect between project operations and finances, leading several consultees to state they felt like they were running two projects simultaneously. . The processing time for project change requests has also impeded project delivery and progress towards its target outputs. There is also evidence that delivery partners who were inexperienced with EU structural funds were deterred from fully engaging with the project, in part because of the onerous claims process and the uncertainty about funding.

Linking in to sector networks has been a key success factor for the project

- 9.3 One of the main success factors of the project was that it was able to tap in to the networks of key sector organisations from the outset. This helped to identify the standards which need to be developed, map out progression pathways and provided introductions to individuals who could join Trailblazer groups. The project benefitted from the PM investing time at the outset to build up her sector network, develop her knowledge of the industry and test who are the key players.
- 9.4 The project has also shown the importance of identifying the right people to join Trailblazer groups i.e. the practitioners who can comment on the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to fill certain occupations.

Universities can add value to the process of developing a responsive skills infrastructure

- 9.5 The project has shown that universities have a breadth and depth of knowledge that can be harnessed to address niche sectors like maritime. Prior to the MSS project there had been very little engagement between maritime employers and educators. FE colleges had struggled to understand how the sector was structured, the range of skill need and the non-linear nature of progression routes. This complexity had hampered training providers' understanding of the sector, what opportunities exist and how young people can build a career in the sector. Having LJMU as the lead delivery partner has helped to overcome this complexity and given all partners a much greater understanding of the maritime sector.

There is an appetite for sector skills forums

- 9.6 The project has shown there is a strong appetite among employers, FE and HE partners for sector skills forums which bring together different stakeholders to identify sector needs, plan provision and strengthen relationships over time. This collaborative approach to solve a common problem can, over time, deliver local benefits in the form of a more responsive skills infrastructure.

Training providers need to raise their credibility if they want to build strong links with the sector

- 9.7 While FE partners have a greater understanding of the needs of the maritime sector, this is insufficient on its own to build strong links with employers. The maritime industry is a traditional sector, where employers will only work with providers who can demonstrate they have good industry knowledge and tutors with practical experience of working in industry.
- 9.8 Building this credibility will take time and resources, and a significant level of commitment by training providers. Despite the progress which has been made, the diversity and fragmented nature of the maritime sector has proved challenging for colleges trying to understand where they should focus. Training partners will therefore need to make strategic decisions about whether they want to fully commit to maritime, and whether the level of demand for these courses justifies the investment that would be required to become credible training providers.

There was a need for greater due diligence of delivery partner capabilities

- 9.9 It became clear early on in the project that Mersey Maritime did not have the capacity to carry out the role that was envisioned for them, which created significant disruption to the project's employer engagement activities. This points to a need for greater due diligence of partners' abilities at the outset of the project. The project has shown the risks in accepting partners' self-assessment of their own capabilities, and underlines the need for third party corroboration of each partners' strengths.

Pro-active and tailored one-to-one engagement can be highly effective

- 9.10 The MSS employer engagement model appears to have been very successful at changing perceptions of apprenticeships and may be an effective tool for stimulating demand. Key success factors included:
- Having an experienced employer engagement officer who brought together knowledge of apprenticeships, drive and networking skills to build relationships with employers.
 - Making use of LinkedIn to expand the employer engagement officer's networks in the sector
 - A one-to-one approach which looked to understand the specific needs of each business, build trust and rapport with the business owner, and offer tailored solutions.
 - The development of simple tools for demonstrating the range of provision available (the skills progression chart).

Recommendations to inform future interventions

There needs to be robust evidence of the need for public intervention

- 9.11 Public funding should only be used to develop apprenticeship standards where there is clear evidence that the standards would not otherwise be developed. We are satisfied that this was the case for some of the standards developed by the MSS project. However, this is due to the fact that it is a small, diverse and fragmented sector, where there are very few organisations willing to commit significant resources to developing standards which could benefit competitors. This is unlike other engineering industries, many of which have well-

resourced sector bodies and structures which provide incentives for collaboration because of their integrated supply chains.

- 9.12 Public intervention should only be considered in sectors with similar characteristics to maritime, and where there is clear evidence that this is preventing the development of standards.

Public funding for the development of apprenticeship standards should use national not regional financial instruments

- 9.13 The MSS project was originally intended to be a local solution to address a national need. However, it learned quickly that Trailblazers need to involve employers from all parts of the country, reflecting the geography of where employers are based. Therefore, funding instruments which aim to support employment in a region or sub-region are not a good fit for this type of project. While we can see a case for public funding in certain circumstances, this should be through a national instrument.

A dedicated secretariat should be created to co-ordinate the Trailblazer

- 9.14 This should include a PM, an employer engagement officer and admin support. This reinforces earlier guidance produced by the Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards (FISSS) which recommended a full time PM to achieve pace and momentum and to ensure the project stays on track. Interventions should look for PMs who can learn quickly, can demonstrate determination, tenacity, organisation, communication and mediation skills.
- 9.15 Having a University (or other independent organisation) co-ordinating the Trailblazer group can also deliver benefits by acting as an honest and impartial facilitator. This helps to mitigate any commercial tensions and ensures that large employers do not dominate.

The PM should minimize the administrative burden on Trailblazer employers

- 9.16 This is key to ensuring that employers stay engaged and that the standard is developed quickly and efficiently. This can be achieved through the following:
- Taking a flexible approach to meetings, including one-to-one and teleconferences.
 - The PM should pose the questions which employers need to address, then translate the feedback in to the educational framework required for the development of standards.
 - The PM should then draft the paperwork and have this reviewed and approved by employers
- 9.17 This approach helps to minimize the time commitment required of employers, many of whom cannot take much time off from their normal work activities.

The secretariat should be overseen by a steering group of industry experts

- 9.18 Involving a range of industry experts with good knowledge of industry needs can add real value to these types of interventions. Collectively, the steering group should be able to provide a comprehensive overview of apprenticeship developments in the sector. This helps to identify gaps and provide links to key individuals who can join Trailblazers.

Producing a skills progression map helps to simplify complex sectors

- 9.19 Producing a skills progression map which shows the various routes that learners and apprentices can take to develop a career can be extremely useful. It helps providers to understand the sector and to identify current and future opportunities for apprenticeship delivery. It helps employers and employees understand the range of provision which is available, and it helps potential apprentices, their schools and families understand how they can build a career in the sector.

Sector representative bodies can add value to these interventions, but need to have the right capabilities

- 9.20 Sector-representative bodies have a role to play initiating links between training providers and the local cluster, and convincing employers in fragmented sectors like maritime of the benefits of apprenticeships. But projects should ensure that organisations have the skills, experience and capacity to play this role before involving them in the project. Otherwise it is unlikely that they will fully engage with the project.
- 9.21 Partner agreements should also be legally binding, with partner roles being made clear from the outset and agreed at a senior level.

A combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches should be used to stimulate demand for apprenticeships

- 9.22 These could include:
- national sector trade bodies and institutes which can exert considerable influence on their members
 - local apprenticeship hubs that can prepare materials to showcase best practice among SMEs and help to address myths and misperceptions, and
 - local sector representative bodies such as Mersey Maritime or the Cornwall Marine Network. These organisations can build trust with local employers, demonstrate an understanding of their needs and recommend tailored provision.

Appendix A - Glossary

Table A.1 Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations	
CMN	Cornwall Marine Network
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
TEC	The Engineering College
EE	Employer Engagement
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FISSS	Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards
KS2	Key Stage 2
IFA	Institute for Apprenticeships
IMarEST	Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology
LCR	Liverpool City Region
LCR CA	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
LJMU	Liverpool John Moores University
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MSA	Maritime Skills Alliance
MSS	Maritime SuperSkills
MTS	Marine Technical Superintendent
NLA	Northern Logistics Academy
PAL	Port Academy Liverpool
PCE	Port and Coastal Engineer
PE	Physical Education
PM	Project Manager
RINA	Royal Institute of Naval Architects
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Appendix B - List of Consultees

Name	Organisation
Di Fitch	LJMU
Helen McCormack	LJMU
Elizabeth Gillies	LJMU
Iain Mackinnon	Maritime Skills Alliance
Paul Markwick	Manufacturing Technology Centre
Melanie Dodd	LCR Apprenticeship Hub
Shulah Jones	Port Academy Liverpool
Rob Tabb	Liverpool Combined Authority
Jamie Brown	STENA
Alan Cartwright	Blabey Engineering
Alex Naughton	Merseytravel
John Murray	Society of Maritime Industries
Paul Corcoran	Carmet Tug Co
Mark Ranson	National Workboats Association



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