

# St Giles

Turning a past into a future

Routeways is supported by  
**J.P.Morgan**

## The Routeways Project Final Evaluation Appendix

**JHCONSULTING**

Routeways Final Evaluation Summary  
January 2020

# Introduction

Routeways is a two year project that ran between January 2018 and December 2019, led and delivered by St Giles Trust (SGT), with the financial support of J.P. Morgan. The Better Placed partners (London Boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham) are key stakeholders in the project.

The stated aims of Routeways included:

- **Enabling people who are in low paid and insecure jobs to improve their earnings and prospects, progress at work and reduce levels of poverty and reliance on state finance, and;**
- **Engaging employers in supporting these improvements and accessing the types of services that will help them to improve and build their businesses.**

A further essential purpose of the project was to explore what works in supporting people in low paid and insecure jobs, including the barriers that they face and the aspirations that they have for improving their lives/their families' lives. This involved identifying practical, structural and policy barriers that may be preventing individuals and families moving out of poverty and having better lives.

An interim evaluation report was produced in January 2019, followed by an evaluation bulletin in July 2019. This final evaluation summary is an appendix to these two reports. It is intended to give an update on activity and achievement to the end of the project period and provide some suggestions to help commissioners and providers move forward.

It is arranged in the following sections:

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# Evaluation methodology

Evaluation of Routeways took place at various points from summer 2018 to December 2019, and included:

- **group and individual discussions with Routeways management and delivery staff, Better Placed partners, training providers and the South Bank Employers Group (SBEG)**
- **one-to-one, confidential discussions with Routeways clients**
- **one-to-one discussions with other organisations that have worked in partnership with Routeways**
- **examination of a range of project data and review of relevant wider research and information**

All direct quotes from respondents are shown in italics and speech marks. Names are not used in order to maintain confidentiality. Routeways data collection was significantly developed in 2019, enabling a much deeper analysis. For this reason, this final summary presents overall figures for the 2 year period of the project and then some more in depth data for 2019.

While this project has been supported by J.P Morgan, the contents and opinions in this report are of the authors alone and do not reflect the views of the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, JPMorgan Chase & Co, or any of its affiliates.

# Overview for January 2018 – December 2019

Overall figures for participation, interventions and outcomes for the 2 year project period are as follows:

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>Participants engaged</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>317</b>
<b>Participants have improved skills</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Participants have increased income and/or are more financially stable</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Participants experienced a range of soft outcomes (confidence, motivations, wellbeing, home/family, improved situation etc.)</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>250</b>
Employers engaged to be part of interventions with participants and Careers Coaches	<b>25</b>	<b>7</b>
Employers engaged in an enhanced job brokerage model to support job progression		<b>8</b>
Employers engaged through job brokerage with recruitment support		<b>15</b>
Employers engaged in activities to design and/or implement changes that address low pay/poor quality employment issues and improve collaboration with colleges/providers.	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>

These figures are very positive, demonstrating that Routeways made significant progress and development in 2019. 45% of clients engaged on the project have improved their financial situations through increased income and/or greater financial stability. Whilst this is just short of the 50% target, it is a very significant achievement given the complexity of clients’ barriers and the challenging nature of the employment market in terms of moving out of low paid work. It also compares very favourably with other similar projects such as Step Up (39%) and the ESF funded In-Work Progression programme (29%).

Routeways has exceeded its target for the number of clients improving their skills. This includes those who have undertaken accredited training as well as clients who have improved their transferable employability skills. Both are vital not only for movement into better work but also for progress in those jobs.

Soft outcome achievement for clients also demonstrate the project’s ability to provide a holistic service that helps to build client resilience – very important if outcomes are to be sustainable in the longer term. The importance of this approach is also recognised in evaluations of Step Up and the In-Work Progression programme.

The most striking achievement in 2019 is the level and nature of employer engagement. This element of the project has been very challenging, as experienced by other similar projects that have set out to work with employers as well as low paid employees. Routeways has made significant progress by building on and drawing from SGT’s longstanding experience of working

with employers, developing a refreshed employer engagement strategy that is reaping rewards. Importantly, the strategy is set in the context of the harsh realities of trying to improve the lot of the working poor. Detail on this element of the project can be found on pages 7-9.

The demographics for the total Routeways cohort show that trends established in year one have largely continued to the end of the project:

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Resident borough</b>	Better Placed Boroughs 92% (majority from Southwark)	Better Placed Boroughs 95% (An increased number from Lewisham)
<b>Gender</b>	65% female 35% male	61% female 39% male
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White British 14% BAME 79% (Black African 34%, Black Caribbean 29%)	White British 6% BAME 89% (Black African 43%, Black Caribbean 31%)
<b>Age</b>	Range 18-65 years, evenly distributed between 20 and 60 years of age	
<b>Qualification Level</b>	None or below Level 1 – 11% Level 1 – 11% Level 2 – 39% Levels 3-5 – 39%	None or below Level 1 – 10% Level 1 – 10% Level 2 – 33% Levels 3-5 – 43%
<b>Benefits status</b>	Universal Credit – 51% Other benefits – 13% Total claiming benefit – 64%	Universal Credit – 45% Other benefits – 25% Total claiming benefit – 70%

It is interesting to note that the proportion of clients from BAME backgrounds has increased. The high level of BAME participation demonstrates the project’s ability to engage and support people from these backgrounds. It may also reflect a disproportionately high representation of BAME people in low paid, poor quality work.

Routeways continued to engage and support a significant number of people with qualifications at Level 3 and above. The issue of under employment of such people is discussed in detail in the 2019 evaluation bulletin. It is clear that there is a continuing need to support those in this predicament, including by providing access to free, industry-relevant training and qualifications to enhance their ability to move out of the ‘rut’ of poorly paid work.

The proportion of clients claiming some form of benefit showed a small increase in 2019, although the percentage claiming UC dropped slightly. As discussed in the 2019 evaluation bulletin, there is evidence of a significant number of ‘hidden poor’ amongst those not claiming benefits, including clients who do not have recourse to public funds and adults, some with their own families, needing to live in the parental home because the costs of housing and living independently cannot be covered by their low wages.

## **Referral routes maximise access**

Referral routes continued to be developed over the life of the project. Referrals from Jobcentre Plus remained steady at 30% of the total. Around 15 mainly voluntary sector organisations referred

clients, with Pecan and Lewisham Homes referring the majority. The range of referral partners including SLaM, Evolve and Mosaic Clubhouse demonstrates the diversity of the client group. It also highlights the importance of maximising access for people stuck in low paid employment. Given that there are people struggling in low paid jobs who were not receiving UC, plus the fact that those claiming UC are not generally required to attend the Jobcentre, it is vital that there is a wide range of referral partners for such projects.

## **Building on success – updated analysis for 2019**

By the end of 2019, Routeways had really come into its own. The energy of the team and their enthusiasm to learn from the experience of the first year, as well as draw on that of other projects and partners gave Routeways great momentum. If the project had been able to continue for a further year it is likely that the results would be even more impressive than what has been achieved, which is in itself significant.

Since the bulletin report produced in July 2019, the project has continued to provide a bespoke and tailored offer to clients as well as to expand and develop its relationships with referral partners, training providers and employers. Routeways has also mainstreamed its learning and expertise across SGT as an organisation.

## **Positive impacts for people stuck in low-paid work**

In 2019, 144 clients were engaged on the Routeways project. Service occupations continued to be the dominant area of work on entry to the project – hospitality and security (24%), cleaning and facilities (17%), health and social care (12%) and retail/fashion (12%). However, there were also a number of clients in two other areas that were not significant in 2018, business administration (12%) and transport/logistics (12%). 80% of all clients were in part-time employment and 47% on zero hours contracts.

Of the 144 clients engaged in 2019, 79 (54%) have made positive improvements in their work situation with 72 (50%) increasing their weekly pay. This demonstrates that in the second year of operation the project has increased the proportion of clients who have improved their pay and/or work circumstances and has achieved the planned target of 50%.

### **Of the 79 clients who identified improvements:**

- **49 (62%) changed their employer**
- **18 (23%) stayed with existing employer but increased pay or hours leading to increased overall pay**
- **13 (16%) took on additional jobs**

### **Further analysis of the 79 reveals that:**

- **72 clients increased their weekly take home pay, of these:**
  - **36 increased their weekly pay by £150 or more**
  - **57 increased their hourly rate of pay**
  - **one client's pay increased from a wage from less than £80 per week to £673 per week - an annual increase of £30,867 PA**
  - **59 clients increased their hours by an average of 16 hours per week**
  - **7 clients decreased their working hours but compensated this with either a higher hourly rate than previously (3 clients), or positive changes in employment**

circumstances including moving from zero hours to fixed contracts, moving from part-time to full-time employment and moving into supportive employment that helps the client to overcome a number of personal barriers with a view to progressing into higher paid work when appropriate.

- **2 clients had a planned decrease in pay because they took the positive decisions to reduce their hours (by 9 hours) so that they could study for higher level qualifications.**
- **36 clients are now being paid at or above the London Living Wage (LLW)**
- **60% of clients are in full-time jobs, 34% in part-time jobs**
- **5 employees are on zero hours contracts which fit with their personal/family circumstances**

A key success factor for Routeways has been its ability to see the whole person, their circumstances and how these interact. This has been vital in understanding that change in one element, be it housing, employment, childcare, health etc. has an impact on the whole. In doing so, staff have been able to help clients move towards achieving their aspirations whilst understanding the complex interplay of the consequences of change. For example, understanding that the new, better paid job requires longer travel and has implications for childcare which may make it unworkable, or that moving to a new job that pays the same but has more empathetic staff is a real win for someone with fragile mental health.

Feedback from clients reveals the range of progress that they feel they have made with the support of Routeways:

- *I was not very happy with the job I had before I joined Routeways and this job that I am now in is much better than the old one. I am really happy with the terms and conditions and the progression that I will be able to make.*
- *At first I was unsure about Routeways. I explored several options including a PTS qualification, traffic Marshall and also got help with UC. However, I now realise that I have the confidence to apply for roles and applied to be a trainee bus driver. I am now working full-time, training and earning the LLW. When I qualify I will be earning much more.*
- *I feel more calm, relaxed. I am experiencing new and exciting challenges which I have not experienced before I get paid more money, the environment is very warm and welcoming and I am very happy here. I can't stop smiling.*
- *Since getting my 2 days that are set every week I am able to plan my life and enjoy my life more. This is a huge benefit because I am partially blind and not to have to ask people to take time on different days to take me to work is really a weight off my mind.*
- *I have been encouraged to look for better work. I had lost confidence but am feeling much more confident now.*
- *I have more confidence, I am more productive and am giving a better contribution. I also have lots of opportunity to progress to a paramedic.*  
*Since being on the project, I have obtained funding to complete the class C+E HGV licence which will give me better work.*

The screening and assessment of clients when they engage with Routeways identified that, along with low pay and insufficient work hours, lack of confidence and self-esteem was one of the most common challenges to be disclosed. Others included childcare issues, low or no appropriate skills and IT/digital skills needs. This latter point is explored further on page 10.

Clients have reported a wide range of soft outcomes relating to their quality of life. The most frequently reported of these include:

- improved self-confidence
- feeling better qualified/more employable/nearer to achieving employment goals
- feeling more positive and happier
- feeling better supported with finance/having improved finances
- understanding more about career options
- feeling better cared for/understood

In addition to these there are a wide range of other positive impacts highlighted including for health and wellbeing, motivation, self-esteem and feeling in more control of their lives. These soft outcomes should not be underestimated, particularly where clients have families. Parental wellbeing is a key factor in the wellbeing of children.

Significant further detail about the impact of Routeways for clients can be found in the two accompanying evaluation documents. However, some examples drawn from interviews in late November 2019 illustrate Routeways' positive effects and the continuing challenges faced by clients.

*"I wanted an admin job, especially a Government job. St Giles helped me to get a one year apprenticeship with the Crown Prosecution Service and I got a Level 2 Business Admin diploma, and my maths and English qualifications. When the apprenticeship ended, so did the contract. I'm still looking for a permanent job and agency work is hard because there's no guaranteed hours and it messes up my UC. St Giles helps me so much to keep me going during this time. They even helped pay for my son's school uniform because DWP don't do that anymore. They really help to reduce my stress and that helps my child – it reduces his anxiety, and I've got better relationships with my family. I've been amazed at how much they help you and that keeps you going looking for that better job that isn't agency work."*

*"St Giles has helped me set up as a self-employed nanny. I didn't realise how complex it was but they helped with all of the process and a bursary to get my DBS and insurance."*

*"I was in temporary accommodation and employed part time in retail but I wanted a full-time job and a better job. I had always thought admin would be good for me and full time job would give me more money. St Giles helped with jobsearch and got me an online course in Level 2 Business Admin that I'm still doing. They also helped me to get permanent housing for me and my two kids. I applied for a job and got through to the last round which was role play. I messed it up because I was nervous. All the others in the room were young graduates. I've learnt from it, but it's hard. My biggest challenge is dropping off and picking up my two boys from school. The school has a breakfast club and I can't afford it. I'll continue on the project and get my qualification. The support you get is fantastic."*



# A new and engaging strategy with employers

Routeways’ outcomes included engaging 25 employers to be part of interventions with project participants. As discussed in detail in the previous evaluations, this is one of the most challenging elements of tackling in-work poverty and has proved so even for specialist business facing organisations such as the project partner, SBEG.

In 2019, SGT developed a new employer engagement strategy, building on the experience of 2018 and recognising the reality of the barriers faced by employees and employers. In particular, the strategy took into account the fact that many clients were reluctant to reveal that they were receiving support because of anxieties about their employers’ reactions to this, and that others wanted to change employer in order to move into a new career often in a different sector. The strategy also recognised that engaging an employer with an immediate ‘hook’ such as help with recruitment, was likely to be more effective.

The strategy comprises a set of tailored strands to maximise the potential for persuading employers to become involved:

Strand	Key success factors	Take up through Routeways
<b>Engaging employers in 3 way interventions - employer, employee and Career Coach working together</b>	<p>Where employees feel able to involve their employer, key issues can be addressed including enabling disabled employees to stay in work, pay increases and improved conditions.</p> <p>Helps employers to understand the needs of their employees and how supporting them can improve their businesses.</p> <p>Particularly effective in supporting employees with specific needs, for example, disability</p>	7 employers
<b>Enhanced job brokerage and support – employers offered a screening, recruitment and further in-work training/support package, tailored to their needs</b>	<p>Meets the needs of the many employees who wish to job/career change to improve their prospects and/or who are anxious about involving their current employer in interventions</p> <p>Can be tailored to suit employer size and sector.</p> <p>Where the employer already has some HR/staff development practices, the offer can enhance these to better support those in low paid jobs to progress</p> <p>Relationships offer the opportunity of further development</p>	8 employers
<b>Job brokerage, including some recruitment support with good quality employers</b>	<p>Meets the needs of the many employees who wish to job/career change to improve their prospects and/or who are anxious about involving their current employer in interventions</p>	15 employers

Strand	Key success factors	Take up through Routeways
<b>Brokering and supporting relationships between employers and training providers to enable employee/employer focused delivery</b>	<p>Engages employers that have extensive and quality staff development/training/progression which widens the opportunities for those wanting to change employer</p> <p>Broadens SGT's employer base and offers further opportunities for developing the relationships in the future</p> <p>Enabling training providers to better understand the needs of employers</p> <p>Can lead into further conversations about pay rates, further progression etc.</p>	<p>2 employers</p> <p>1 Independent Training Provider</p> <p>1 college</p>

The engagement figures in the table demonstrate that job brokerage is a very effective means of ‘getting a foot in the door’ with employers. Helping employers solve recruitment problems is an immediate action that brings clear business benefits for them. If this is handled effectively it can and does open up opportunities for conversations about training, progression and pay rates. Ideally, any project such as Routeways would be working with employers that do not offer good pay and conditions to try and change the culture of poor quality employment. However, by working with those who offer relatively good employment but who want to improve, Routeways has not only helped those stuck in poorly paid work into better work but is also helping to raise the overall quality of employment. If there was to be a critical mass of this type of intervention, it may begin to put pressure on poorer quality employers.

Employers from a diverse range of sectors, and of different sizes have been engaged. Health/care, hospitality, construction and cleaning companies form the majority, with those in the energy, retail and security sectors also represented. It is no surprise that these sectors reflect those from which clients have been drawn (apart from construction). It underlines that better work with prospects can be found in these sectors. This may help in demonstrating to employers in these sectors who do not currently offer good quality employment that there are business benefits to doing so.

In terms of size, 41% of employers engaged are large, often national companies, with 53% being small or medium sized employers – the majority being at the smaller end of this continuum. Two very small employers (below 5 employees) were also engaged. This demonstrates SGT's ability to work with a wide variety of employers, the majority in the private sector.

### **A dedicated employer engagement role brings advantages**

Summarising the key outcomes from the new employment strategy does not fully reflect the very significant amount of work that has gone into driving forward this part of the project. Behind each of the numbers above is a backstory of working in detail with an employer to understand their needs and find the solution that will also help to improve pay, conditions and progression for low paid workers. In some cases this has involved drawing up with the employer a full analysis of staffing and business needs, including training, development and recruitment, and formulating a plan to move forward. The greatest limiting factor for these new developments with employers is that the agreed project length was two years. By the end point of the project several employers were in planning discussions with SGT. Whilst the utmost is being done to maintain and continue

those relationships it demonstrates that a third year of funding would have enabled the full potential of the project to be fulfilled.

SGT's decision to create an internal dedicated employment engagement manager role has enabled the organisation to focus expertise and resources on employers whilst maintaining clear links with staff whose focus is on employees. This chain of relationship between employers and employees is essential in order to maintain effective responses for both sets of clients.

## Tackling the challenges of training brokerage

Whilst a number of employers engaged by Routeways had an interest in staff development and progression, 5 were particularly interested in upskilling their existing employees and ensuring that new entrants were also able to undertake relevant training. Of these, in depth discussions took place with 3 employers who originally came into contact with project through job brokerage activity and were looking to source a variety of training including numeracy and literacy, and soft skills such as punctuality, organisation and communication. Unfortunately the project ended before these could be taken forward.

The remaining 2 employers were engaged specifically around finding training solutions and are examples of activity to develop relationships between them and training providers:

- A newly established hotel and a flexible employment focused independent training provider: in depth discussions between Routeways, the hotel and training provider were very positive. The next training would be needed by the hotel in 2020 which fell outside the project period. However, as a result of this engagement the hotel, which currently doesn't offer the LLW was willing to take part in discussions about working towards this and around flexible working (particularly important for the largely female workforce).
- A small coffee shop and a flexible employment focused independent training provider: discussions led to a fully training needs analysis being drawn up followed by the involvement of the training provider. The proposal was accepted as being very useful for a business of their size but again the project finished before this could be taken forward.

## Three way interventions remain valuable

Where possible, the project continued to develop three way interventions which involved the employer, employee and Career Coach working together to find a solution to improve the employee work situation whilst satisfying employer needs. These include two interventions for employees with disabilities – one to work with the employer to support a client with a learning disability and one to agree reasonable adjustments to enable the employee to continue at work. These examples demonstrate the importance of the multi-stranded employer engagement strategy to ensure that all opportunities to help employers develop better work are exploited and that a wide range of support can be provided to both employer and employee.

## Influencers are needed

The 2019 research published by the Rowntree Foundation '*Influencing employers so more people break free from poverty through work*' reflects many of the issues experienced by Routeways. The report provides some interesting ideas for tackling the challenges, reflecting some of the new and successful approaches developed by Routeways in 2019. Importantly, the need for "*business support services and other influencers to help employers weigh the costs and benefits of taking action on low pay*" is also stressed. This point was made in the previous evaluations of Routeways and is key if real change in the culture of low pay is to be achieved.

## Developing skills and gaining industry standard qualifications

In 2019, Routeways has enabled 36 (26%) of clients to access a wide range of accredited training to improve their work prospects.

Sector/subject	Level(s)	Examples	Number	%
<b>Security</b>	Level 2 & 3	Door security, personal security, CCTV	11	31%
<b>IAG, Education</b>	Levels 1-3	IAG, Teaching, Childcare, Interpreting	6	17%
<b>Health &amp; Social Care</b>	Level 2 & above	Skills for Care, Phlebotomy, Access to Radiography	6	17%
<b>Functional skills</b>	Entry & above	ESOL, Literacy, Numeracy	5	14%
<b>Engineering &amp; transport</b>	Levels 2-4	Civil & Environmental Engineering, Railway, Road, HGV	3	9%
<b>IT and Admin</b>	Levels 2-3	Business Admin, Legal Secretary	3	8%
<b>Other</b>	Various	Union Rep/Social studies BA	2	6%

The project continued to develop this much needed element of support during the latter half of 2019. The experience of this work has highlighted two particularly important and knotty challenges – a widespread and urgent need to help clients improve their digital skills and confidence, and a continuing difficulty for employees in accessing training whilst working.

### The need for digital skills

Digital skills needs are highlighted by many clients as a barrier for them. Accessing IT/digital skills training that is not charged for and that fits with working patterns has become increasingly difficult. There are many on-line courses but most clients do not have access to a laptop or tablet at home. In addition, lack of confidence is a very big issue. Even where clients may have some basic digital skills they feel very nervous completing on-line forms etc. without the support of a Career Coach. This is understandable given the unforgiving nature of many on line application processes. This element of skills development is vital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and should be a priority in future services for people in low paid employment.

In addition to providing access and in some cases financial support to enable clients to take up vital work related training, SGT also continued to deliver a range of non-accredited training focused on helping clients to develop their employability skills and ability to apply for better jobs. In the latter part of 2019 this included a session for clients at Credit Suisse where employees at the company worked with Routeways clients to help them develop their CVs and to give them confidence and motivation for applying for jobs that they might have previously felt out of their reach. This type of activity is clearly helpful in beginning to break down the barriers of poor self-esteem and challenge perceptions that 'I don't belong in the corporate world' which can really help people move out of the rut of poor quality employment.

## Relationships with flexible training providers

As reported in the July 2019 bulletin, the majority of training was delivered by independent training providers, with colleges often not able to provide the flexibility and access required to meet the needs of employees.

SGT has continued to maintain and develop its relationships with a range of training providers that can more readily meet the needs of employees. A new partnership was established between SGT and a training company, funded through the Adult Learning budget, that was working with Lewisham Homes (one of the housing providers partnering with SGT). The company is able to deliver free training to those earning less than £15,000 per year. A wide range of highly flexible training has been delivered, giving clients transferable, accredited skills, for example, in customer service, administration, data protection, event planning, mental health awareness and team leadership.

The trainer observed how the holistic support that Routeways has provided in addition to training has helped clients to progress - *“The Routeways clients are in challenging positions, with low incomes they are always in stressful positions. One client had no access to benefits despite being on low and precarious wages caused by a zero hours contract. She was threatened with losing her home throughout her training with us so it was very hard for her. But I saw the St Giles project was able to offer her really good support in a variety of ways to keep going. In terms of supporting clients I can say that they are excellent. I only ever have good feedback from my clients about them.”*

There were also interesting observations with regard to the role of colleges, including the lack of introductory IT courses and the fact that *“SGT offers a more bespoke service. I worked in colleges for some years and there are some great staff but as organisations they don’t have so much of a focus on the individual. Whilst St Giles has its own challenges in looking for funding, they do a lot more personal support and a better job of meeting clients’ needs.”*

It is important to note that whilst SGT continues to develop its relationships with flexible training providers, even this provision is impossible for some clients to access because they cannot commit to regular training. This is particularly the case for those on zero hours contracts or working through agencies.

Whilst the planned activity with SBEG and Morley College as key partners to engage employers in developing skills provision has not taken place as planned, it is clear that St Giles has built on its range of partnerships with employer/employee focused providers to ensure that employees have access to the training that they need to help them move out of low paid work. St Giles has also built on a relationship established by SBEG with Lewisham & Southwark College by enabling some clients to access apprenticeships at the college.

In the work to develop more effective responses to the training needs of employers and employees it is helpful to distinguish between the two. An employer’s training needs may be quite different from that of the employee. Similarly, the approaches to meeting these needs is necessarily different since where training is employer driven time will be made available and employees who take part generally experience benefits. By contrast, where the employee instigates training to meet their needs, the employer may not know or, if they do, may not be inclined to be supportive.

## Partnerships that promote access

The work to establish partnerships with other organisations whose client base includes those in low paid and insecure employment continued to develop in 2019. In particular, working with social housing providers is proving to be highly effective, as highlighted by two interviewed for the evaluation:

- *“The USP for Routeways is that it works with employed people using a holistic approach, supporting all aspects of clients’ needs and seeking individual solutions to these. They do a great job. We are very concerned where we will refer employed people to when the project comes to an end because in-work support is so rare and to have wrap around services all supporting the client is pretty unique. We’ve had some really good positive outcomes for our clients. One client gained enough confidence to approach their current employer and ask for more pay and more hours using the CV they had done with Routeways to justify their request and they were successful. Another client was helped to access funding for an accountancy course which gave them real hope that things would improve.”*
- *“We’ve had a long relationship with St Giles and Routeways has given us the potential for more cross referral so that clients that don’t meet our criteria can be referred to them and vice-versa. Their communication is fantastic and the whole team is excellent. They provide quality services and are great at responding. We get feedback on our clients which is really helpful. They are really supportive of the clients and they go the extra mile. Recently they met with an energy supplier who were seeking to recruit. St Giles did the whole recruitment process and so those who wanted to move into better jobs were trained and supported for the interviews. One of our clients had a panic attack unfortunately but they were great with her and got her back in for the next round of interviews. We have been seeing where we can work together on new initiatives because in-work support is critical for many of our clients.”*

## Mainstreaming the learning

The Routeways project has provided an excellent opportunity for SGT to develop effective ways of helping those in poorly paid employment to improve their work circumstances and their wider quality of life. In 2019, another project, Level Up, was launched by SGT. This service is designed to meet the needs of ex-offenders stuck in low paid work. In addition, recent new projects for residents in Southwark have included elements for those in low paid work as well as those not in work. The Better Placed partners as a whole are in the process of considering how they might further develop in-work provision to help people progress in their employment and careers.

The learning curve of establishing and developing Routeways continues to provide highly valuable input into the development and delivery of these services. SGT as an organisation has developed knowledge and expertise which is being shared across staff internally, as well as with project partners, key stakeholders including the Better Placed boroughs and through the Better Work network.

# Key design features for an effective service – suggestions for commissioners and providers

Drawing on the experience of St Giles services to tackle in-work poverty and that of other similar projects, and in the context of recent research into the issue, the following suggestions are intended to help inform commissioners' thinking and other providers embarking on this area of service.

A key overarching point to bear in mind is that there is a continuum from unemployment to progressive employment, with at least 3 stages at which interventions can and are delivered to help people, broadly: not in paid work, into work, progression in work.

Whilst an individual may require support at each stage of this process, either in a linear fashion or moving in and out of support, the skills required of the provider and staff, and nature of the support are different. Added to this, the level, complexity and intensity of support to help someone progress in work is likely to be greater the longer that they have been stuck in low paid employment. This means that services to support *progression in work* should be specified separately from *into work* support.

## Client engagement and progression

**Publicity and promotion:** should emphasise that the service is about improving people's employment circumstances and prospects. It is essential for an effective service to be holistic ie: able to support with housing, health, debt, caring responsibilities etc, and these issues are often as important to individuals as their work situation. However, if non-work support is given prominence in publicity and promotion, the service may not be able to target effectively those who are also very keen to try and move out of low paid work. It may inadvertently encourage employees who only want help with other needs such as housing and benefits etc.

**Referral sources:** having as wide as possible a referral network that includes Jobcentre Plus as well as others such as voluntary/community based organisations, food banks, debt advice centres, housing providers, children's centres etc. will maximise access for individuals, especially for those not claiming benefits. Delivery organisations should be able to demonstrate these referral networks.

**Selection criteria:** whilst it is important to have broad criteria to ensure effective targeting of those in poor employment, this should reflect the diversity of the cohort of the working poor:

- **UC claim not essential - targeting on the basis of UC alone denies the 'hidden poor' access to better work.**
- **Discretionary 6 month minimum employment - to take into account, for example, those who have recently been released from custody and have gone into a poorly paid job, or those who have been on and off zero hours contracts or in unstable or agency work.**
- **No qualification restrictions – experience shows that there are a significant number of people with higher level qualifications who still find themselves stuck in low paid work**

**Range of support:** experience shows that individuals not only need high quality IAG and career support, but also need access to support for housing, health, training, childcare and any other issue that is creating a barrier to progression at work. Given that nearly two thirds of St Giles' Routeways clients were women who were juggling childcare and family commitments with work, this is even more essential. Providers should be able to provide this range of support through a combination of in-house services and supported referral to trusted partner specialists.

**Staff skills and attributes:** whilst there are some common skills sets between staff working with people who are moving into work and those who are currently trying to progress from poorly paid work to better jobs, there are also some key differences. For example, the ability, skills and knowledge to support people who may have higher levels of qualification but lack the confidence and employment focused skills to compete for better jobs. This requires particular coaching ability and the skills to explore a wider range of career options and help source a wider variety of training that might normally be the case. The advantages of a dedicated employer engagement post are highlighted below. In addition to this, employee facing staff also need the ability and insight to understand how best an employer might be engaged in finding solutions.

**Caseloads:** people in low paid employment need as much support as their unemployed counterparts. An additional factor is that this support needs to be even more flexibly delivered to take into account their working patterns and, where applicable, family commitments. Ratios of staff to clients should be the same as that for services for unemployed people. Hours of delivery should also be flexible and include some later evenings and possibly weekends.

**Access to finance for training and other essential items:** given the very limited access for those in work to free training and financial support in general, and the financial constraints of apprenticeships, it is essential that any specification for in work support includes a spot purchase fund that can finance work related training and other essential items including equipment etc. where needed.

**Access to flexible, relevant training, including IT/digital skills:** one of the most challenging aspects of supporting in-work progression is the lack of flexible, employee focused training. Delivery organisations need to have relationships with training organisations that can accommodate people who are in work. This includes independent training providers that are more likely to have this flexibility and offer the range of industry standard training and qualifications required. Commissioners should encourage and explore these types of partnerships, including involving employers, in addition to the largely college based focus that they currently have. Particular focus should be given to enabling employees to develop IT/digital skills and confidence in using them.

**Data collection:** the experience of Routeways illustrates the need for robust and comprehensive data collection to enable a full understanding of the cohort, their barriers and progress. It may be helpful for commissioners to work with experienced delivery organisations to identify in specifications the key data that they would find particularly useful, bearing in mind that discussions would need to take place about the methods and feasibility of collecting the data.

## Employer engagement

Working with employers is an essential yet challenging element of supporting those stuck in low paid work to get better work and tackling the culture of low paid, poor quality employment. The overarching observation is that any employer engagement strategy must include a variety of possible approaches, treating employers as individually as low paid workers, and therefore specifications for this element of the service should not be prescriptive.

There are a number of important factors to consider in commissioning and delivering.



**Utilising job brokerage as a way to engage good quality employers that offer career options for clients** - recognising that many people in low paid work want to job/career change in order to improve their progression and prospects, and that this initial relationship provides an introduction to potential further development.

**Acknowledging that ‘3 way’ interventions (employer, employee, provider) may be rare but should still be encouraged**– the employee may not want their employer to know that they are getting support for fear of losing their job, however, experience indicates that this type of intervention can help, particularly for people with disabilities

**Dedicated employer engagement roles.** It is important that staff undertaking these roles have an in depth understanding of the client group (low paid workers) as well as the ability to see things from an employer’s perspective and engage employers in a variety of ways.

**Brokering relationships between employers and training providers** requires a highly bespoke approach if it is to work. Relationships between large employers and colleges are substantially different from those between smaller employers and independent training providers but both are highly valuable.

**Developing employer relationships that can result in real change is a long term prospect** – this means that projects should be funded ideally over a 3 year period.

**Commissioners should ensure that their organisations (and sub-contractors) pay the LLW and offer job progression,** and work strategically with other bodies and influencers (Mayor’s Office – particularly in the light of the Good Work standard, London Councils, Living Wage Foundation, Institute of Directors, Investors in People, trade bodies and other business facing organisations) to change the culture of low paid work and support the projects and services that they are commissioning.

## Outcomes

The success of projects aimed at helping low paid people into better work should be measured through a variety of outcomes that not only include the financial indicators but also those factors that are important to the individual in improving their quality of life. Suggested employee focused measures include:

- **Increases in hourly rate (including living wage measures)**
- **Increases in hours worked**
- **Improvements in contracts – movement from zero hours to fixed hours, part-time to full-time etc.**
- **Improvements in working conditions that accommodate personal and family circumstances more effectively – flexible hours, reasonable adjustments, reduction in travel time, childcare facilities/arrangements, accommodation of health conditions etc.**

It may also be worth considering more nuanced indicators for employer engagement, recognising the different levels of involvement and change that could take place, for example:

- **Employers engaging in enhanced job brokerage that recognises the need for good quality employment with prospects**
- **Employers engaging in positive discussions about staff training, development, flexible working, reasonable adjustments etc.**
- **Employers co-designing a staff development and training plan with the service provider and training provider**
- **Employers engaging in positive discussions about staff contracts ie: moving from zero hours to fixed hours, and/or increases in pay**
- **Employers making positive changes in staff contracts and pay**
- **Employers signing up to the LLW**

These suggestions for commissioners and delivery organisations are intended as starting points. They hopefully can contribute to taking forward the significant and valuable work that Routeways has achieved with employees and employers.