

Review of the Specialist Employability Support (SES) – Visual Impairment Contract

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1. The Programme (2015/2021)

1.1 The Overview

The Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) secured the Visual Impairment Strand of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Specialist Employability Support contract for England, Wales and Scotland to be delivered from 2015 to 2020. The programme was designed to provide a service to people that had some form of visual impairment and were at risk of exclusion from the job market. The programme helped them to secure and sustain employment or self-employment, through an individually tailored combination of guidance, learning in the workplace, work experience and training. Each customer received an individual bespoke action plan created for them by a dedicated advisor and then worked through this over a period of up to 52 weeks. The aim of the programme was to move customers into employment of 15 hours or more and sustain employment for 26 weeks. In Work Support was offered to help the transition into work.

Customers were initially offered a triage service by RNC. Those that were identified as wanting to attend their college based in Herefordshire, joined SES on a residential programme that allowed them to gain qualifications and prepared them to secure employment and receive In Work Support from the RNC College Team. Those customers that did not want to go to the RNC college but still wanted local support, were referred to 3SC and matched to one of our carefully selected delivery partners (DPs) that had the relevant expertise and were in close proximity to the customer.

Customers were initially referred to the programme by Job Centre Plus (JCP). The customer details were securely added and stored on our bespoke IT platform (Apricot Portal). 3SC then informed the DPs and the customers were assigned to the DP to start the next stage of their enrolment on to the contract. Once the enrolment was completed the customer's journey for their bespoke support commenced.

For 3SC, our referred customers were categorised into two strands:

1. **SES Start Back - a shorter-term provision:** SES Start Back customer support consisted of a shorter period of support designed to prepare the customer to move directly into employment within a 3-to-6-month period.

2. **SES Main - a longer term provision:** SES Main customers were identified as being further away from the job market and needed a longer duration of support on the contract of up to 12 months.

1.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The KPIs were aimed at progressing the customers through the support to ultimately secure employment and sustain it for at least 26 weeks. The KPIs were:

- 100% of customers to be registered for the programme.
- 100% of customers to have their induction within 20 days.
- 100% of customers to complete the provision.
- Job entries:
 - SES Main – 45% of customers to move into employment.
 - SES Start back – 40% of customers to move into employment.
- Short Job Outcome: Customers sustain employment for at least 13 weeks
 - SES Main – 45% of customers.
 - SES Start Back – 40% of customers.
- Sustained Job Outcome: customers sustain employment for at least 26 weeks
 - SES Main - 34% of customers
 - SES Start Back – 24% of customers

The results for the contract performance can be seen in the tables below.

		Contract to Date					Contract to Date						
		KPI	Target (%)	Target	Total	Total (%)	RAG						
SES	Referrals	N/A	N/A	207	N/A	B	Start Back	Referrals	N/A	N/A	80	N/A	B
	Non-Starters	N/A	N/A	25	12%	B		Non-Starters	N/A	N/A	25	31%	B
	Starters	N/A	N/A	182	88%	B		Starters	N/A	N/A	55	69%	B
	Early Leavers	N/A	N/A	30	16%	B		Early Leavers	N/A	N/A	7	13%	B
	Induction Comp	100%	182	182	100%	G		Induction Comp	100%	55	55	100%	G
	Induction within 20 days	100%	182	167	92%	A		Induction within 20 days	100%	55	51	93%	A
	Provision Comp	100%	182	141	77%	R		Provision Comp	100%	55	48	87%	A
	Job Entry	45%	63.5	30	21%	R		Job Entry	40%	19.2	10	21%	R
	Short Job	45%	63.5	23	16%	R		Short Job	40%	19.2	9	19%	R
	Sustained Job	34%	47.9	22	16%	R		Sustained Job	24%	11.5	8	17%	R

For the SES main strand, we had 207 customers registered of which 182 completed the enrolment stage. The 25 customers that did not start on the programme were either deemed as not eligible, unsuitable for the programme or the customer simply changed their mind and did not want to proceed.

The 182 customers that did start had to be fully enrolled within 20 days of being referred to 3SC. We achieved 92% for this KPI (167 customers) meaning that 15 customers exceeded the 20 days, however, this was due to the customer's availability at the time (holidays, hospital appointments or wrong contact details).

In relation to the KPI for all customers to complete their 52 weeks of support, during the 5-year term we only had 41 customers marked as early leavers (22% of the active caseload). The main reason for this was that customer's circumstances changed with their medical condition and had to withdraw from the support. Many customers left once the Coronavirus pandemic swept the nation, as these customers had underlying health conditions and felt they could not continue.

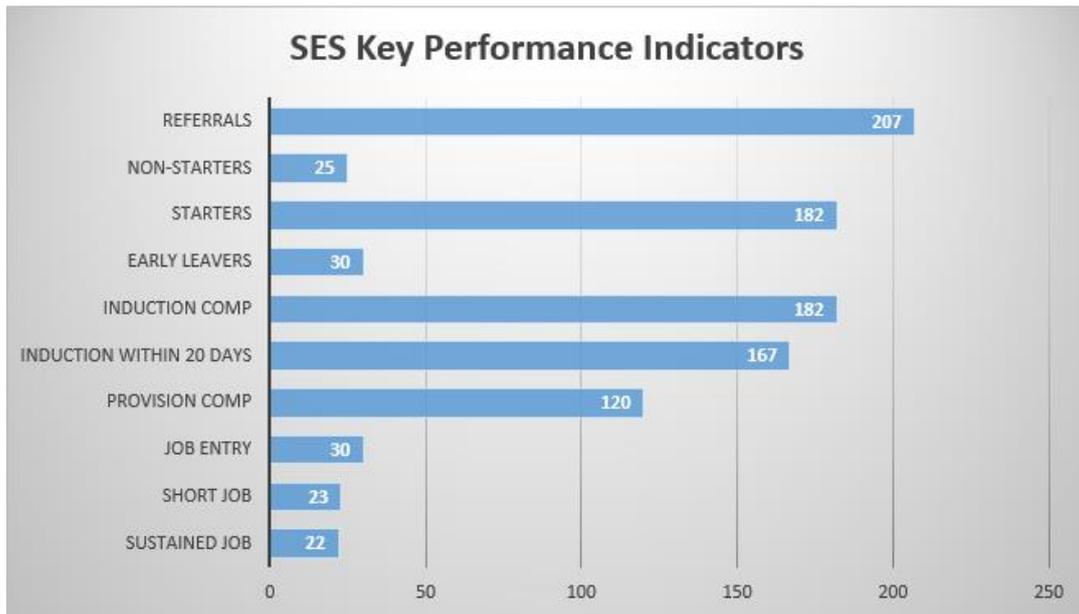
For the job entry and sustained outcomes KPIs for customers that did complete their support, we achieved 30 job starts which fell short of our target of 63. Prior to the pandemic, we were confident of reaching the target with the 50+ customers that remained on the caseload. Unfortunately, a significant amount of activity stopped with many of our customers having to shield and then the programme was closed early by the DWP. Our sustainments were also affected by the pandemic due to some customers being furloughed or deciding that they did not want to continue with the job. Our DPs worked very hard to try and secure alternative employment for those customers in the very short time frame so that the customers would meet their 13- and 26-week sustainments. We were confident that we would have reached the targets should the contract not have finished 8 months early.

The results for the SES Start Back strand were very similar to SES main. When enrolling customers on the programme, our DPs found that some customers were not suitable for the support and did not start on the contract. We achieved good performance on our KPI for inductions within 20 days which was high at 93% and our early leaver ratio over 3 years was low at 12% (early leavers from the entire caseload stood at 20% over the lifetime of the contract).

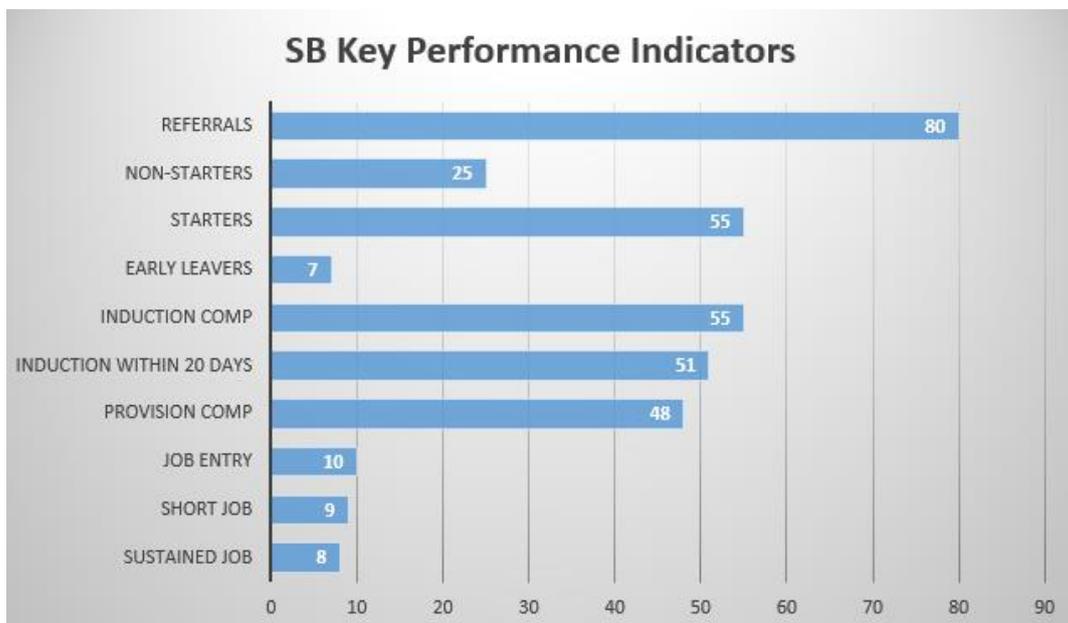
Our supply chain managed to secure 10 job starts from the 48 active customers which was below the identified target. However, all stakeholders and the commissioner, DWP, agreed

that the KPIs for this strand simply did not work for the customer demographic. This was also identified across the country from other primes delivering the SES contract. Therefore, after two years the DWP issued a 'Deed of Variation' which resulted in the withdrawal of the SES Start Back provision as it was not deemed suitable for SES.

SES Main Results:



SES Start Back Results:



1.3 Delivery Partners and Geographical Coverage

As SES was a national contract for England, Scotland and Wales, it was important to identify the DPs that could deliver the programme across all areas and had the capabilities to support customers with a visual impairment.

Table 1 shows the list of the 37 active DPs and the areas where they delivered the programme.

Table 1: Active SES Delivery Partners

Delivery Organisation	
Name	Areas
Access Training	North Wales, Cornwall, Devon, Somerset
Aspire Igen	Humberside
Black County Housing Association (BCHA)	West Midlands
Beacon Centre for the Blind	West Midlands
Beacon Centre for the Blind [2]	Staffordshire
Bootstrap	Lancashire
Breakthrough	Manchester
Capability Scotland	Scotland
CIS Ayresshire	Scotland
Compaid	East Sussex, Kent
Destiny	Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk
Disability Information Bureau [DIB]	Cheshire
ELITE Employment Support Agency	Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Vale of Glamorgan
Empower	Lincolnshire
Foresight	Lincolnshire
Gecko Programmes	West Midlands
Groundwork [1] - Manchester	Greater Manchester, Merseyside
Groundwork [2] - North East and Cumbria	Cumbria, Durham, Tyne & Wear
Groundwork [3] - Norfolk and Cambridgeshire	Norfolk, Cambridgeshire
Groundwork [4] - Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire
Groundwork [5] - London	London
Lancashire County Council	Lancashire

Leonard Cheshire Disability	London
Mencap	Derbyshire, Greater Manchester, Humberside, Nottinghamshire, West Yorkshire
Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind	Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan
PossAbilities	Greater Manchester, Lancashire, West Yorkshire
QEDUK	West Yorkshire
Rathbone	Scotland
Royal National Institute for the Blind [RNIB]	Scotland
Shores	Humberside
The Square Metre	Leicestershire, North Hamptonshire, Warwickshire
St. Giles Trust	London
Support4Sight	Essex
Tai Calon	Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen
TBG	Swansea, Neath, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Cardiff, Wiltshire
The Write Time	London
WECIL	Avon, Gloucestershire, Somerset
Woodspeen	West Yorkshire

Table 2 shows a list of 10 additional DPs that were in 3SC's supply chain but did not receive or secure any customer referrals. This was mainly due to the DPs and their local JCPs not being able to identify any eligible or suitable customers for the contract in their areas of delivery.

Table 2: Delivery Partners with No Referrals

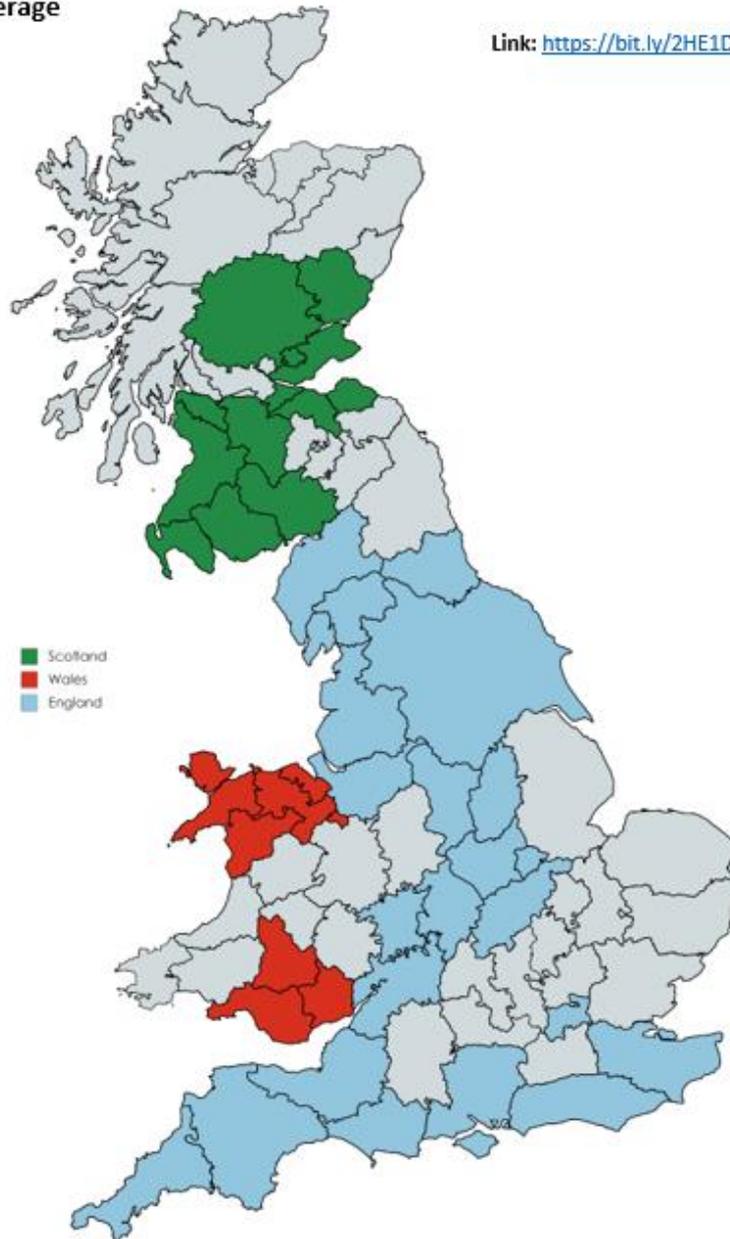
Delivery Organisation	
Name	Areas
Azure Charitable Enterprises	Northumberland
CPL Group	Cambridgeshire
Footprints Project	Hampshire, Dorset, South Somerset
Livability	Hampshire & Dorset

Norfolk Centre for Social Development	Norfolk, Suffolk
Pembrokeshire college	Pembrokeshire
RBLI	South East
RNIB Cymru	South Wales
Support4Sight	Essex
Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council	Liverpool
Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting Ltd	Wiltshire, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire

A total of 74 companies were contracted by 3SC over the life cycle of the 5-year SES contract which was the largest supply chain 3SC has managed to date. The greatest number of active DPs that were delivering at the same time was 23 during the period of September 2018. The average number of DPs active and delivering at any one time was 16.

1.1 Map of Coverage

Link: <https://bit.ly/2HE1DT8>



1.4 Contract Story

The SES contract delivery started in October 2015. 3SC had a supply chain in place ready to receive referrals. After a couple months 3SC had only received a handful of referrals. This was raised with RNC, the prime, so they could liaise with DWP to find out if there were any delays or issues. The response was that the JCPs did not have any customers that matched the

requirements for the programme. After a period of 6 months, 3SC had only received 30+ referrals, some of which were nonstarters as they were not eligible or suitable for the contract. As a result, the Contract Performance Manager (CPM) informed RNC that 3SC were going to put together a marketing strategy with the DPs to gain more interest and identify their own customers to be referred to the programme

Each DP was asked to submit their individual marketing ideas to 3SC. From there, the CPM drafted a master Marketing Strategy using all the ideas submitted across the DPs and held a conference call with the whole supply chain to run through the steps needed to increase the number of referrals.

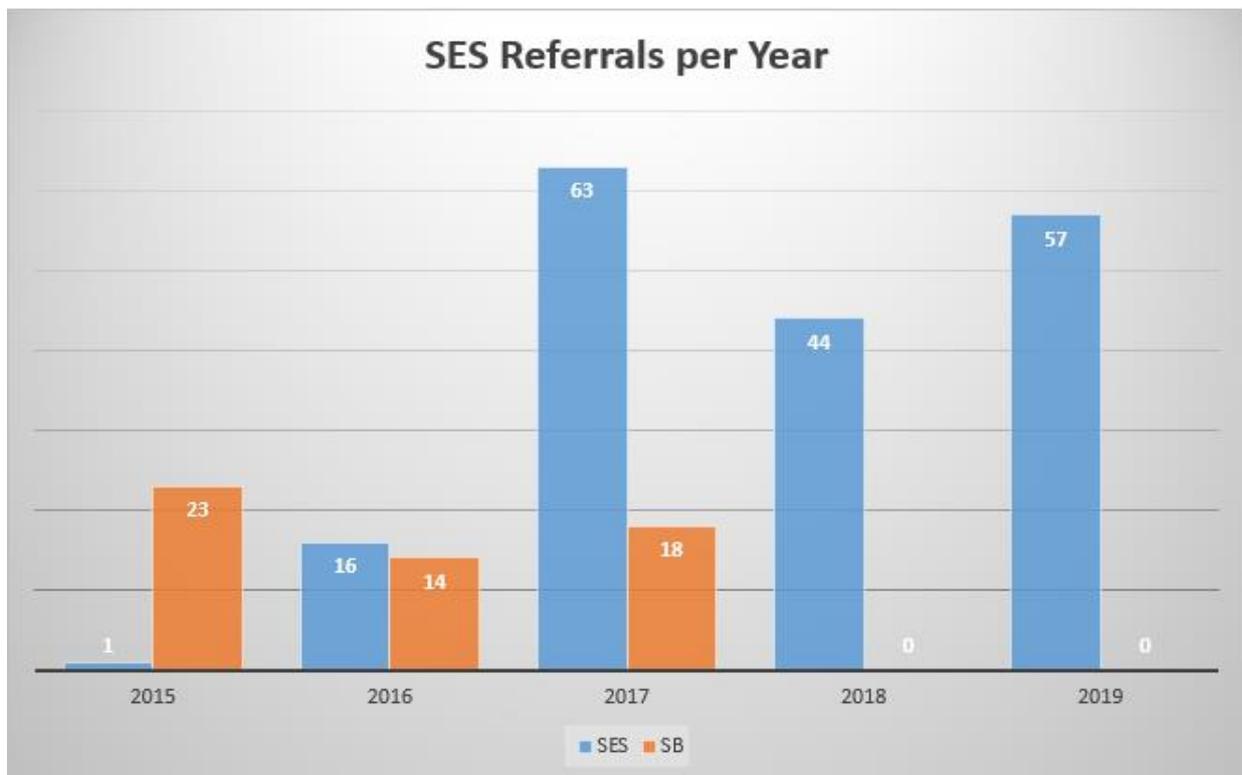
The Marketing Strategy and actions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: 3SC SES Marketing Actions

Marketing Task	How these actions will be conducted	Timescale/date
Job Centre Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide marketing information to the JCP Managers, ensure promotional literature is available in all JCP offices, such as the RNC brochure and discuss this further in regular face to face meetings, also via email and telephone meetings with the managers. • Face to face contact, as usually quite difficult to get in touch with advisors on the phone. • Confirm distinction between Disability and VI strands to relevant Job Centre staff whilst on site with the Job Centre Plus colleagues. • Introduction of relevant delivery staff to confirm skills and experience to deliver. • Sharing of marketing and publicity information • Ensure regular contact is made to keep up to date with any information and so any confusion is cleared up. 	Ongoing action.
Website Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPs to advertise the SES programme on their websites also to increase visibility and awareness 	To be completed by

	<p>and for promotional purposes, also advertise on any relevant Facebook pages and other social media websites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Service web page to include the details on the SES programme and upload the RNC leaflet. • Ensure appropriate project information is on the Website and clearly visible. • Interested parties for the SES provision should then be directed accordingly. • Use social media accounts effectively and regularly to promote the SES programme and increase awareness. 	the end of April.
Review current caseloads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any potential customers that would benefit from accessing the SES programme, review current internal caseloads, if suitable customers are identified, discuss with them the VI SES programme and the benefits and refer them to their local JCP offices to apply for the programme. • VI customers identified through caseload reviews and to be referred to JCP to request referral to SES VI. • Review caseloads or referrals to signpost the provision, all staff to review current caseloads and new referrals to see if they are better suited to SES, if so, refer back to JCP to make the referral. 	Ongoing action.
Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a standardised marketing advert to the Work Programme distribution newsletter/vacancy bulletin, ongoing action. • Include positive case study in the next issue of service newsletter. This has a distribution of over 1500, to include other professionals, JCP, employers and customers. 	Ongoing action.
External organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any relevant organisations outside of our supply chain and that is local to the DP geographic area and enquire about their current caseload to see if any customers suitable for the programme, to continue to promote the SES VI contract with those organisations. • Direct promotion of the SES programme within relevant job centres and any other relevant groups, and to ensure to remind them that the VI programme is available, ongoing action. 	Ongoing action

For the remainder of 2016, the DPs did a lot of work identifying and choosing the right customers for the programme. They had to not only be eligible but suitable for the programme. By having a pre induction meeting with the customers the DP had already built a relationship with them before the referral stage making the start of the support a smooth process. Unfortunately, the JCP took too long to refer customers onto the programme, therefore, 3SC again approached RNC to request that the DWP inform the JCPs to improve in this area. As can be seen in the graph below, 2017 saw a huge rise in referrals as a result of the actions taken.



Also in 2017, 3SC compiled statistics and information from our supply chain relating to the Start Back strand of the contract. It can be clearly seen that this strand was not effective and not suitable for the customer demographic and therefore not doing the contract performance justice in terms of outcomes and success rates. RNC and other Primes on SES also raised this with the DWP and as a result a Contract Variation was issued from DWP to confirm that for the remainder of the contract, the Start Back element will no longer be part of the KPI delivery. This was welcomed by both 3SC and our supply chain as it then allowed DPs to concentrate on the long-term support for their existing customers.

Table 4 provides a breakdown of how many customers each of the DPs received during the term of the contract.

Table 4: Delivery Partner Referral Numbers

Delivery Organisation		
Name	Number of Referrals	Non-Starters
Access Training	5	2
Aspire Igen	2	1
Black County Housing Association (BCHA)	1	
Beacon Centre for the Blind	12	2
Beacon Centre for the Blind [2]	6	
Bootstrap	7	
Breakthrough	2	
Capability Scotland	4	2
CIS Ayresshire	1	1
Compaid	7	1
Destiny	3	
Disability Information Bureau [DIB]	4	
ELITE Employment Support Agency	25	7
Empower	2	1
Foresight	1	
Gecko Programmes	5	11
Groundwork [1] - Manchester	22	1
Groundwork [2] - North East and Cumbria	17	4
Groundwork [3] - Norfolk and Cambridgeshire	1	
Groundwork [4] - Nottinghamshire	12	1
Groundwork [5] - London	4	2
Lancashire County Council	16	2
Leonard Cheshire Disability	10	7
Mencap	3	1
Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind	12	3
PossAbilities	12	3
QEDUK	2	1
Rathbone	1	
Royal National Institute for the Blind [RNIB]	10	1
Shores	2	

The Square Metre	4	1
St. Giles Trust	1	
Tai Calon	1	
TBG	2	
The Write Time	5	1
WECIL	9	2
Woodspeen	1	

3SC managed the supply chain in an inclusive and transparent way. Contract Performance Assessments (CPAs) were conducted with each of the active DPs during the life of the programme. A total of 837 CPAs were completed, most of which were done via conference calls on a bi-monthly basis. 3SC and RNC would arrange a meeting with a DP to conduct the CPA and where possible would also invite a customer along to discuss their experience of the programme. These meetings went very well and 3SC always received very positive feedback from RNC.

Monthly management checks for quality assurance were also conducted by the DPs and the 3SC Team. Thousands of checks were undertaken during the contract. The Apricot Portal was a success in allowing our DPs to compile effective management information (MI) and to check their performance against our service delivery levels. The feedback we received from the DPs was that this was the best portal they had used as it enabled operations to run smoothly but more importantly allowed the DP advisors to concentrate more time on providing effective support for their customers. The CPM also put in place a 'SES Forum' for the DPs to access best practice information, good news stories, case studies and also allowed 3SC to add news research articles and updates which could have a direct impact on our customers.

The 3SC CPM agreed held information events for our delivery partners which covered the latest tips and advice from RNC for the DP SES customers relating to visual impairment. One event was held in the south and one event was held in the north as so we could accommodate as many DPs as possible. These events were greatly appreciated by the DPs and allowed them to adapt the support for their customers.

In 2018 RNC applied for the Merlin Accreditation. 3SC and our delivery partners supplied feedback as part of an interview process. RNCs feedback stated:

"We are really pleased that our overall scoring rose by 3% especially as we were advised that for the majority of the Primes assessed under the revised framework that their score had gone down."

“Something that did come across very strongly was about the openness and transparency of our positive working relationship and how this transpires through to the DPs.”

Their overall outcome was 75%: Good.

This is the email that was then conveyed to the 3SC supply chain from the CPM:

“As you know, Following the Merlin Survey in late 2018, RNC recently went through the Merlin accreditation in January 2019. Considering that the new scoring parameters has now been widened with more areas being scrutinised, and where most other organisations scores have decreased from their previous Merlin accreditation, I am pleased to announce not only did RNC obtain the Merlin award again for SES, they have been the only organisation at present where their score has increased.

I have attached the full report above, and it does make for pleasant reading. There are many positive comments throughout the report and too many to specifically mention, but it clearly shows that we have great contract relations between all parties, a great MI system (Apricot) in place along with effective processes and effective communication. All in all, we are all striving towards the same goal which is to help our customers in to work and to improve their lifestyle.

On a last note, RNC has asked me to pass on their deepest appreciation for the amazing work and effort that all the delivery organisations put into this contract and also to those DP’s that took part in the Merlin interviews.

So well done to you all and a thank you as well from me and the 3SC Team.”

In 2018 and 2019 3SC received further contract variations which reflected a decrease in the financials for the outputs of the contract. Although this was a decrease, it was still a large amount of income for the DP to receive should the customer reach all of the KPIs. 3SC continued to reach out to more organisations around the UK to join our supply chain so we could offer full geographical coverage.

In 2020 due to Covid 19, all of the DP’s face to face support ceased for their customers and in work support also stopped due to customers being furloughed etc. The 3SC Team proactively worked with all the DPs to implement their Business Continuity Plans and to ensure that the revised operations would still deliver the programme as best as possible. The DPs did an amazing job putting in new adjustments and providing remote support with all of their active customers. This was done in a short space of time and their efforts were praised by the DWP

and RNC. However, as the contract only had 7-8 months remaining DWP offered the opportunity to RNC to either carry on with the contract delivery in its limited, virtual form or to accept a buyout and terminate the contract early. Eventually RNC decided on the latter, to terminate the contract early. However as no one wanted to just terminate customers from the programme, our DPs agreed to continue to provide the ongoing remote support for all their customers to the full term of their 12 months. This showed the level of commitment 3SC and our DPs had for the programme delivery and their customers.

1.5 Summary

The SES contract has been one of the longest employability programmes 3SC has delivered and also had the largest supply chain of delivery partners delivering it. The use of the Portal to track and manage referrals and customer data ensured that paperwork was kept to a minimum and allowed DPs to concentrate on providing an exceptional level of customer service. The portal also gave us excellent, up to date management information and reports. Being able to identify our own customers that could be referred on to the programme was the biggest turning point for our delivery.

As 3SC were working with so many DPs across the country, we had to provide effective and robust performance and quality management and improvement, and our approach delivered this to high standard as recognised by RNC and their Merlin assessment.

Although 3SC did not reach all of the KPI targets due to Covid and the contract finishing 7-8 months early, the DWP and RNC were extremely pleased with 3SC's performance and management of the contract. RNC, in particular, mentioned in our final meeting that even though this was a programme aimed at customers securing employment, the amount of support our VI customers have received was excellent and had enabled our customers to move closer to the job market which was a big achievement. A number of customers have continually struggled for much of their adult life in not being able to secure employment or even an interview, but with the support and intervention they received, it boosted their confidence on all levels, from communicating, to their IT skills, obtaining qualifications, how to conduct themselves during an interview and also broadening their goals and expectations on what employment or self-employment they could aim for.

1.6 Case Studies

3SC received 59 case studies during the period of the programme. Here is a selection:

Case Study 1: SES Client – JP August 2020

JP was initially referred as an active job searching client under the SES provision.

Initial contact with JP resulted in a start being delayed due to the client's father passing away and the client trying to deal with the associated grief and procedures on his own. It was agreed with his Disability Employment Advisors to defer the referral for a few weeks.

At the next contact it was agreed to meet at Beacon, however, JP failed to attend as he couldn't afford the bus ticket, so we rearranged the appointment and I agreed to meet him in Oldbury, where he lives.

Over the first few months of programme JP's attendance was hit and miss, he would frequently call to cancel meetings stating he was ill, or just not turn up. We arranged joint meetings with his DEA to try to agree an approach that would reach the client and that is where I became suspicious of his health, as it transpired that he hadn't had his eye condition diagnosed, he was suffering with depression and anxiety, and I frequently smelled alcohol on his breath. I approached the subject of JP's drinking habits on several occasions, he always denied a daytime drink and explained it would be from the night before. During this period, we arranged IT training and Technology training at Beacon, to which JP only attended 1 session and we had to retract the offers as others were on a waiting list to start.

I then became suspicious of his bad memory as he always needed reminding to attend appointments and his frequent bouts of sickness and illness. I arranged a meeting for 10am in Oldbury JCP where I addressed my concerns. I explained that I have his best interests in mind and that I couldn't help him without him being honest with me. At this point JP broke down and admitted he drinks during the day, and in a morning when he gets up, due to his ongoing grief and loneliness alongside the pressures of trying to find a job. From this point on I explained that I appreciated his honesty, and that I am not here to judge but to support, and now I was in a position to help him.

I discussed with his DEA that I felt he was not in fact in a good headspace to be looking for employment, and in my opinion, he needed to be on a sickness related benefit to get his life on track, before seeking employment again. The DEA agreed and we spoke to JP together.

Moving forward JP was able to use doctor's notes to release him from his job search requirements for 12 weeks, before I supported him in a move onto universal credit, and then onto the sickness element of the benefit, where he was told, he is no longer required to seek employment (support group).

With this new approach, JP really started to interact with me, always attending appointments as I always went to Oldbury, and doing many things I asked of him, such as making and attending GP appointments, getting referrals for his eye health at hospital etc. He had begun to trust me which was the start to him moving forward.

Covid stopped our interactions in March 2020, so I decided as JP was a vulnerable client, I would support him with several calls a week, some weeks early on I called every day to check on his mental health. His mental health deteriorated drastically over early lockdown and he made several attempts on his life. I referred him to social services with a safeguarding referral, to food banks for deliveries when he had run out of money or during self-isolation, to his GP, to the ambulance service and to the police when he went missing, and again, we have made progress and moved forward with his mental health.

We have a clear plan moving forward; JP is going to concentrate on getting his physical and mental health sorted. I will support him in chasing referrals once we can, and I have supported him in a PIP claim, which should help him feel more secure financially.

We discuss his drinking habits regularly and I encourage him to be open and honest. His GP is working on appropriate support referrals, and I will support JP through that process once we are able to again. His DEA is also very supportive and calls JP to keep in touch.

Now SES has finished, and JP completed his year on programme I will continue the support in an unchanged way, as I feel we have reached a pivotal point in support. I continue to call JP twice a week at the moment and will see him regularly once we can resume face to face contact.

Although we haven't achieved an outcome for JP, I feel we have made a big difference to his life and will continue to offer that support until JP no longer requires such in depth interventions.

Case Study 2: SES Client - L

June 2020

L had been on Universal credit for several months since leaving his last role as Advisor at Oakwood Finance LTD. He had to leave his last role due to his eye condition getting worse throughout his employment.

He felt he was not getting much support from his work coach at DWP and was worrying in case he was going to be unemployed for a while. He was unable to carry out an effective job search and was relying on Indeed when searching and applying for employment.

Although L was very skilful and highly literate, he found himself lacking job searching skills.

We have supported L in carrying out an effective job search and using website he never thought of before.

L has secured employment with HMRC being the forefront of calls from members of the public working as a Customer Service Consultant. He has managed to sustain employment for over 26 weeks.

L Feels very confident and excited for the future. He is working for a very good employer who understands his eye condition and the correct peers are in place to help L progress within his role and HMRC.

“Since joining Groundwork I have found them very professional in their approach in getting me into work. My advisor was extremely professional and very pro-active to my individual requirements regarding my disability and helped me from start to finish in finding full time work. Once secured, he and Groundwork assisted me in settling in my role and helping me prove my worth. I would highly recommend them and my advisor.”

L plans to continue in employment with HMRC as the career progression seems promising. He has a good team around him and has great support from his manager. HMRC and his manager understand that he has a visual impairment and will be doing all they can for Lee to have a sustainable job.

Case Study 3: SES Client - A **May 2017**

The Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind delivers the SES programme for 3SC/RNC in South Wales and is a longstanding charity with experience of supporting disabled and disadvantaged people into employment.

In April 2016 we received the referral for A who has Aniridia which means that the iris of her eye has not formed correctly and her vision is affected. A has a significant sight loss and is classed as Registered Blind although she does have some limited vision and requires aids and adaptations in the workplace to work independently.

A was assigned an advisor who has worked closely with her to identify suitable job opportunities and to improve her employability skills. She had been unemployed for about 4 years before she was referred to SES and was during this time a carer for both foster children and her parents. A already had extensive work experience and had before being signposted to SES applied for a job with the Alzheimer's Society. We were very happy to be able to support her into this job as a BME Information Officer which she started in May 2016. A is also a qualified social worker and has experience in this field as well as in fostering and other areas or work.

It was identified that although the job had been secured, support was required to ensure that the appropriate aids and support would be put in place in order for A to succeed in this role. We worked closely together to progress the Access to Work application which posed problems at every turn. Although the initial application for ATW support had been submitted before A started work, it took weeks for the initial assessment to be carried out. The ATW advisor assigned to the case contacted A but subsequently did not log all information provided and went on long-term sick leave. This meant that we had to chase up for the assessment which eventually took place after Anne had been in work for 5 weeks. There were then issues with the assessment as it only covered aids and adaptations and not the need for Fares in Work. Luckily, with perseverance and support from her advisor, this has now been resolved.

A loves her job but was worried about the impact the ATW application issues would have on it and for other disabled people seeking work in the organisation. Her employer is supportive but A was conscious that if she was unable to carry out the duties of the role she would not be kept on following the probationary period. As the ATW application was finally approved, this issue was resolved, and A successfully passed the probationary period.

SES has provided A and her employer with contact support as well as support with her ATW application and both note that this has been invaluable as the process has been very frustrating.

In addition to this support, the SES Advisor has been working with A to increase her employability skills by updating and reviewing her CV, developing skills for completing application forms and also updating her interview skills by training sessions and mock interviews. A is conscious that her current job is a 1 year contract to May 2017 and she wants to be prepared and have the skills in order to apply for alternative positions if needed. She is developing in her role and hopes that the work she does will demonstrate a further need for this post.

A's long term plans are to remain in employment and ideally increase her hours. She feels that her role has allowed her to develop and that she has had an impact on the community where she works. When asked about SES and her advisor, this was her response:

'The programme has provided me with very good support and has been helpful in reducing the stress regarding communicating with ATW and I feel that the outcome would have been very different without the support. All support has been delivered in a non-patronising manner and I feel like an ordinary person when speaking to the advisor. We have an equal relationship, and this has been a real bonus. It is fundamental to have support from specialist providers when going back into work in terms of making the transition successful. Knowledge of a person's condition specific needs is very important and has been provided in my case.'