

Project Evaluation: CVSC Capacity Building Project

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**Cymorth
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Conwy**



**Community
Voluntary
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Conwy**



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1 Executive Summary

Introduction

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund, funded under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), was designed to strengthen the voluntary sector in Conwy, supporting organisations to enhance their resilience, sustainability, and impact. Through financial support, capacity building, and volunteer engagement, the programme has helped third-sector organisations expand their services, improve infrastructure, and strengthen governance.

This evaluation assesses the programme's effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, ensuring compliance with UKSPF evaluation guidelines. It provides key insights into programme interventions, outputs, outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned, offering recommendations for future funding and voluntary sector development.

All the interventions within this programme sit with Investment priority Communities and Place.

Programme objectives and scope

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund was designed to:

- Support voluntary organisations in Conwy through financial assistance and capacity-building initiatives.

- Increase volunteering and social action, strengthening community cohesion and participation.

- Build financial sustainability, helping organisations develop long-term funding strategies.

- Address economic and social disparities, ensuring equitable access to resources and support.

- Enhance governance and operational effectiveness within third-sector organisations.

The fund was aligned with UKSPF priorities, supporting initiatives that contribute to:

- Pride in Place – strengthening community identity and civic engagement.

- Economic Inclusion – increasing opportunities for skills development and volunteering.

- Community-Led Development – ensuring locally driven initiatives receive the necessary funding and support.

Key findings and achievements

The programme met or exceeded key UKSPF targets, demonstrating strong financial management, strategic alignment, and sector engagement:

1,004 volunteering opportunities supported against a target of 90.

189 organisations received non-financial capacity-building support (target: 106).

1,524 individuals participated in community engagement initiatives (target: 120).

1,432 households accessed cost-of-living support (target: 60).

£808,321.13 in grants distributed to 61 third-sector organisations (as of 19/02/25, exceeding the target of 33).

The programme significantly enhanced community resilience, supporting projects that delivered:

Training and capacity-building for third-sector organisations to improve governance and sustainability.

Volunteer engagement programmes increasing participation in social action initiatives.

Infrastructure improvements in community centres and local services.

Feasibility studies that supported long-term community asset transfers and sustainability planning.

Challenges and lessons learned

While the programme delivered strong results, some challenges emerged:

Short funding timelines – Limited time for project implementation created difficulties for some organisations.

Administrative complexity – Some organisations struggled with UKSPF reporting requirements and financial monitoring processes.

Volunteer recruitment variability – Some projects faced lower-than-expected volunteer engagement, requiring further structured management and support.

Community engagement barriers – Some initiatives struggled to reach disengaged groups, highlighting the need for targeted outreach strategies.

Key lessons from the programme include:

Early stakeholder engagement – Ensuring project alignment with community needs from the outset enhances long-term impact.

Flexible fund management – Simplified reporting structures can improve accessibility for smaller voluntary organisations.

Long-term planning for sustainability – Future funding models should focus on strategic financial planning and organisational resilience.

Impact on policy and strategic priorities

The programme has contributed to national and regional policy priorities, including:

UKSPF priorities: Enhancing volunteering, economic inclusion, and social resilience.

Welsh Government Priorities: Strengthening the foundational economy, tackling economic inactivity, and promoting social inclusion.

Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) Priorities: Supporting community cohesion, local business growth, and cultural engagement.

Well-being of Future Generations Act: Aligning with sustainability goals by investing in community assets, volunteer engagement, and social well-being initiatives.

Recommendations for future investment

To build on the success of the CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund, future programmes should:

Strengthen volunteer infrastructure – Develop structured volunteer recruitment and retention strategies, ensuring long-term participation.

Increase funding periods – Allow for longer-term funding cycles to improve project implementation and sustainability planning.

Enhance monitoring and evaluation – Implement streamlined reporting frameworks to reduce administrative burdens on organisations.

Foster collaborative funding models – Encourage joint applications between voluntary, public, and private sector partners to increase resource efficiency.

Improve strategic communication – Strengthen partnerships with local government and funders to ensure alignment with broader policy goals.

Target hard-to-reach groups – Develop community outreach strategies to engage underrepresented groups in volunteering and social initiatives.

Conclusion

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has successfully strengthened the voluntary sector in Conwy, exceeding UKSPF targets and delivering significant social, economic, and cultural benefits. By addressing skills development, financial sustainability, and volunteering, the fund has empowered local organisations and ensured long-term community resilience.

Future investment should focus on strategic capacity-building, sustainable funding, and improved collaboration to maintain and enhance the impact achieved through this programme. The lessons learned provide a valuable framework for future funding rounds, ensuring that voluntary sector organisations continue to thrive and contribute to inclusive, community-led development in Conwy and beyond.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

The Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Key Fund, delivered by Community & Voluntary Support Conwy (CVSC), was funded under UKSPF with an aim to strengthen the voluntary sector in Conwy. The project sought to enhance the resilience, capacity, and sustainability of Third Sector organisations by providing targeted financial support, training, and volunteer engagement opportunities.

The programme was designed to address key priorities, including:

Improving skills and increasing employability within the voluntary sector.

Encouraging community-led initiatives to foster Pride in Place.

Supporting organisations to become financially sustainable beyond grant funding.

Enhancing volunteering and social action opportunities to strengthen community cohesion.

This project was aligned with the broader Welsh Government priorities, which focused on reducing economic inactivity, strengthening the foundational economy, and promoting community resilience. Key objectives included supporting skills development, enhancing employability, improving access to services for disadvantaged groups, and fostering social inclusion. Additionally, the fund aimed to increase volunteering and civic engagement, ensuring communities had the capacity to lead local initiatives. Sustainability was also a priority, with an emphasis on green skills, digital inclusion, and long-term economic resilience.

The programme also contributed to CCBC's SPF strategy, focusing on supporting the foundational economy and addressing economic inactivity through capacity-building initiatives. CVSC played a key role in ensuring that SPF funding was effectively distributed to eligible organisations and that funded projects contributed to long-term community benefits.

2.2 Evaluation purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to:

Assess the effectiveness of the Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Key Fund in delivering its stated objectives.

Measure the impact of grant funding on voluntary sector organisations, volunteers, and communities.

Identify successes, challenges, and areas for improvement in programme delivery.

Provide evidence-based recommendations for future funding, sustainability, and governance improvements.

The evaluation focuses on:

The reach and effectiveness of funding allocation, including the impact on Third Sector organisations.

The effectiveness of training and capacity-building initiatives in strengthening voluntary organisations.

Volunteer engagement outcomes, assessing the role of SPF funding in increasing participation.

Governance and project management, ensuring transparency and accountability in fund administration.

The intended audience for this evaluation includes:

CVSC leadership and delivery teams to inform future programme improvements.

CCBC and the UKSPF Monitoring Team to assess fund utilisation.

Third Sector organisations and stakeholders to understand the long-term impact of capacity-building investments.

Welsh Government and regional policymakers to provide insights for future funding allocations.

2.3 Structure of the report

This report is structured to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Key Fund, outlining its objectives, outcomes, and impact, while also identifying key challenges and lessons learned.

The Methodology section (Section 5) explains the evaluation framework, data collection methods, and analytical approaches used to assess the programme. It details how quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from grant recipients, beneficiaries, volunteers, and stakeholders, ensuring a robust evidence base for the findings.

The project overview (Section 6) provides a detailed account of the project's aims, scope, and alignment with policy priorities. It outlines how the Key Fund was structured to support voluntary organisations in Conwy, linking its objectives to UKSPF, Welsh Government, and CCBC priorities.

The findings and analysis (Section 7) presents the key outcomes and performance measures of the programme. This section explores the impact of grant funding, levels of volunteer participation,

and the effectiveness of training initiatives. It also examines how the fund contributed to building the capacity and sustainability of third-sector organisations.

To illustrate the programme's real-world impact, case studies (Section 8) highlight individual experiences of grant recipients. These provide qualitative insights into how funding was used, the challenges faced, and the long-term benefits for organisations and their communities.

The stakeholder perspectives (Section 9) summarise qualitative feedback from key stakeholders, including grant recipients, volunteers, CVSC staff, and Conwy Council representatives. This section captures reflections on the programme's effectiveness, areas for improvement, and recommendations from those involved in its implementation and delivery.

The conclusions (Section 10) reflect on the programme's overall achievements and challenges, drawing together key findings from the evaluation. It provides an assessment of how well the fund met its objectives and identifies broader lessons for similar initiatives in the future.

Recommendations (Section 11) offer strategic guidance for improving future funding structures, governance, and programme delivery. Based on evaluation insights, this section suggests ways to strengthen voluntary sector resilience, enhance fund accessibility, and improve financial oversight.

The appendices (Section 12) contain supporting documentation, including survey results, data tables, and supplementary information on stakeholder engagement.

Finally, the references section (Section 13) lists all data sources, policy documents, and guidance materials used throughout the evaluation.

3 Methodology

3.1 Evaluation framework

The evaluation of the Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Key Fund was conducted using a Logic Model framework to map inputs, activities, delivery of the Welsh Government Investment priorities, outputs, and outcomes. This approach was complemented by Outcome Mapping to capture changes in stakeholder behaviours and contributions beyond immediate outputs. The Logic Model allowed for a structured analysis of project achievements against planned objectives, while outcome mapping helped document qualitative impacts on organisations, volunteers, and beneficiaries.

3.2 Data collection methods

Document review

Grant application forms of all organisations that applied for Key Fund grants, including successful and unsuccessful applicants, were reviewed to understand the proposed interventions. We collated monitoring forms from funded organisations, and these were analysed to assess progress against key targets and the effectiveness of interventions. Reports and financial records were reviewed to ensure compliance with UKSPF guidelines and budget allocations

Stakeholder interviews

A structured interview process was implemented, ensuring input from all relevant stakeholders:

Grant recipients were invited to share their experiences, challenges, and successes.

Beneficiaries of funded projects were identified by grant recipients and interviewed to capture the direct impact of the programme.

Grant applicants who had been declined funding were interviewed to understand the impact of not receiving funding and to establish whether they had been supported sufficiently through the process.

Volunteers who participated in UKSPF-funded projects were asked about skills gained and the personal impact of their roles.

We interviewed training participants to assess the effectiveness of skills development and capacity-building efforts.

CVSC staff involved in project management were interviewed to evaluate the efficiency of programme delivery and internal challenges.

Finally, Conwy Council's UKSPF Monitoring Team was consulted to triangulate findings and validate project performance against funding criteria.

All interviewees were offered the choice to participate in Welsh or English, ensuring bilingual accessibility and inclusivity.

Case studies

Detailed case studies were developed to provide an in-depth review of selected projects funded under UKSPF. These case studies illustrate best practices, challenges, and lessons learned.

The selection criteria for case studies included geographic representation, sector diversity, and impact on beneficiaries. Case studies were created for the following organisations, who delivered projects under the Shared Prosperity Fund. These appear as appendices in the report. Abergele Community Action; Betws y Coed Community Council; Hummingbird Project; Llanfairfechan and North Wales Croquet Club; She Shed Abergele; Trefriw Town Council; TVConwy and Clwb yr Efail.

Surveys

Surveys were conducted over the phone or in a virtual meeting to grant recipients, beneficiaries, volunteers, and training participants to gather quantitative and qualitative data on programme outcomes.

The surveys included Likert-scale questions, open-ended responses, and multiple-choice sections to ensure comprehensive feedback collection.

Respondents were able to complete surveys via phone, or virtual interviews, improving response rates, depth of response and accessibility.

Data analysis

Quantitative analysis

Statistical methods were applied to monitoring data, survey responses, and financial reports to measure the programme's reach and effectiveness.

Key performance indicators included number of grants awarded, volunteer placements created, training sessions delivered, and participation levels at training and volunteering.

Trend analysis was conducted to identify patterns in funding allocation, participation demographics, and impact measures.

Qualitative analysis

A thematic analysis was used to review interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses.

Emerging themes were categorised under community engagement, skills development, volunteer impact, financial sustainability, and organisational resilience.

Case studies were used to illustrate individual success stories and highlight common challenges encountered by grant recipients.

Limitations

Time constraints

The evaluation was conducted within a fixed timeframe, limiting the ability to track long-term impacts of capacity-building efforts and community engagement.

Some monitoring reports were still being collated during the later stages of evaluation, affecting real-time data completeness.

Data availability

Some grant recipients struggled to provide detailed evidence of impact, particularly where projects were still ongoing.

While efforts were made to engage all beneficiaries, some declined participation or were unavailable for follow-up interviews.

Inclusivity measures

Bilingual options (Welsh and English) were offered in all interactions, ensuring linguistic accessibility.

Flexible engagement approaches were used, including evening and weekend interviews, to accommodate different schedules.

Alternative methods such as phone interviews were provided for participants unable to access Teams or Zoom.

4 Project overview

4.1 Project objectives

The Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Key Fund, delivered by CVSC, was designed to provide financial and developmental support to voluntary sector organisations in Conwy. The project's key objectives, as outlined in the UKSPF funding application, were to:

- Enhance the capacity and sustainability of voluntary sector organisations by providing small grants ranging from £500 to £60,000.

- Expand training and skill development opportunities for voluntary organisations to improve governance, financial resilience, and volunteer management.

- Encourage and facilitate volunteering opportunities, increasing participation and engagement in community-driven activities.

- Support local organisations in their recovery and long-term sustainability, particularly considering challenges arising from economic pressures and post-pandemic recovery.

- Promote community-led initiatives that align with the UKSPF's focus on fostering a sense of Pride in Place and strengthening local civic engagement.

These objectives were designed in collaboration with the voluntary sector to ensure that the Key Fund addressed identified local needs and delivered maximum impact across the county.

4.2 Scope of the work

The project involved a multi-faceted approach to supporting the voluntary sector, comprising three key areas of activity:

Grant distribution

The project managed a Key Fund, distributing small to medium-sized grants to voluntary organisations. These grants were used for infrastructure improvements, training, volunteer recruitment, and community engagement activities.

CVSC ensured that monitoring and evaluation processes were put in place to track impact and ensure compliance with UKSPF funding requirements.

Capacity building

CVSC delivered a suite of training workshops tailored to the needs of the voluntary sector, covering topics such as: Volunteer management; sustainable funding strategies; governance and compliance; equality, diversity, and inclusion; and project evaluation and impact measurement.

In addition, they provided one-to-one support to organisations requiring additional guidance on funding applications, financial management, and strategic planning.

Volunteering and community engagement

The project encouraged new volunteer engagement, particularly in priority areas such as community transport, social inclusion, and environmental initiatives. It supported local events and initiatives designed to foster civic pride and strengthen community networks.

CVSC also worked in partnership with Conwy's Third Sector Support Wales network to enhance volunteer recruitment and retention efforts.

4.3 Alignment with UK Shared Prosperity Fund priorities

The UKSPF has been designed to address regional disparities and empower communities through locally driven initiatives. The CVSC Key Fund aligns with several key UKSPF priorities at UK, Welsh Government, and Conwy levels:

4.4 UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund priorities

The project directly supports the UKSPF investment priority of "Community and Place", particularly through:

W9 - Strengthening volunteering and social action, increasing engagement in community activities.

W11 - Enhancing capacity and sustainability of voluntary organisations, ensuring long-term resilience.

W12 - Encouraging civic pride and social cohesion, fostering engagement in local initiatives.

W15 - Supporting social and economic participation, helping residents access opportunities for personal and professional development.

W13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.

W14: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.

4.5 Welsh Government priorities

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund also successfully aligned with and delivered on Welsh Government's priorities, contributing to economic inclusion, social engagement, community resilience, and environmental sustainability.

Key achievements include:

Strengthening the foundational economy, ensuring voluntary organisations became more resilient.

Expanding access to essential services, reducing inequalities and improving well-being.

Increasing civic participation and community engagement, fostering pride in place.

Delivering long-term sustainability and environmental responsibility, ensuring responsible investment in community infrastructure.

By funding diverse, impactful projects, the programme has made a measurable contribution to the people of Conwy, which closely aligns with the Welsh Government's priorities. It has also contributed to leaving a lasting legacy in Conwy's voluntary sector.

4.6 Conwy local priorities

CCBC UKSPF strategy focuses on enhancing community resilience and strengthening the third sector. The CVSC Key Fund supports Conwy's specific UKSPF objectives by:

Providing targeted financial support to voluntary organisations delivering key community services.

Expanding training and skills development opportunities, strengthening the sector's ability to deliver high-quality services.

Encouraging social inclusion and participation, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

5 Governance and delivery

5.1 Management of the grant programme by Community & Voluntary Support Conwy

Programme coordination and strategic oversight

The UKSPF funded Key Fund was managed by CVSC's dedicated programme team, which included staff overseeing grant distribution, financial compliance, training, and applicant support. The Chief Officer provided strategic leadership, ensuring the fund aligned with broader community development goals. The Grants Manager and Capacity Building Project Manager took a hands-on approach to supporting organisations, particularly those with limited experience in funding applications.

A significant priority in managing the programme was ensuring accessibility, particularly for smaller community groups that traditionally struggle to access funding. CVSC made a conscious decision to simplify application processes where possible, providing extensive pre-application support and feedback to improve submission quality. This was complemented by tailored training and workshops, equipping organisations with the skills to develop sustainable funding strategies.

5.2 Strengths of CVSC's approach

Proactive applicant support

CVSC staff engaged with potential applicants before and during the application process, offering guidance on funding criteria and project development. This support included a number of face to face surgeries as well as webinars. Feedback from grant applicants indicated that this level of support was highly valued with some saying that they probably wouldn't have applied with having the help from CVSC

The Grants Manager provided bid-writing support and financial planning advice, helping organisations articulate their needs effectively. Smaller groups received hands-on mentoring, including help with compliance and governance to ensure eligibility.

Effective financial oversight

The Business Manager developed a financial tracking system that monitored committed, planned, and actual spending in real time.

Despite challenges with Gwynedd Council's reporting templates, CVSC adapted their processes to meet UKSPF's strict financial oversight requirements.

Financial processes were transparent and robust, ensuring grant funds were allocated efficiently and remained within compliance regulations.

Capacity building beyond funding

The training programme covered essential topics such as governance, bid writing, and income diversification, strengthening organisations beyond the funding period.

A key aspect of CVSC's support was embedding sustainability into projects, ensuring that organisations were not solely dependent on short-term grants.

The team facilitated networking opportunities, connecting organisations to relevant stakeholders and funding sources.

Responsive and flexible approach

When funding delays or administrative challenges arose, CVSC actively worked with grantees to find solutions, such as adjusting budgets and repurposing underspent funds.

The Grants Manager played a key role in adapting budgets, ensuring that money remained within the community rather than being returned.

The team maintained open communication with applicants, ensuring clear guidance on compliance and reporting requirements.

5.3 Challenges encountered

Short funding timelines

The limited timeframe for applying, receiving, and spending UKSPF funding placed pressure on applicants, particularly smaller organisations with limited administrative capacity. Many groups struggled to complete projects within deadlines, requiring CVSC to assist in adjusting project scopes and timelines.

Administrative complexity

UKSPF reporting requirements were rigid and time-consuming, leading to multiple iterations of claim forms and additional compliance burdens. Some organisations found financial reporting overly complex, requiring extra support from CVSC to navigate claims processes.

Variability in engagement with training

While bid-writing workshops were well attended, some standalone training sessions had lower than expected uptake. Free training led to high non-attendance rates, prompting CVSC to introduce a cancellation fee for larger events to encourage commitment.

Delays in fund disbursement

Payment delays from Gwynedd Council created cash flow difficulties for some organisations, particularly those reliant on external funding sources. CVSC mediated between grantees and fund administrators to resolve financial bottlenecks, ensuring minimal disruption to project delivery.

5.4 Lessons learned and recommendations

There is a need for longer funding periods if we are going to ensure that the voluntary and community sector can mobilise and deliver on the outcomes. Extending grant timelines would allow organisations more time to plan, deliver, and measure project impact effectively.

Streamlined administrative processes are essential, particularly where smaller organisations have limited administrative capacity. Whilst proper monitoring of public funds is important, reducing paperwork duplication and improving financial reporting templates would minimise burdens on both grant holders such as CVSC and grantees.

Enhanced digital training delivery offers the opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to use digital transformation to increase capacity. Offering hybrid or recorded training sessions for example, could increase accessibility for organisations struggling to attend in-person workshops.

Earlier financial engagement: Working with funders at the outset to clarify financial processes could reduce delays and improve cash flow management for grantees.

Stronger data integration: Investing in automated financial and CRM tracking systems would provide a more seamless link between funding allocations and project outcomes.

CVSC successfully delivered the UKSPF Key Fund through a highly supportive, hands-on approach, ensuring that funding reached organisations that might otherwise have struggled to access financial support. Their commitment to capacity building, proactive applicant support, and financial accountability significantly strengthened Conwy's voluntary sector. Despite challenges around funding timelines and administrative complexity, CVSC's ability to adapt, problem-solve, and prioritise community needs ensured that the programme was a success. The lessons learned provide valuable insights for future grant delivery models, reinforcing the importance of accessibility, flexibility, and sustainability in community funding.

5.5 Transparency in funding allocation

Overview of the funding allocation process

The allocation of funding under the UKSPF Voluntary Sector Key Fund has been structured to ensure transparency, fairness, and alignment with strategic priorities. The funding approval process follows a structured sequence of steps, incorporating multiple layers of review and accountability.

Key elements of the process include:

Clear governance and decision-making structure

The UKSPF Grants Panel, composed of representatives from the voluntary sector and community organisations, is responsible for assessing applications. CVSC Officers manage the technical eligibility review, ensuring applications meet the required criteria before being presented to the panel.

Application and review procedures

Applications are submitted for consideration under strict guidelines, with a transparent selection framework in place. Each application is reviewed based on predefined eligibility and impact criteria before reaching the panel. Panel members declared any conflicts of interest before reviewing applications.

Evaluation and decision-making criteria

The panel assesses applications based on: Feasibility and deliverability of the project; alignment with UKSPF objectives; financial sustainability and value for money and potential impact on the local community.

Detailed minutes were recorded to document discussions and decisions made, enhancing transparency.

Panel meetings and final decision-making

One panel meeting was held on the 6th November 2023 to assess applications to the main fund. Other applications, for micro grants were considered by the team on a rolling basis. The outcome decisions were retained as a record of the decision and the process. Decisions included full funding approvals, partial awards with conditions, or rejections based on comprehensive discussions. Special conditions were frequently attached to grants to ensure compliance with UKSPF goals (e.g., requiring additional volunteer recruitment or planning permissions before fund disbursement).

5.6 Validation of transparency measures

The robustness of the funding process is reflected in multiple checks and balances embedded into the evaluation and allocation framework:

Conflict of interest management

Panel members were required declare any potential conflicts before reviewing applications.

Those with conflicts were excluded from discussions and decision-making on relevant applications.

Documentation and record-keeping

Comprehensive records were maintained for all applications, including approvals, rejections, and conditions applied to funding. Meeting minutes detailed the rationale for each funding decision, which strengthened transparency and allowed for independent review.

Use of pre-conditions for grant awards

In cases where concerns were raised, funding has been awarded with pre-conditions to ensure accountability. Examples included: Requiring additional documentation such as planning permissions or proof of funding from other sources.

Setting conditions for project sustainability, such as ensuring new roles created were bilingual where necessary.

Monitoring and compliance measures

The monitoring process ensured that funds were used appropriately, with expenditure evidence required (e.g., receipts, invoices, payroll records).

Projects failing to comply with monitoring requirements risked funding withdrawal.

The fund retained a small reserve to address potential budgetary discrepancies in final project costs.

Best practices in transparency

The UKSPF funding allocation process aligns with best practices in grant management, including:

- Publicly available guidelines ensuring applicants understand eligibility and assessment criteria before applying.

- Independent review and decision-making: A panel composed of diverse representatives reduces the risk of bias.

- Formalised appeals and queries process: Applicants can seek clarification on funding decisions.

- Regular monitoring and reporting: Ensuring compliance with financial and project delivery expectations.

5.7 Conclusion

The funding allocation process under the UKSPF Voluntary Sector Key Fund demonstrates strong adherence to principles of transparency, fairness, and accountability. The structured approach, combined with detailed documentation and independent review, ensured that funding decisions were justified and aligned with community priorities. Future refinements could include increasing public access to summary reports on funding outcomes in order that organisations can understand the types of projects most likely to be funded in future. Many grant funders provide case studies of

previously funded projects within the grant application section of their site. CVSC were credited with providing exceptional support to voluntary and community organisations in Conwy; however, opportunities to develop capacity particularly of smaller organisations and strengthening applicant support mechanisms to further enhance engagement and impact would be a valuable addition.

Feedback on CVSC's management of the programme:

“CVSC have a clear understanding of the Voluntary Sector funding landscape, and their experience in delivering funding programmes has been key, allowing them to provide expert support to voluntary and community organisations.

Their dual approach, offering financial support and capacity-building initiatives such as governance workshops and training, helps contribute towards strengthening the sustainability of third sector organisations across Conwy.

Their relationships with local organisations have made them an important partner in delivering the UKSPF objectives in Conwy.”

Conwy County Borough Council

6 Findings and analysis

6.1 Project spend against profile

Financial performance analysis: CVSC Shared Prosperity Fund delivery

Overview of financial performance

The financial data reflects CVSC's performance against its approved budget, showing strong financial management and progress towards full expenditure. As of 17 February 2025, the organisation had spent £1,034,061.37 of its £1,065,700.00 budget, representing 97.02% of total funding allocated.

A key consideration in this evaluation is that the project has been granted an extension until 31 March 2025, meaning that remaining funds (£35,041.85) are expected to be spent within the extended period. However, as the evaluation deadline is 21 February 2025, the analysis must be based on actual expenditure to date, recognising that full delivery will not be completed until the extension period concludes.

Breakdown of financial performance

Cost heading	Approved budget (£)	Actual spend (£) (up to 17/02/25)	Remaining spend (£) (to 31/03/25)	% Spent
Project delivery staff costs	£152,443.85	£140,620.13	£11,823.72	92.24%
Training costs	£79,664.15	£70,678.45	£8,985.70	88.72%
Grants to third parties and beneficiaries	£800,000.00	£800,000.00	£0.00	100.00%
Evaluation costs	£10,000.00	£9,840.00	£160.00	98.40%
Project management and administration	£8,592.00	£8,592.00	£0.00	100.00%
Volunteer costs	£15,000.00	£8,321.13	£6,678.87	55.47%
Total	£1,065,700.00	£1,038,051.71	£27,648.29	97.41%

Key findings and performance against targets

Strong financial delivery with minimal remaining spend

97.02% of the total budget has been spent, demonstrating that CVSC has effectively allocated and utilised UKSPF funds in line with the approved funding profile.

The remaining balance of £35,041.85 is expected to be fully utilised by 31 March 2025, aligning with the agreed extension period.

Full delivery of grant distribution (W9-W14 Intervention both outputs and outcomes)

100% of the £800,000 allocated to third-party grants has been disbursed, indicating that all funding to voluntary organisations and community beneficiaries has been successfully allocated and administered.

This achievement suggests strong fund management and adherence to grant distribution targets, a critical success factor in the overall programme delivery.

Staff and training costs are on track

Project delivery staff costs: 92% of the budget has been utilised, with £14,024.41 remaining, expected to cover final salaries and administrative costs.

Training costs: 88% of the budget has been spent, with £10,348.23 remaining, likely to be used for final training sessions and associated programme delivery.

Administrative and evaluation costs fully utilised

Project management & administration (£8,592) and evaluation costs (£9,840) have been fully or near-fully spent, demonstrating compliance with budget allocations.

Volunteer cost underspend – Area for consideration

Volunteer costs represents a small underspend and the reasons for this are addressed below.

Note there is a further grant of £1,600 currently being considered which would reduce the underspend further

Underspend on volunteering grants

Despite initial expectations that the volunteering grants fund would be oversubscribed, the final expenditure revealed an underspend, requiring CVSC to take proactive steps to redirect the remaining funds effectively. Following discussions with the local authority, approval was granted to reallocate unspent funds into the training budget of the UKSPF project, ensuring that all available funding continued to support volunteer development. Additionally, overspends from the main Key Fund were absorbed into this fund where appropriate evidence was available. CVSC also worked closely with applicant groups, sending targeted emails and arranging meetings to discuss their

expenditure and evidence requirements before applications were submitted. In some cases, funds were provisionally awarded to allow groups to cover volunteer expenses such as uniforms and training, with payments made once appropriate evidence was provided.

Several key factors contributed to the underspend. One of the main challenges was that many organisations targeted for the fund did not routinely pay volunteer expenses. Some groups expressed concerns about setting a precedent that they could not sustain beyond the funding period, making them reluctant to apply. Among the organisations that did pay volunteer expenses, the amounts claimed were generally small, with five out of thirteen applications being under £400. Additionally, some applications had to be rejected due to insufficient evidence that volunteers had received payments, as the administrative burden of retrieving this information was too high for some organisations.

The structure and timing of the fund also impacted its delivery. Unlike other elements of the UKSPF programme, this fund was an additional component that was not approved until March 2024, nearly a year after the project's start date. This significantly reduced the time available to administer and promote the fund, leading to lower-than-expected uptake. Furthermore, the retrospective funding model created challenges, as many organisations did not keep records of volunteer expenses, making it impossible for them to claim reimbursement.

Moving forward, CVSC recognises that a separate volunteering expenses fund may not be the most effective approach. Instead, a more streamlined solution would be to absorb this funding into the main Key Fund micro grant programme, allowing organisations to include volunteer expenses as part of a broader funding application. This would reduce administrative barriers, provide greater flexibility for applicants, and ensure that available funding is fully utilised to support volunteer engagement and sustainability.

Considerations for the evaluation report

Timing of the evaluation vs. full project delivery

As the evaluation is due by 21 February 2025, but the project has until 31 March 2025 to spend the remaining funds, not all financial data is finalised.

Recommendation: The report should acknowledge the extension period, stating that remaining funds are committed for expenditure and expected to be fully utilised by the final project deadline.

Final programme impact will be fully measured post-March 2025

While the financial performance suggests strong overall delivery, the final project outputs and impact will not be completely measurable until all funds are spent.

Recommendation: A follow-up post-March review may be useful to capture the full impact of the final funding allocation.

Underspend on volunteer costs requires attention

While most budget lines are on track, the volunteer cost underspend is notable.

Recommendation: A review of volunteer-related activities should be included in the final evaluation, ensuring the programme has met its intended volunteer engagement targets.

CVSC has demonstrated strong financial management, successfully allocating and spending 97.02% of UKSPF funding within the project timeline. The grant distribution was fully delivered, and staff, training, and administrative costs are on track. The remaining £35,041.85 is expected to be utilised by the 31 March 2025 deadline, with volunteer costs being the main outstanding budget area requiring attention.

While the evaluation is required before the final deadline, the report should acknowledge the extension period, ensuring that full project delivery is recognised while highlighting areas requiring final action. The overall financial performance suggests effective budget management and adherence to UKSPF funding objectives, positioning CVSC well in terms of meeting its commitments and targets.

6.2 Achievement of key outcomes

Analysis of findings: Achievement of UKSPF outputs and outcomes

This section provides a detailed analysis of the Interventions, outputs and outcomes delivered through the CVSC Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Key Fund, assessing performance against targets and explaining variations where relevant. Where possible, data and beneficiary feedback from Appendix A have been integrated to provide a richer assessment of impact.

All the interventions sit within the Investment Priority Communities and Place.

Full descriptions of the interventions are as follows:

W9 Funding for impactful volunteering and/ or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.

W11 Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups

W12 Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration.

W13 Community measures to reduce the cost of living including through measures to improve energy efficiency and combat fuel poverty and climate change

W9: Impactful Volunteering and social action projects

Number of organisations receiving non-financial support

Target: 106 (Revised)

Actual: 30

Analysis: The initial target was based on the assumption that organisations receiving support under both W9 and W11 could be counted in both categories. However, double counting was removed in the revised classification, resulting in the final number of 30 organisations receiving non-financial support, which aligns with the original target.

Beneficiary example:

Conwy Connect received support from the Volunteering Admin Assistant with their volunteering policy. CVSC met with them to discuss training and induction for volunteers and review their volunteering policy. Conwy Connect felt more confident to progress with their volunteering programme and manage their volunteers. They valued the discussion about volunteer progression from service user to volunteer.

Number of volunteering opportunities supported

Target: 90

Actual: 1004

Analysis: This significantly exceeded target reflects the high volume of volunteer-involving projects supported through the Key Fund. The original projection underestimated the level of volunteering activity that grant recipients would generate. Applicants were asked to report on all volunteering roles supported, leading to a much higher total than anticipated.

Beneficiary example:

Conwy Mind's Keeping Connected project engaged 20 volunteers in a structured telephone befriending programme, supporting mental health and reducing loneliness among beneficiaries.

Number of organisations receiving grants

Target: 33

Actual: 35

Analysis: The grant distribution slightly surpassed its target, ensuring wider access to funding among third-sector organisations. The additional grants were possible due to efficient fund management and reallocations from undersubscribed areas.

Beneficiary example:

TV Conwy used its grant to train volunteers in media production, equipping individuals with digital storytelling skills while promoting local community initiatives.

Number of volunteering opportunities created

Target: 90

Actual: 235

Analysis: The creation of 235 new volunteering opportunities demonstrates the programme's role in expanding volunteer-led initiatives. This was due to a greater-than-expected demand for volunteer-led community projects and the flexibility within the fund to support them.

Beneficiary example:

Dwygyfylchi Bowling Club introduced a Winter League that expanded volunteer engagement and introduced new members to the sport, breaking the perception that bowls is only for older adults.

W11: Capacity building and infrastructure support for local groups

Number of organisations receiving non-financial support

Target: 106 (revised)

Actual: 189

Analysis: This substantially exceeded target demonstrates the high demand for capacity-building support, particularly from smaller organisations needing guidance on governance, funding applications, and sustainability planning.

Beneficiary example:

Non-financial support impact: Income diversification training – Llais Lle

Llais Lle, a community organisation dedicated to supporting local initiatives, benefited significantly from the Income Diversification training delivered as part of CVSC's non-financial support programme. The session provided clarity on legal requirements and introduced practical funding opportunities, equipping attendees with valuable knowledge on sustainable income generation.

Following the training, Llais Lle was able to immediately apply their learning. They were already running a music night with a raffle, and the session helped ensure the raffle was conducted in compliance with legal guidelines. Additionally, they leveraged the training insights to successfully secure funding from a private developer undertaking car park works for the local council, resulting in a donation towards a new bench for the local playpark in Llanfairfechan.

Feedback from Llais Lle highlighted that the training provided actionable strategies for fundraising, allowing them to explore new income sources and expand their financial resilience. The organisation strongly recommended the session for all community groups, particularly those in the early stages of development, emphasising the immediate and practical benefits it offered. While the training was well-received, they suggested extending future sessions to allow for a deeper dive into funding options, reinforcing the high demand for continued financial guidance within the sector.

This example demonstrates how CVSC's capacity-building support directly enhances the sustainability and impact of community organisations, equipping them with the tools and confidence needed to diversify their income and secure new funding opportunities.

Beneficiary example:

Youth Shedz attended LGBTQ+ inclusion training, reinforcing best practices and improving confidence in creating inclusive spaces for young people.

Number of organisations receiving grants

Target: 26 (revised)

Actual: 17

Analysis: The lower-than-expected grant allocation under W11 reflects a reclassification of grants originally counted under both W9 and W11. This adjustment ensures accurate reporting and

compliance with UKSPF monitoring guidelines. Despite this, the project still exceeded its original internal target of 10 organisations.

Improved engagement numbers

Target: 120

Actual: 2310

Analysis: Engagement figures significantly surpassed expectations due to wider sector participation in training, volunteer initiatives, and community outreach activities. The Key Fund's broad accessibility helped organisations scale their community engagement beyond initial projections.

Beneficiary example:

Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Dyffryn Conwy used UKSPF funding to train event volunteers, increasing participation and ensuring safer event management.

W12: Community engagement schemes and local regeneration

Number of events / participatory programmes

Target: 11

Actual: 19

Analysis: The programme successfully delivered 19 community events, including training sessions, networking meetings, and engagement initiatives, surpassing the target due to high demand for interactive learning and sector collaboration.

Beneficiary example:

CVSC Funding Conference

Improved engagement numbers

Target: 100

Actual: 120 attendees, 16 unique workshops, plus a funding and information fair with 30 stallholders.

Analysis: The CVSC Third Sector Conference served as a key example of successful community engagement, bringing together professionals and organisations from across the voluntary sector. Attendees valued the opportunity to network, fostering connections that encouraged collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and future partnership opportunities. The conference featured a diverse range

of workshops, with sessions on safeguarding, volunteer management, and equality, diversity, and inclusion being particularly well-received.

The organisation and venue were also praised, with attendees commending the structured format, accessibility, and support from event staff. The inclusion of a sensory room was highlighted as an important step towards inclusivity, ensuring that the event was welcoming to all participants.

A standout aspect of the conference was the quality of speakers and session content, with many attendees noting the relevance and practical value of the discussions. The LGBTQIA+ inclusion talk received specific praise for being approachable, insightful, and addressing key issues in the sector, further reinforcing the event's impact in promoting equity and inclusivity within community initiatives. Through thoughtfully curated content, accessible facilities, and meaningful engagement opportunities, the conference exemplified how strategic event planning can strengthen sector-wide collaboration and community impact.

Summary

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has met or exceeded the majority of its UKSPF targets, particularly in volunteering, community engagement, and cost-of-living support.

Significant overachievement was observed in volunteer support (1004 vs 90), household support (1432 vs 60), and training participation (315 vs 244), reflecting strong sector demand and effective programme outreach.

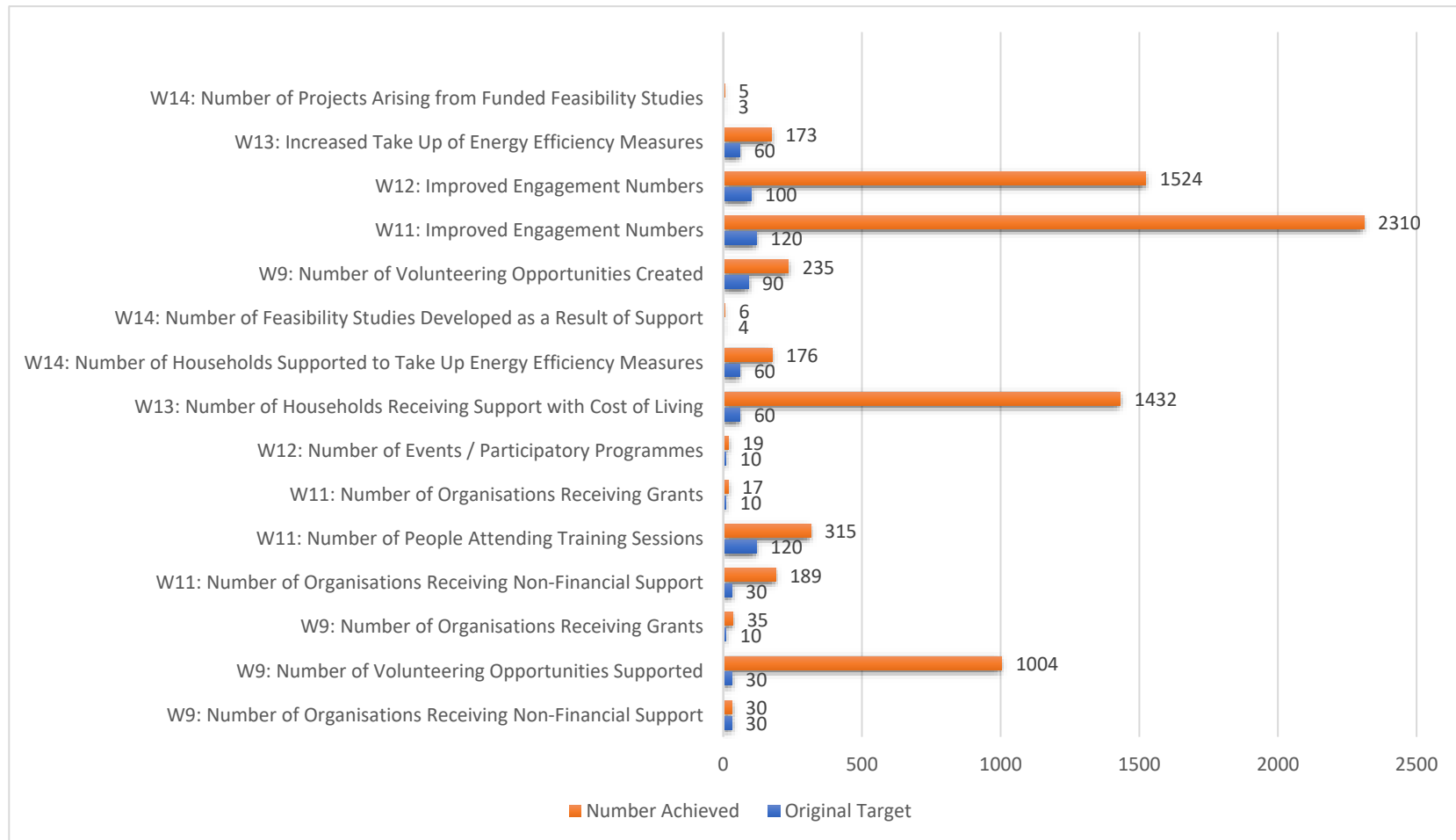
Underachievement in grants awarded (17 vs 26) was due to reclassification adjustments, ensuring compliance with UKSPF reporting.

The cost-of-living and energy efficiency support interventions had far-reaching impacts, reinforcing the fund's ability to address pressing social issues.

The analysis highlights the programme's strong delivery performance, its ability to scale impact beyond initial projections, and its role in strengthening Conwy's voluntary sector.

Moving forward, lessons from volunteer engagement, feasibility study implementation, and training uptake can inform future funding strategies to sustain and enhance these positive outcomes.

6.3 Figure 1: Progress Update (Outcomes and Outputs): 14/02/2025 (CVSC Monitoring Data)



6.4 Contribution to Welsh Government priorities

Analysis of findings: Delivering on Welsh Government's priorities

The Welsh Government's priorities included supporting the foundational economy, reduce economic inactivity, strengthen local communities, and improve access to services for disadvantaged groups. The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund aligned with these priorities by delivering financial support, training, volunteering opportunities, and community initiatives aimed at strengthening the voluntary and community sector across Conwy.

Key Welsh Government priorities and programme delivery.

Tackling economic inactivity and supporting employability

The Welsh Government prioritised reducing economic inactivity and improving employability by investing in skills, training, and opportunities for disadvantaged groups to participate in the workforce. The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund contributed by:

Supporting volunteering as a pathway to employment

Conwy Mind's Keeping Connected recruited 20 volunteers for a telephone befriending service, providing mental health training that improved employability and supported volunteers into future roles.

TV Conwy trained volunteers in media production, with at least one participant securing a university place due to the experience gained.

Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Dyffryn Conwy provided structured training for 234 volunteers, equipping them with event management skills, particularly in health and safety.

Providing sector-specific training to increase capacity and job readiness

Youth Shedz attended LGBTQ+ inclusion training, equipping them with knowledge to create safer, more inclusive youth spaces.

Age Connects North Wales Central expanded their Home Life Project, training staff and volunteers to provide non-medical home support, increasing employment opportunities in the social care sector.

These initiatives supported volunteers and participants in developing transferable skills, increasing confidence, and improving job prospects, contributing to a more resilient workforce in Conwy.

Strengthening the Foundational Economy

The Welsh Government's priorities emphasised investing in community-led organisations that provide essential local services and build economic resilience. The CVSC Key Fund contributed to this by:

Ensuring the sustainability of vital community services

Clwb yr Efail used UKSPF funding to maintain and expand services for older adults, including providing daily hot meals, social activities, and practical support such as benefits advice.

Making Sense CIO delivered creative engagement training to care home staff, embedding arts-based approaches into dementia care, improving service delivery and quality of life for care residents.

The FDF Centre for Independent Living used UKSPF funding to expand disability support, engaging 300–400 new beneficiaries in Conwy and securing additional funding streams for future sustainability.

Investing in community infrastructure and sustainable models of service delivery

Betws y Coed Memorial Hall conducted a feasibility study to support a community asset transfer, ensuring the hall remains locally managed and financially viable.

Age Connects North Wales Central developed a toenail-cutting service, addressing a critical healthcare gap while creating a sustainable social enterprise model.

By strengthening organisations' financial sustainability and expanding essential local services, the programme contributed directly to the foundational economy and supported long-term resilience.

Supporting social inclusion and access to services

A major focus of Welsh Government's aims was enhancing access to services and reducing inequalities, ensuring that disadvantaged groups could participate in community life. The CVSC Key Fund delivered on this priority by:

Expanding access to vital services for vulnerable communities

The Hummingbird Project provided cost-of-living support, distributing hundreds of winter coats and Keep Warm packs, reducing financial hardship.

The FDF Centre for Independent Living successfully supported disabled people in navigating benefits applications, with one beneficiary receiving over £225,500 in backdated entitlements.

Conwy Disabled Archery used UKSPF funding to purchase adaptive archery equipment, enabling disabled participants to engage in sport and socialise in a supportive setting.

Addressing isolation through community participation

She Shed Abergele created a safe space for women experiencing social isolation, leading to increased confidence, friendships, and structured volunteering.

Llanfairfechan Croquet Club provided accessible sporting opportunities, engaging disabled veterans and increasing participation from 50 to 66 members.

These projects directly contributed to Welsh Government's commitment to reducing inequalities, ensuring that marginalised groups had access to opportunities for engagement, well-being, and financial stability.

Increasing Civic engagement and community-led initiatives

Welsh Government's priorities included empowering communities to take ownership of local assets and participate in decision-making. The CVSC Key Fund contributed to this by:

Supporting grassroots community projects that increase civic pride

Trefriw Community Council used UKSPF funding to restore a historic village sign, strengthening local identity and heritage appreciation.

Jackdaw Gigs delivered Welsh-language music events, promoting cultural engagement in a traditionally anglicised area, aligning with the Cymraeg 2050 policy.

Encouraging local decision-making and community ownership of assets

Cyngor Cymuned Dolwyddelan developed a five-year community plan, providing a strategic framework for local infrastructure and transport planning.

Betws y Coed Memorial Hall engaged the community in decision-making about the future of their local asset transfer, ensuring community voices shaped the hall's long-term viability.

By funding community-led projects that enhanced local pride and strengthened governance structures, the programme contributed to Welsh Government's goal of empowering communities to lead their own development.

Ensuring environmental and social sustainability

The Welsh Government's aims prioritised **environmentally sustainable and socially responsible funding allocations**. The CVSC Key Fund delivered on this by:

Investing in energy efficiency and sustainability projects

Penmaenmawr Phoenix Football Club used UKSPF funding to install solar panels and a borehole, reducing operating costs and supporting long-term financial sustainability.

Betws y Coed Memorial Hall conducted energy efficiency assessments, preparing for sustainable upgrades in a future asset transfer.

Girl Guiding Aberconwy improved building insulation and heating, making their community space more energy efficient and reducing costs.

Encouraging sustainable community participation

Clwb yr Efail adopted waste reduction and sustainability practices, repurposing food waste and minimising environmental impact.

She Shed Abergele focused on upcycling and repurposing materials, embedding sustainable practices into their community craft programmes.

These initiatives supported Welsh Government's ambition for greener, more sustainable communities, ensuring that investments delivered long-term benefits beyond the funding period.

Conclusion

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund successfully aligned with and delivered on Welsh Government's priorities, contributing to economic inclusion, social engagement, community resilience, and environmental sustainability.

Key achievements include:

Strengthening the foundational economy, ensuring voluntary organisations became more resilient.

Expanding access to essential services, reducing inequalities and improving well-being.

Increasing civic participation and community engagement, fostering pride in place.

Delivering long-term sustainability and environmental responsibility, ensuring responsible investment in community infrastructure.

By funding diverse, impactful projects, the programme has made a measurable contribution to Welsh Government's goals of Communities and Place: Improve local pride and wellbeing: Supporting Local Business to grow employment, particularly in areas of high unemployment, and People and Skills which aims to improve adult numeracy and address skills gaps. It has also contributed to leaving a lasting legacy in Conwy's voluntary sector.

6.5 Contribution to Conwy County Borough Council priorities

The Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) has outlined specific priorities under the UKSPF to address local needs and align with key strategies, including the Corporate Plan 2022-2027, the Conwy Economic Growth Strategy, and "Creu Conwy – Creating the Spark," a cultural strategy for 2021-2026. The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has effectively delivered on these priorities through targeted interventions and support for community projects.

Enhancing community and place

CCBC emphasises building 'Pride in Place' by investing in community infrastructure and local green spaces. The CVSC Key Fund has contributed to this priority by supporting projects that improve community facilities and foster social cohesion.

Clwb yr Efail: Funding was provided to maintain and expand services for older adults, including daily hot meals and social activities, thereby enhancing social ties and reducing isolation.

Betws y Coed Memorial Hall: A feasibility study was conducted to support a community asset transfer, ensuring the hall remains locally managed and financially viable, aligning with the goal of empowering communities to take ownership of local assets.

Supporting local business

The Conwy Economic Growth Strategy focuses on fostering economic resilience by supporting local enterprises. The CVSC Key Fund has aligned with this priority by:

TV Conwy: A grant was awarded to train volunteers in media production, equipping individuals with digital storytelling skills and promoting local community initiatives, thereby enhancing employability and supporting the local creative industry.

Age Connects North Wales Central: Funding supported the expansion of the 'Home Life Project,' training staff and volunteers to provide non-medical home support, which not only addresses a critical community need but also creates employment opportunities in the social care sector.

Investing in people and skills

CCBC's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 highlights the importance of skills development and reducing economic inactivity. The CVSC Key Fund has addressed this by:

Youth Shedz: Participants attended LGBTQ+ inclusion training, reinforcing best practices and improving confidence in creating inclusive spaces for young people, thereby enhancing their social skills and employability.

Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Dyffryn Conwy: UKSPF funding was utilized to train event volunteers, increasing participation and ensuring safer event management, which contributes to building a skilled volunteer base and enhancing community events.

Promoting cultural engagement

Aligning with "Creu Conwy – Creating the Spark," the CVSC Key Fund has supported cultural initiatives that enrich the community's cultural fabric. As a partner organisation of Creu Conwy – Creating the Spark, CVSC ensured that cultural initiatives were aware of the opportunity to apply for the CVSC Key Fund to support the enrichment of the community's cultural fabric.

Jackdaw Gigs: Funding facilitated the creation of Welsh-language social events, strengthening cultural engagement in an area where such opportunities were previously limited, thereby promoting the Welsh language and culture.

Trefriw Community Council: A grant was provided to restore a historic village sign, enhancing local heritage appreciation and community pride, which contributes to preserving and promoting local history.

Summary

Through strategic funding and support, the CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has effectively delivered on Conwy County Borough Council's Shared Prosperity Fund priorities. By enhancing community infrastructure, supporting local businesses, investing in people and skills, and promoting cultural engagement, the programme has made significant strides in building pride in place and increasing life chances across Conwy.

Contribution to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2014

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014 provides a framework for public bodies and funded programmes to ensure that development is sustainable, inclusive, and beneficial for both current and future generations. The Act is built on seven well-being goals, which the CVSC

Capacity Building Key Fund has successfully delivered against by funding diverse community projects that improve social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being across Conwy.

A Prosperous Wales

“An innovative, productive, and low-carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and uses resources efficiently and proportionately.”

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has contributed to a prosperous Wales by supporting projects that develop skills, create economic opportunities, and enhance financial resilience for individuals and organisations.

Penmaenmawr Phoenix Football Club: UKSPF funding enabled the club to install solar panels and a borehole, reducing operational costs while making the facility environmentally sustainable. This ensures long-term financial viability and promotes a low-carbon future.

Age Connects North Wales Central: By expanding the Home Life Project, this initiative has created employment and volunteering opportunities in the social care sector, increasing access to services while enhancing employability in a critical sector.

A Resilient Wales

“A nation that maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic, and ecological resilience.”

The programme has promoted environmental sustainability and community resilience by supporting green initiatives, sustainable asset transfers, and ecological conservation.

Betws y Coed Memorial Hall: Funding was used to conduct an energy efficiency assessment, preparing the hall for future sustainability upgrades and ensuring that it remains an essential, low-impact community hub.

Glan Conwy Scout and Guide HQ Committee: UKSPF funding was allocated to improve insulation and heating efficiency at their community facility, reducing energy consumption and contributing to environmental sustainability.

A Healthier Wales

“A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised, and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.”

The Key Fund has directly contributed to improving mental and physical well-being through initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, social inclusion, and access to vital services.

Conwy Mind's Keeping Connected Project: This initiative reduced loneliness and social isolation by recruiting and training volunteers to provide telephone befriending services for individuals experiencing mental health difficulties.

Conwy Disabled Archery: UKSPF funding enabled the purchase of adaptive archery equipment, expanding access to sports and encouraging physical activity for disabled individuals.

A More Equal Wales

“A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.”

The programme has improved accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that marginalised and underrepresented communities can benefit from opportunities for skills development, volunteering, and social support.

- The FDF Centre for Independent Living: This initiative supported disabled individuals in navigating benefits systems, including a case where a single beneficiary secured £225,500 in backdated entitlements, demonstrating the life-changing impact of accessible support services.
- She Shed Abergele: Providing a safe space for women experiencing social isolation, this project empowered individuals through social connections, skill-building activities, and structured volunteering opportunities.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

“Attractive, viable, safe, and well-connected communities.”

The programme has strengthened community networks and engagement, ensuring that local assets, volunteering, and support services contribute to well-connected and thriving communities.

- Dwygyfylchi Bowling Club: UKSPF funding allowed the club to expand its facilities and introduce a Winter League, fostering intergenerational participation and providing a safe, social activity for new and existing members.
- Cyngor Cymuned Dolwyddelan: By developing a five-year community plan, this initiative has provided a strategic approach to local development, ensuring that infrastructure improvements and community projects reflect resident needs.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

“A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage, and the Welsh language, and which encourages participation in the arts, sports, and recreation.”

The programme has helped preserve and promote Welsh culture through arts, heritage, and language-focused projects.

Jackdaw Gigs: This project supported Welsh-language social events, ensuring that cultural engagement is accessible to Welsh speakers in an area where such opportunities were previously limited. This directly aligns with the Cymraeg 2050 strategy to increase daily Welsh language use.

Trefriw Community Council: Funding was allocated to restore a historic village sign, reinforcing local heritage, tourism appeal, and community identity.

A Globally Responsible Wales

“A nation which takes account of whether actions make a positive contribution to global well-being.”

The programme has contributed to ethical and sustainable development, ensuring that funded initiatives promote environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and sustainable funding models.

- Making Sense CIO: This project delivered arts-based engagement training for care home staff, embedding sustainable approaches to dementia-friendly creative engagement, improving well-being while reducing reliance on costly external programmes.
- Llanfairfechan Croquet Club: Through inclusive sports programming, this initiative fostered global best practices in social integration, working with refugees, asylum seekers, and disabled veterans to provide accessible recreational activities.

Summary

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has effectively delivered on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014, ensuring that projects contribute to a prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive Wales.

Economic inclusion has been strengthened through volunteering, skills development, and community-led enterprises.

Environmental sustainability has been embedded in funding allocations, with projects supporting renewable energy, asset sustainability, and conservation.

Community resilience and well-being have been promoted through mental health support, sports inclusion, and local regeneration initiatives.

Welsh culture and language have been preserved and celebrated, ensuring that communities remain connected to their heritage.

By integrating the principles of sustainable development, this programme has not only met immediate community needs but has also laid a foundation for long-term, future-focused progress in Conwy and beyond.

7 Case studies

Abergele Community Action Case Study



Grant amount: £54,187.36

Investment priority Communities and Place

UKSPF Interventions achieved: W9, W12 and W13

Organisation overview & background

A group of volunteers came together in 2001 as Abergele Youth Action with the aim of providing opportunities and activities for young people. Since then, the organisation has developed to provide support for the whole community.

In 2005 they moved into Hesketh House and developed an internet Café and community hub. Abergele Community Action Ltd became a registered charity and company limited by guarantee in 2008, providing a formal legal entity structure.

Community led and set within the community it serves, the organisation has grown by identifying a community need and providing it.

Seeking to reduce the digital divide, the group provides access to computers and the internet and provides the skills to use them.

Abergele being an area of high unemployment linked to significant poverty, their community café created opportunities for work experience and volunteering.

In 2013 they launched [Abergele District Foodbank](#), affiliated to [Trussell Trust](#) and in 2018 they developed [Abergele Community Money Advice](#) authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and affiliated to the national organisation Community Money Advice.

In 2019 Abergele Community Action developed its youth provision further when youth services relocated to their own building which operate as [Abergele Youth Den](#).

In February 2024 the [Abergele Community Shop](#) was launched and in October 2024 the Hive was opened.

Strategy and delivery

Unusually for a community led organisation that responds to community need, Abergele Community Action is also committed to developing strategically. Their Strategic Plan 2025 – 2028 which contains four key strategic objectives, covering four distinct areas of their work and described as Strategic Plan # 1; Strategic Plan # 2; Strategic Plan # 3 and Strategic Plan # 4.

Strategic Plan # 1

The Hive - Community space objective: To provide a vibrant and inclusive warm community space called The Hive. Offering accessible resources, including access to the foodbank, community shop, workshops, and support services that cater to diverse needs, fostering a sense of belonging and empowering individuals to build connections, resilience, and personal growth.

Strategic Plan # 2

Youth inclusion objective: To continue delivering a youth inclusion service with young people. Abergele Action will empower those aged 10 to 25 who are at risk of social, economic, educational, or digital exclusion by providing opportunities to build skills, confidence, and resilience for a successful life. Through Abergele Youth Den, the project will offer a safe and supportive space for personal and community projects while embedding the five steps to wellbeing and evidence-based approaches to tackling youth anxiety and depression.

Strategic Plan # 3

Financial Inclusion services objective: To continue to deliver and develop financial inclusion services, including debt advice, money mentoring, income maximisation, and benefits advice.

Strategic Plan # 4

Connecting with the community objective: To strengthen connections with the community by increasing engagement through outreach, partnerships, and events. This will include, collaborating with local organisations, and expanding the organisation's presence on social media to build trust, gather feedback, and foster meaningful relationships with diverse community members

Abergele Action Mission

"Our mission is to provide accessible resources, inclusive programmes, and compassionate support services that empower individuals in our community. Through collaboration, education, and active engagement, we aim to foster personal growth, strengthen resilience, and build a network of support that ensures every member feels safe, valued, and empowered to thrive."

Website: <https://www.abergeleaction.co.uk/home>

Social media links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/abergeleaction>

Twitter/X: https://x.com/abergele_action/

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/abergele-community-action-ltd/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/abergeleyouthshed/>

Situation

The Abergele community faces high levels of deprivation, unemployment, poor housing, and limited educational achievement. Rising living costs have significantly increased the demand for support, leading to a need for sustainable solutions that uphold dignity while reducing food poverty.

Abergele, located within Conwy County Borough in North Wales, exhibits notable socio-economic challenges, particularly in areas such as poverty, child poverty, unemployment, and health. Data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019 and other sources provide insight into these issues.

Overall deprivation

The WIMD 2019 identifies small areas, known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), with high concentrations of deprivation. In Abergele, the LSOA of Abergele Pensarn 2 is among the most deprived 10% in Wales across multiple domains, including overall deprivation, income, employment, and health.

Income and child poverty

Income deprivation is a significant concern in Abergele. The Abergele Pensarn 2 area ranks within the top 10% most deprived in Wales for income. While specific child poverty rates for Abergele are not detailed in the available data, broader statistics from Conwy County Borough indicate that 19.1% of children live in poverty, slightly below the Great Britain average. However, as there are areas of Conwy that do not score high on the deprivation index, it is likely that child poverty figures for Abergele are much higher than the County Borough average.

Unemployment

Employment deprivation is also prevalent in Abergele. The Abergele Pensarn 2 LSOA is among the top 10% most deprived areas in Wales concerning employment. This suggests a high proportion of working-age individuals facing involuntary exclusion from the labour market.

Health and mental health

Health deprivation is a critical issue in Abergele, with Abergele Pensarn 2 ranking within the most deprived 10% in Wales for health outcomes. While specific mental health data for Abergele is not provided, national trends indicate a strong link between socio-economic deprivation and mental health challenges. In Wales, adults in the most deprived areas are more likely to be treated for mental health problems compared to those in less deprived areas.

To address these issues, Abergele Community Action sought UKSPF funding to launch a Community Larder—a social supermarket model that provides affordable food, choice, and dignity to individuals and families in need.

The project funded by UKSPF

The funding application was a mixture of capital and revenue expenditure to build on existing services which would start immediately and run as a pilot for 12 months.

Creation of a 'Community larder' was based on the principle that everyone should have access to good food.

The values of dignity, choice, and hope were central to the project which would operate as a member-led neighbourhood hub, serving as a springboard to other community initiatives, opportunities, and ideas.

The project aimed to reduce food poverty and create opportunities to strengthen the community. The food bank operates from station buildings in Pensarn which have been refurbished by Transport for Wales. The Community Larder was planned to operate separately from the food bank and provide a community hub where people can shop and socialise in a friendly atmosphere.

An additional outcome of the Community Larder is to prevent food waste by working with the environmental charity FareShare to ensure a sensible and useful redistribution of supply chain surpluses as well as local suppliers.

The Community Larder aimed to be run by its members using co-operative principles and many volunteers would be members too.

It would open to all with no referral necessary and anyone living in the area will be welcome to join.

People would be able to join for as long as they want or choose to come only occasionally. The Community Larder would stock a wide range of top-quality food including fresh fruit and veg, frozen and chilled food, meat and dairy products, and long-life tinned and packaged food.

The Community Larder aimed to operate just like a shop and people would choose the food they want from the shelves. Members pay a small subscription of a few pounds a week, and in return can choose groceries worth many times more, often saving up to £1,000 a year on shopping bills.

The money collected from memberships would be used to buy additional stock when needed. The UKSPF funding would be used to buy equipment including fridges and freezers as well as shelving used to create the shop. It would also provide salaries to create employment opportunities to establish and develop the project, a project lead and an assistant. A subscription would be payable to FareShare for the provision of stock.



Objectives and goals

The UKSPF funding supported the launch of the **Community Larder**, a member-led neighbourhood hub that promotes dignity, choice, and empowerment.

<https://www.facebook.com/AbergeleCommunityShop/videos/1331005901257624>

Key objectives:

Establish and pilot the Community Larder over 12 months.

Provide affordable food options for those in need while reducing food waste.

Create a hub for community engagement and social inclusion.

Offer volunteering and employment pathways to enhance skill development.

Expected impact

Members save an average of £21 per week on groceries, translating to over £1,000 per year in savings.

Provides access to good-quality fresh food for those facing food insecurity.

Strengthens community bonds by fostering relationships among members.

Serves as a stepping stone to employment through volunteering and training.

Embedded Video

<https://www.facebook.com/AbergeleCommunityShop/videos/1741215216657509>

Implementation and approach

The UKSPF funding purchased equipment including fridges and freezers as well as shelving which was used to create the shop. It provided a salary to employ a project lead to establish and develop the project together with an assistant. A subscription is payable to FareShare for the provision of stock.

Volunteers are key to the success of the project. Many of the volunteers are former foodbank clients and now the organisation regularly has 25 volunteers per week working in different capacities in the foodbank and the shop. Role descriptions were created to cover all the different tasks including managing incoming stock, stock rotation, customer relations, data input and handling cash. Every volunteer has an induction to their role which is regularly reviewed allowing them to swap roles and gain wider experience and build their confidence and skills. Volunteers undergo Food Hygiene training as well as manual handling as appropriate.

Abergele Action has created a Volunteer Handbook which informs what volunteers can expect and how they will be treated.

Funding was used for volunteer activities including trips out which recognised their value to the project and developed a sense of community.

In October 2024, in response to consultation and feedback and because of the success of the project the next step was to develop a five-year Strategic Plan. One of the missions was to establish the Hive, providing a warm, inclusive and welcoming place where people can access resources including the foodbank, the community shop, the financial inclusion services (debt advice, benefits and welfare advice, money mentoring and budgeting) workshops and support services.

Results - impact & outcomes achieved

Delivery of key interventions

Intervention W9 Funding for impactful volunteering an/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

Intervention W12 Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration

Intervention W13 Community measures to reduce the cost of living including through measures to improve energy efficiency and combat fuel poverty and climate change.

Outcomes achieved

W9 Volunteering roles created as a result of support 18

W12 Improved engagement numbers 90

Outputs achieved

W9 Volunteering roles supported 18

W13 Number of households receiving cost of living support 90

Volunteer engagement

25 volunteers work weekly in different roles, many of whom were former foodbank clients.

Volunteers receive training in food hygiene, stock management, and customer service.

A Volunteer Handbook was developed to guide and support participation.

Key partnerships:

To deliver a service that is of the highest standard of delivery and to make it relevant and effective in meeting the needs of the community, Abergele Action collaborate and network with other service providers and agencies who can sometimes provide the necessary expertise that is needed in achieving the desired outcomes for our service users. These agencies and service providers include the east area local authority family centre, different departments in social services, housing associations (including Wales and West, Cartrefi Conwy and Clwyd Alyn), Local Authority Welfare Rights, Probation, North Wales Police, Youth Justice, Conwy Employment Hub, NHS Substance misuse services, Welsh Water, Warm Wales, Homeless teams, (Local Authority and independent charities), Nacro, the Wallich, local schools and Conwy Youth Service.

Working strategically with referral partners and support agencies provides a joined-up approach. Funding was used to hold a networking day which gave people opportunities to share their services and better understand what each other does to support people in the community. The event was attended by over 100 people representing 45 different support agencies. Everyone came away with a better understanding of each other's services and what improvements need to be made.

Abergele Action subscribe to Fareshare and receive two deliveries every week. Fareshare is the UK's national network of charitable food re-distributors, made up of 18 independent organisations, taking good quality surplus food from right across the food industry and supplying frontline charities and community groups.

The group developed good relationships with local supermarkets and volunteers collect unused and surplus stock at the end of the day which would otherwise go to waste.

Quantitative outcomes:

3,075 foodbank beneficiaries (Jan-Dec 2024) compared to 4,022 in 2023, showing reduced dependency.

357 individuals registered as Community Larder members, with new registrations each week.

1,647 transactions processed in six months, benefiting an estimated 4,941 people.

29,600 meals distributed and 14.8 tonnes of food saved from landfill.

£6,161 in subscription revenue, making the project financially self-sustaining.

Community impact of Abergele Community Action

The Abergele Community Action project, supported by UKSPF funding, has significantly contributed to strengthening the social fabric of the community. Through strategic investment in food security, volunteering, financial inclusion, and youth engagement, the project has made measurable improvements in social inclusion, well-being, and economic resilience.

Increased community engagement and social inclusion

Abergele Community Action has created safe, welcoming spaces where individuals can access essential services while engaging with their local community. The establishment of The Hive and the Community Larder has provided:

A member-led food support model, offering dignity and choice for those experiencing food insecurity.

Opportunities for social interaction, strengthening community bonds and reducing isolation.

A volunteer-driven approach, where many participants transition from service users to active contributors.

Strengthened mental and physical well-being of members and volunteers

The Community Larder's impact extends beyond food support; it has also improved mental and physical well-being by providing:

Affordable access to fresh, nutritious food, supporting better diet and health outcomes.

Volunteer opportunities that promote confidence, skill-building, and a sense of purpose.

A supportive network, where service users receive additional help with debt advice, welfare benefits, and financial mentoring.

Volunteer engagement

25 active volunteers per week assisting in food distribution, stock management, and customer service.

Structured volunteer training in food hygiene, stock rotation, and handling cash.

Volunteer handbook developed to ensure a structured and rewarding experience.

Greater dignity and Choice for food-insecure families

Unlike traditional foodbanks, which often operate on a referral basis, the Community Larder model allows anyone in need to become a member, ensuring that people can access food with dignity and autonomy.

Development of a strategic five-year plan to enhance services and outreach

In response to community needs and project success, Abergele Community Action has developed a Five-Year Strategic Plan (2025-2030), ensuring long-term sustainability. Future developments include:

The Hive as a central hub, integrating food support, financial inclusion services, and community activities.

Expanded volunteer coordination, with funding applications submitted for dedicated volunteer management staff.

Continued strategic partnerships with local authorities, °, and referral agencies to strengthen service provision.

By fostering community resilience, volunteerism, and financial inclusion, Abergele Community Action has demonstrated a sustainable, impactful approach to tackling social challenges, aligning with the objectives of the UKSPF and local well-being goals.

Beneficiary quotes

"I was referred to the foodbank but now I use the Community Larder. It's better to choose my own food, including fresh bread, vegetables, and fruit. I can now afford to cook proper meals for my children."

"I came for help with my debts. Since suffering a stroke, I lost my job and couldn't afford to pay my bills. They helped me to sort out my debts and get the benefits I am entitled to and told me about the shop. I use it every week. I now volunteer as often as I can, although my wife has now had a heart attack so it's a struggle. They are all so kind and supportive – I don't know where I'd be without them"

Partner quote

"I refer tenants to the foodbank and Community Larder all the time. They're always willing to help and offer practical solutions. Their kindness and dedication make a real difference in our community."

Future sustainability & next steps

Five-Year Strategic Plan (2025-30) developed to ensure long-term impact.

The Hive established as a central hub for food support, financial advice, and community activities.

Additional funding applications submitted to the National Lottery and WCVA for sustained leadership and volunteer coordination.

Volunteer engagement and training expanded to provide **pathways to employment**.

Several funding streams will come to an end in the Spring and as the organisation continues to adapt to the needs of its community. They have restructured and scaled the organisation to significantly increase the positive influence the social impact of their services has on the wider community, and this has resulted in reducing operational staff from 14 to 9 (4 full time and 5 part time) resulting in increased efficiency and effectiveness.

With effective management the Hive will continue to successfully achieve its mission by incorporating the foodbank and community shop in the same place. Abergele Action has applied to the National Lottery Community Fund for funding for a full time Strategic Manager for the Hive whose role will be to coordinate not only the Foodbank but also the Community Shop as well as working strategically with referral partners. A funding proposal has also been submitted to the WCVA Volunteering in Wales Grant for a part time Volunteer Wellbeing coordinator whose role will be to effectively recruit, coordinate and support a team of 25 volunteers every week.

Now that the Community Shop is established subscriptions cover the cost of our subscription to Fareshare as well as the purchase of food supplies when necessary. The scheme is fully sustainable.

Since 2001 Abergele Community Action has developed the skills, expertise and resources to continue to successfully deliver this project. There is no doubt that this is a worthwhile project that engages many willing volunteers and with the necessary financial investment, sound management and coordination it will succeed in meeting the needs of the community in terms of addressing food poverty as well as financial, social, educational and digital exclusion and contributing to the much-needed regeneration of the area.

The Project provides opportunities and services that enable people to affect real change in their lives and in the community in which they live.

There is no doubt that the combined outcomes of the projects outlined in the Strategic Development Plan support the delivery of the following three aims: building a strong, cohesive and sustainable community; developing a prosperous, enterprising community with strong economic growth; and reducing poverty and inequality in the community.

The UKSPF has enabled Abergele Action to increase capacity and seeks to identify further UK and Welsh Government funding to build on this success.

Trefriw Community Council Case Study

Trefriw Community Council

Grant Amount: £865

UKSPF Interventions achieved: W12 Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration

W12 Participatory events or programmes.

Website: <https://trefriwcommunitycouncil.co.uk/wp/>

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Trefriwcommunitycouncil/?locale=en_GB

Organisation overview and history

Trefriw Community Council (TCC) represents the rural wards of Trefriw and Llanrhychwyn in the Conwy Valley (circa 800 residents). As the lowest tier of local government, its vision is to make Trefriw a great place to live, work, and visit with an annual plan focused on community improvement.

TCC plays a vital role in representing and supporting local residents ensuring that the village remains a vibrant and well-maintained place to live. As the first point of contact for community concerns, the council acts as a liaison between residents and governing bodies such as the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Conwy County Borough Council, and Snowdonia National Park Authority.

It is consulted on a range of local matters, including planning applications and infrastructure developments, ensuring that decisions reflect the needs and interests of the community.

The council is responsible for managing and maintaining key community assets, which include Trefriw Village Hall, Trefriw Cemetery, and the Recreation Ground. It also provides essential amenities such as seating around the village, it reports highway issues to the county council and ensures the village's public footpaths are maintained in partnership with Conwy County Borough Council.

The council takes pride in fostering a sense of community through initiatives such as providing the village Christmas tree and supporting local organisations, including the Trefriw Children's Playing Field Trust and the Trefriw Gardening Club. Additionally, it plays a role in the Henry Higgins Charitable Trusts, helping to administer funding for community benefit. Through these responsibilities, TCC works to preserve the village's character, support local initiatives, and enhance the quality of life for residents.



The village and the sign circa 1950s



The village and the sign 1932

Situation (Background & context)

The wooden Places of Interest sign by St. Mary's church in the village centre was in a very bad state of repair. The frame and board were rotten and irreparable. There has been a Places of Interest sign on this site in the village for at least 90 years. The earliest known photograph of it was

taken in 1932. If the sign had not been replaced last year it may have been in too poor a condition to be copied, risking the loss of the sign forever.

In a landscape of budgetary pressure and constraint, where ever more is being asked of town and community councils in terms of service provision, TCC did not have funds in reserve to spend on a new sign.



The sign as it was prior to replacement.

Objectives

To replace the degraded historic Places of Interest sign while retaining its traditional look and style, including historical spelling errors.

Planned approach

The planned approach for this project focused on preserving the historical integrity of the village sign while ensuring its longevity and cultural relevance. The existing sign was to be removed and replaced with a weatherproof aluminium composite facsimile, maintaining the original design and authenticity through the expertise of a local signwriter. To enhance durability, the sign would be mounted on robust metal support posts, ensuring it withstands environmental conditions for decades. The funding allowed TCC to commission a hand-painted sign, crafted using polycarbonate materials for increased resilience, aligning with sustainability principles under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Additionally, the sign incorporates bilingual text, reflecting and celebrating the Welsh-speaking heritage of the community, while the use of locally sourced craftsmanship supports small businesses and reinforces community pride.

The project faced challenges with time constraints due to the local signwriter being in high demand, delaying completion.

Targeted UKSPF outcome

W12 Community engagement and local regeneration through cultural preservation. It was hoped that this project would strengthen community pride by preserving a familiar historic feature and demonstrate TCC's ability to execute meaningful community projects.

It has led to increased confidence within TCC in their ability to secure and manage external grant funding.

Impact



Quantitative and qualitative outcomes

The restoration of Trefriw's historic village sign has had a tangible impact on community engagement, local identity, and long-term sustainability. Both quantitative and qualitative measures demonstrate the project's success in preserving heritage while fostering greater community pride and participation.

Quantitative outcomes

The significant engagement on social media highlights the public interest and appreciation for the project. TCC's social media posts about the new sign received 95 'Likes', while a local business's post generated 159 'Likes', reflecting broad community interest and digital engagement. The project has effectively raised awareness of local heritage and stimulated further conversations about preserving historical landmarks.

Qualitative outcomes

Beyond social media engagement, the project has delivered long-term benefits to the village, enhancing both its physical environment and community identity:

Preserving local identity: By ensuring the continuity of a 90-year-old landmark, the project has reinforced a sense of place and historical pride, maintaining Trefriw's unique character for future generations.

Enhanced village aesthetics: The high-quality craftsmanship and bilingual signage have contributed to a more welcoming and visually appealing village landscape, reinforcing civic pride.

Future financial savings: The use of durable materials and expert craftsmanship ensures minimal maintenance costs, providing a cost-effective and sustainable solution for the community.

Unexpected benefits: The restoration sparked increased engagement in heritage projects with more residents expressing interest in conservation initiatives and the potential for future community-led projects in Trefriw.

The project's success in preserving local heritage while fostering community participation highlights its broader impact beyond the immediate restoration of the sign. By combining historical preservation with modern engagement strategies, TCC has ensured that this project leaves a lasting legacy for the village.

Beneficiary quotes

The restoration of the historic village sign has been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from the community, with residents expressing appreciation for its authentic design and long-term durability. Beneficiaries praised the project, with comments such as "Very nice! Good to see that it's similar to the old sign." and "Looks great. Should last a good few years!", highlighting both the preservation of local heritage and the use of high-quality materials. Others described it as "very

impressive” and a “great job” reinforcing the community’s pride in the project and its contribution to the village’s aesthetic and historical continuity.

Future sustainability & next steps

The newly installed village sign has been designed with long-term sustainability in mind, requiring only minimal future maintenance. The polycarbonate material ensures durability, with upkeep limited to occasional cleaning and greasing of the bolts that secure it to the mounting poles. This low-maintenance approach aligns with cost-effective asset management, reducing the need for frequent repairs or replacements.

Building on the success of this project, TCC is now focusing on further infrastructure improvements within the village. Two key priorities include:

Village hall renovation – A planned restoration of Trefriw’s 200-year-old community hall, ensuring its continued use as a central hub for local activities.

Play park upgrade – Reinstating the basket swing, enhancing recreational facilities for children and families.

To support these initiatives, TCC intends to seek grant funding, ensuring that future projects benefit from external financial support while maintaining a focus on community needs and sustainability.

Additionally, the grant process for the village sign project has provided invaluable experience in securing funding, managing applications, and fulfilling reporting requirements. These insights will strengthen future funding applications, ensuring that TCC can continue to enhance local infrastructure while maximising investment opportunities for the community.

TVConwy Case Study



Grant Amount: £13,651.40

UKSPF Interventions achieved: W9,W11 and W12

W9 Funding for impactful volunteering and or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.

W11 Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support and local civil society and community groups.

W12 Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration

Overview of the organisation

The aim of TVConwy is to increase the skills and opportunities for local people to gain “on the job” experience within the field of media, whilst creating programmes and news items highlighting issues that are relevant to them and the local area, giving the community a voice.

The organisation also encourages the growth of the creative industry in North Wales through this cohesive approach. Serving Conwy and the North Wales counties.

The challenge

Over the past ten years TVConwy has met a large number of small groups who struggle to promote what they do or apply for funding as they are committed to their work but lack the capacity (skill set, members, time, funding etc.) to do so. These are often people who work tirelessly and make a huge impact in the community but need support of this kind from an outside group.

Situation as it existed prior to UKSPF funding

TVConwy has a forum on Facebook with just over 2,000 members and they encourage groups to use this to promote themselves. TVConwy regularly sees pleas for basic funding, equipment, volunteers etc. but with little or no clear and compelling visual information about what the group does.

They are also contacted on a regular basis through their social media platforms by various groups asking for promotional help, and they have been approached many times face-to-face whilst out filming.

Short and engaging media contact, such as the promotional videos produced by TVConwy, would make a huge difference to these small groups – giving them professional quality content for use in social media and in grant applications.

Project objectives and approach

TVConwy's UKSPF-funded project aimed to enhance visibility and outreach for small, underfunded local projects working in health and well-being, animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and community development. The initiative sought to address the challenge faced by many grassroots organisations that struggle to effectively showcase their work and attract funding due to limited resources and media expertise.

Through the grant, TVConwy set out to produce at least eight high-quality short videos, providing a professional platform for local groups to promote their activities, engage with wider audiences, and strengthen their grant applications. The project also had a strong focus on volunteering and capacity building, benefiting not only the featured organisations but also TVConwy itself by providing volunteers with hands-on experience in media production, filming, and content creation.

The funding was used to purchase new equipment, cover production and post-production costs, and ensure professional-quality video outputs. By investing in high-quality content creation, the project aimed to support community engagement and increase the digital presence of small organisations that often struggle to secure visibility.

Beyond the immediate impact, the project sought to create a sustainable digital asset for beneficiaries, allowing them to use their video content to strengthen funding bids, attract sponsors, and promote volunteering opportunities. Additionally, TVConwy's volunteers benefited from practical skills development, gaining real-world experience in filming, editing, and media production, enhancing their own employability and long-term prospects in the creative sector.



Implementation and approach

The funding enabled TVConwy to deliver a high-impact digital media project, producing eight short videos showcasing the work of small local groups in the fields of health and well-being, animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and community development. Each video was produced in two versions, with English and Welsh subtitles, ensuring accessibility for a wide audience.

To achieve professional production standards, TVConwy invested in new equipment, branded clothing for volunteers, and secured specialist training sessions. This ensured that the team could produce high-quality, engaging content that effectively highlighted the dedication and impact of grassroots organisations.

As part of the project, three new volunteers joined the organisation on a regular basis, with three more expressing interest in getting involved in the coming months. Additionally, TVConwy supported a student with her university application, providing valuable experience in media production. The videos also served as a recruitment tool, helping featured groups attract new volunteers and expand their reach.

Collaborations and partnerships

The project was delivered through close collaboration with eight local groups, providing them with a valuable promotional resource while strengthening community connections. These partnerships have sparked discussions about future joint grant applications and media projects, fostering a long-term culture of collaboration.

TVConwy also engaged with local freelance professionals to ensure timely, high-quality video production, while simultaneously providing training opportunities for volunteers. The organisation

sought advice and informal mentoring from local videographers and photographers, enhancing the skills and confidence of its volunteer team. Additionally, the training provider and merchandising suppliers were sourced from local businesses, ensuring that the project also contributed to economic sustainability within the community.

Challenges and how these were addressed

TVConwy encountered delays in receiving the funding, which impacted the initial timeline for securing training sessions before commencing video production. As a result, volunteers received on-the-job training, supported by experienced freelance videographers who provided practical guidance throughout the filming process. Although training sessions were scheduled, they had to be postponed due to illness; however, they have now been rescheduled for the coming months. This adjusted timeline is expected to sustain volunteer engagement beyond the completion of the productions.

The project also faced various production challenges, including adverse weather conditions and cancellations from some of the groups initially approached during pre-production. To manage these setbacks, the team revised the shooting schedule and reallocated part of the budget to purchase protective clothing and additional equipment for volunteers.

Each video project presented unique production challenges, ranging from outdoor filming and working in noisy environments to addressing sensitive topics. This intentional approach was designed to provide volunteers with a diverse and practical learning experience. These challenges were mitigated through on-the-job training facilitated by experienced volunteers and freelance professionals, ensuring that the team developed a broad skill set in media production while maintaining the quality of the final outputs.

Results: impact & outcomes achieved

The TVConwy digital media project successfully delivered eight short promotional videos, significantly enhancing the visibility of small community organisations. As of 28 January 2025, these videos had amassed a combined viewing total of 26,052 on Facebook, reaching 17,933 individuals. Each featured group received a professionally produced promotional video, a resource that many would not have been able to afford independently. These videos serve as valuable assets for grant applications, volunteer recruitment, and public engagement thus strengthening the long-term sustainability of each organisation.

Quantitative outcomes

Eight short films produced and widely shared among the organisations and CVSC.

Social media engagement growth:

Facebook "follows" increased from 5,218 in April 2024 to 5,360 in January 2025.

TVConwy Community Forum membership grew from just over 2,000 to 2,643.

Volunteer recruitment success: Three new volunteers joined, with an additional three expected in early 2025.



Qualitative outcomes

The project has enhanced TVConwy's community presence reinforcing its role as a local media hub and increasing demand for future collaborations. The videos have led to a greater number of requests from community groups seeking to promote their activities and events, further expanding TVConwy's reach.

Investment in new equipment has significantly improved the quality and diversity of content production allowing for higher production values and broader storytelling opportunities. Additionally, branded clothing for volunteers has not only enhanced health and safety compliance but has also served as an effective promotional tool increasing TVConwy's visibility at events and productions.

Feedback from the featured organisations has been overwhelmingly positive, with groups highlighting the value of the promotional films in attracting funding, volunteers, and broader community engagement. Working collaboratively, TVConwy has offered guidance on social media strategies, provided media training for participants, and used its platform to amplify the work of local organisations, creating a mutually beneficial model of engagement.

This initiative has not only delivered on its core objectives but has also set the foundation for continued growth, collaboration, and volunteer development, ensuring that both TVConwy and its partner organisations benefit from increased visibility, engagement, and long-term sustainability.

Unexpected benefits and lessons learned

One of the key insights gained from this project was the varying comfort levels of smaller community groups when working with a large film crew. While some groups found the process engaging, others were initially intimidated by the size of the production presence, highlighting the importance of building rapport and adapting filming approaches to suit different environments.

Additionally, it became evident that some volunteers required more time and support when working with new equipment, reinforcing the need for progressive training and hands-on experience to build confidence. However, the project also uncovered unexpected talent and enthusiasm within the volunteer team. One new volunteer fully embraced the production process, taking on multiple roles including photography, audio recording, and interviewing both on and off screen. Their rapid skill development led to them assuming the role of producer independently, demonstrating the project's potential to upskill volunteers and provide pathways to leadership roles within TVConwy.

These experiences underscore the value of a flexible, volunteer-led approach, where individuals can progress at their own pace while also creating an environment that nurtures confidence, adaptability, and skill development across all levels of experience.



Beneficiary quote

“Just to let you know I’ve since sent my UCAS application and I’ve got an offer from my first choice which was Cardiff and an unconditional offer from Salford. Thank you, for letting me help out and gain experience it really helped me with writing my personal statement. Hope I can help in the future as well.” – LH – 6th form student.

Future sustainability & next steps

The success of this project has established a strong foundation for the future sustainability of TVConwy's community-driven video production work. The investment in new equipment and branded clothing has enhanced the organisation's public presence, improving visibility and outreach, which in turn will help attract new volunteers and increase engagement with local groups. The upgraded equipment will allow TVConwy to continue producing high-quality video content and expand its capacity to support community-led projects beyond the scope of this grant.

To sustain and develop this work further, TVConwy plans to:

Pursue additional grant funding, either independently or in collaboration with other organisations, to support new productions, volunteer training programmes, and media workshops.

Leverage the organisation's enhanced technical capabilities to secure paid production work, where volunteers will gain valuable experience alongside local industry professionals. This will open opportunities to bid for a wider variety of projects, increasing financial sustainability while also further developing volunteer skills and employability.

Continue working in partnership with CVSC, whose ongoing support will help explore new funding avenues, provide networking opportunities, and strengthen TVConwy's role within the local third sector.

Lessons learned and future grant applications

Reflecting on the project, it was clear that the ambitious scope presented both opportunities and challenges. While the production of the eight high-quality videos was successfully achieved despite various obstacles, the team overestimated the number of new volunteers that could be accommodated within the timeframe. However, the project still provided significant learning experiences, both in terms of volunteer skill development and organisational growth.

The insights gained through this initiative have provided a well-structured framework for future funding applications, ensuring that future projects can build on this experience with a clearer understanding of capacity, resource management, and volunteer engagement. The behind-the-scenes documentation and promotional efforts successfully increased public awareness of TVConwy's work and will serve as a valuable asset for future funding proposals, particularly for further Shared Prosperity Fund applications or similar community media initiatives.

By applying these lessons and continuing to build strategic partnerships, TVConwy is well-positioned to expand its community impact, strengthen financial sustainability, and further develop its role as a leading platform for grassroots storytelling in Conwy.

8 Stakeholder perspectives / Summary of feedback

8.1 Summary of feedback grant recipients

The organisations that received funding through the UKSPF reported significant benefits, challenges, and unexpected outcomes because of their funded projects. Their experiences provide valuable insights into how the fund has impacted the voluntary and community sector, enhanced sustainability, and influenced community engagement and capacity building.

Organisations of various sizes and sectors benefited from the UKSPF, using the funding to enhance service delivery, improve infrastructure, and strengthen community engagement. Some grants enabled direct service provision, while others built long-term capacity within organisations, ensuring sustainability beyond the funding period.

For example, Betws y Coed Memorial Hall used its funding to explore a community asset transfer, assessing the feasibility of taking full ownership of the hall. The grant supported structural and energy efficiency surveys, community consultation events, and planning for sustainable operations. The project highlighted the importance of community ownership models in preserving local facilities.

Similarly, Cyngor Cymuned Dolwyddelan used UKSPF funding to develop a five-year community plan, which has provided a clear strategy for local projects and infrastructure management. The plan has helped the council secure additional funding and improve community engagement in decision-making.

Dwygyfylchi Bowling Club used its grant to enhance participation by introducing a Winter League, extending engagement beyond the summer season. The project increased membership and diversified participation, illustrating how small investments can have lasting impacts on community engagement.

For Clwb yr Heulwen Llansannan, UKSPF funding ensured the continuation of vital social activities for older residents in a rural area, preventing isolation and strengthening community ties.

Conwy Disabled Archery used the funding to purchase specialist equipment, making the sport more accessible and inclusive for disabled participants, leading to greater social inclusion and physical activity participation.

Some projects focused on volunteering and skills development. Conwy Mind's Keeping Connected programme recruited volunteers to deliver a telephone befriending service, helping those experiencing loneliness while training volunteers in mental health awareness and active listening skills.

TV Conwy used UKSPF funding to train volunteers in media production, producing high-quality digital content to support community organisations.

Challenges encountered

While UKSPF funding has played a crucial role in strengthening the third sector, organisations also faced key challenges in project implementation.

A common challenge was the tight timeframe for project delivery. Several organisations noted that funding was received late in the year, limiting their ability to plan strategically or engage participants effectively. Age Connects North Wales Central found that staff recruitment was delayed due to the timing of the grant, impacting service expansion.

Another recurring issue was the difficulty in engaging certain community groups. Betws y Coed Memorial Hall faced challenges in securing broad community participation due to its location in a business district rather than a residential area.

Making Sense CIO, which worked with care settings to introduce creative engagement techniques, encountered barriers in gaining access and securing staff buy-in from care managers, some of whom struggled to prioritise creativity alongside daily care responsibilities.

For projects focused on volunteering, the availability and retention of volunteers was a challenge. Clwb Achub Bywyd O'r Môr Llanfairfechan, which trained lifeguards to improve water safety, found that while initial interest was high, some trainees did not continue engagement beyond certification.

She Shed Abergele, a women's community group, had to rebuild its membership and secure independent premises after separating from a larger organisation.

A further challenge reported by some organisations was financial sustainability beyond the grant period. Sound Radio CIC, whose application was unsuccessful, highlighted the lack of alternative funding options for community radio, which limited their ability to expand services.

Even successful projects, such as Penmaenmawr Phoenix Football Club, noted that while the installation of solar panels and a borehole reduced long-term costs, further investment was needed to maximise their sustainability potential.

Capacity building and sustainability

A key objective of the UKSPF was to increase the resilience and sustainability of third-sector organisations, and in many cases, this has been successfully achieved.

Organisations have reported improved financial planning, increased community ownership, and the ability to access additional funding. For example, Clwb yr Efail used UKSPF funding to modernise their facility, train staff, and improve volunteer engagement, resulting in greater financial security and increased community participation.

Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Dyffryn Conwy expanded its volunteer training programme, ensuring event safety and efficiency at its annual agricultural show, which saw record attendance.

Trefriw Community Council's initiative to restore a historic village sign demonstrated the importance of heritage preservation in strengthening community identity and tourism appeal. The project unexpectedly led to a successful funding bid for additional community improvements, demonstrating how small-scale initiatives can unlock further investment.

Unexpected outcomes and lessons learned

Many organisations noted unexpected positive outcomes from their projects.

Increased participation from younger demographics has been a recurring theme. Dwygyfylchi Bowling Club's expansion led to partnerships with local schools, introducing bowls to younger players and shifting perceptions of the sport as being for older adults. Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Dyffryn Conwy's agricultural show saw higher-than-expected attendance from families, prompting discussions on expanding educational activities for children.

Several organisations found that improved facilities led to new and unexpected uses. Girl Guiding Aberconwy had anticipated a modest increase in use of its community facility after making energy efficiency improvements but found that new groups, including Tai Chi classes and youth clubs, began using the space regularly.

Some organisations reported that increased visibility led to partnerships and funding opportunities beyond their original expectations. TV Conwy's media project not only helped featured organisations gain exposure but led to a young volunteer securing a university placement based on their experience. Conwy Disabled Archery saw interest from other disability sports organisations, leading to potential collaborations on future inclusive sports events.

A key lesson learned was the importance of early stakeholder engagement and flexible project planning. The FDF Centre for Independent Living, which provided advocacy and support services for disabled people, found that some community groups assumed they would offer weekly visits, leading to misaligned expectations. Similarly, Making Sense CIO found that securing early buy-in from care home managers would have improved consistency in staff engagement with creative workshops.

8.2 Reflections from the CVSC team

The CVSC team played a critical role in administering the Shared Prosperity Fund, ensuring effective grant distribution, supporting third sector organisations, and navigating the complexities of programme management. Their collective reflections offer valuable insights into the programme's successes, challenges, and areas for improvement.

Programme strengths and achievements

The team unanimously agreed that the Shared Prosperity Fund provided an essential boost to voluntary organisations in Conwy, many of which had limited experience accessing structured funding. By simplifying the application process and offering guidance, the team helped smaller organisations secure funding they might not have otherwise received.

One of the key successes was the ability to quickly establish and deliver the programme within a short timeframe. Despite the pressures of meeting deadlines, the team ensured that funds were allocated efficiently and fairly, reaching a diverse range of organisations. Staff members also highlighted the positive impact of the capacity-building support provided, particularly bid-writing workshops and financial management training, which strengthened organisations beyond just grant funding.

The collaborative approach within CVSC was another significant success. The Chief Officer noted that strong internal communication and teamwork ensured that grant administration, financial oversight, and capacity-building efforts were aligned effectively. Regular meetings and cross-team support played a crucial role in managing workload distribution and troubleshooting emerging challenges.

Challenges encountered

While the programme had many strengths, the team faced several operational challenges. The Business Manager noted that the financial reporting requirements set by Gwynedd Council were overly complex, leading to additional administrative burdens. Rigid budget categories often required adjustments, creating delays in fund distribution.

Another major challenge was the tight funding window. The Grants Manager and Senior Funding Officer highlighted that organisations often struggled to deliver projects within the timeframe, particularly those involving infrastructure improvements or recruitment. This placed additional pressure on the CVSC team to provide flexibility where possible while maintaining compliance with funder requirements.

Volunteer engagement was another area that proved more difficult than expected. The Volunteering Admin Assistant found that while there was enthusiasm for volunteer-led projects, many organisations lacked the infrastructure to effectively manage volunteers. Training and policy development efforts helped address this, but some organisations still required long-term support.

Lessons learned

The team identified several key lessons from their experience managing the programme:

Clearer financial administration from the outset: The complexity of UKSPF financial reporting created difficulties for both CVSC and grant recipients. The team suggested that future funding

rounds should incorporate clearer financial templates and advance discussions with funders on how costs can be categorised.

Longer funding periods: The compressed timeframe limited organisations' ability to plan and implement projects effectively. The Chief Officer stressed that future programmes should allow for a more phased approach, with funding distributed over a longer period to maximise impact.

Increased pre-application support: The Grants Manager noted that some organisations needed more structured guidance before applying, particularly in understanding UKSPF intervention themes. More tailored pre-application workshops could help organisations align their projects with fund objectives earlier in the process.

More streamlined communication with funders: The team experienced delays in responses from Gwynedd Council, which impacted claim processing and reporting. The Business Manager suggested that a dedicated liaison role between CVSC and the regional funder could improve communication and efficiency.

What the team would do differently:

Reflecting on the programme, staff members suggested several adjustments for future initiatives:

Introduce a more proactive monitoring approach: Rather than relying solely on end-of-project reports, the team recommended implementing mid-term check-ins with grantees. This would allow earlier intervention where projects were struggling and provide more real-time insights into impact.

Develop digital training resources: While in-person workshops were valuable, the team recognised that some organisations struggled to attend due to time constraints. The Volunteering Admin Assistant and Grants Manager suggested developing an online training hub with recorded sessions and toolkits to provide ongoing support.

Strengthen cross-sector collaboration: The team recognised that better integration with other local funding streams, such as those managed by Conwy Council, could have reduced duplication and improved coordination. Future programmes could explore joint planning between funding bodies to streamline opportunities for third sector organisations.

8.3 Reflections from the beneficiaries

Stakeholder Perspectives: Beneficiary experiences and community impact

The UKSPF projects delivered across Conwy have had a transformative impact on individuals and communities, improving social inclusion, access to essential services, well-being, and volunteering opportunities. Beneficiaries of these projects including older people, disabled individuals, volunteers, community members, and people experiencing financial hardship have highlighted the tangible improvements in their daily lives.

Overall impact of the UKSPF-funded projects

Across multiple sectors, UKSPF-funded initiatives have provided vital community services, improved well-being, and strengthened social connections. Many beneficiaries reported that these projects helped combat isolation, provided much-needed practical support, and opened new opportunities for personal development.

Social inclusion and reducing isolation were recurring themes in feedback. Clwb Yr Efail Conwy, for example, has been supported to maintain a safe, welcoming space for older individuals to socialise, share meals, and receive care in a well-maintained and friendly environment. One regular attendee described it as a “special haven” where elderly residents could break the cycle of loneliness, enjoy nutritious meals, and engage in social interaction.

Practical support services have been essential for many beneficiaries. Age Connects North Wales Central delivered the Home Life programme, which provided home support services for older people. One service user expressed how the initiative had given them peace of mind, knowing they could travel without worrying about their elderly mother’s care. Another described the service as “heaven sent,” highlighting how it improved their quality of life.

For individuals facing financial hardship, UKSPF-funded projects such as Care and Share played a crucial role. One beneficiary, Dave, described how the project helped him navigate housing and benefit issues following a period of unemployment and personal hardship. He noted that the organisation treated him with dignity, tailored food support to his needs, and provided consistent, compassionate care, which contributed to his improved mental well-being. Similarly, Diane, another Care and Share user, explained that before engaging with the project, she often had to choose between paying rent and buying food. The food parcels provided not only practical support but also a sense of community and kindness, as the delivery team made time to chat and check in on her well-being.

Community engagement and well-being

Many beneficiaries described feeling more connected to their community because of the UKSPF-funded initiatives. Llanfairfechan Croquet Club created an inclusive and welcoming space where individuals of all abilities could engage in sport, build friendships, and take part in social activities. A regular participant described the club as a great tonic, helping them manage moderate depression through teamwork and camaraderie.

The club also hosted a special event for refugees and asylum seekers, introducing them to croquet in a safe, friendly, and relaxing environment. This initiative provided a rare moment of joy and social connection for people who had faced significant hardships, helping them integrate into the community and form new social bonds.

Similarly, Blind Veterans UK partnered with Llanfairfechan Croquet Club to offer visually impaired veterans a new and engaging activity. The veterans reported feeling welcomed and supported, and

the event was so successful that it inspired them to explore other accessible sports opportunities in their local area.

Skills development and volunteering

Several UKSPF-funded projects helped individuals gain new skills, access training, and enhance their career opportunities. TV Conwy, for example, provided hands-on media training for young volunteers, equipping them with digital production skills. One volunteer, Lily, initially joined the programme to explore career options in journalism and digital marketing. Through her experience with TV Conwy, she developed practical skills, grew in confidence, and secured offers from top universities. Another participant, Josie, worked as a photographer on a documentary project and later took on supporting roles in other community events, highlighting how the project encouraged continued engagement and career development.

For individuals seeking practical skills and structured volunteering opportunities, UKSPF funding supported organisations such as Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Dyffryn Conwy. Their agricultural show training programme not only ensured event safety but also provided volunteers with transferable skills in event management and coordination. This hands-on experience contributed to stronger community engagement and increased volunteer retention.

Unintended outcomes and lessons learned

One of the most significant unintended outcomes across multiple projects was the increase in intergenerational and cross-community engagement.

Dwygyfylchi Bowling Club's Winter League expansion attracted younger players, breaking the perception that bowls was only for older adults. Their work with local schools introduced children to the sport and fostered new partnerships.

Girl Guiding Aberconwy's facility improvements led to increased use of their space, with new groups such as Tai Chi classes and youth clubs benefiting from the upgraded environment.

Trefriw Community Council's heritage sign restoration sparked unexpected interest in local history, leading to further community-led heritage initiatives.

Many beneficiaries noted that the flexibility and responsiveness of UKSPF-funded organisations played a key role in their success. For example, Conwy Disabled Archery initially planned to use its grant for equipment, but increased demand for accessible sports led them to expand their outreach, bringing more disabled participants into the programme than anticipated.

The She Shed project has had a profound impact on its participants, fostering social inclusion, personal development, and emotional well-being. Beneficiaries consistently highlighted how the project provided a supportive space where women could connect, learn new skills, and contribute to the community.

For many members, She Shed has been a lifeline, offering companionship and structure in their weekly routines. June, who lost her husband, shared that without She Shed, she would be sitting at home staring at the walls. Instead, she now enjoys new friendships and skill development, which has been vital for her well-being. Sheila echoed this sentiment, stating that She Shed has helped her combat loneliness and given her something to look forward to each week.

The project also enables personal empowerment and intergenerational knowledge-sharing. Rosalie, a former arts teacher, expressed how She Shed allowed her to pass on her skills to others, fulfilling a long-held desire to share her expertise. Similarly, Pauline found joy in helping the community through crafts, enjoying both learning and teaching within the group.

Beyond personal benefits, She Shed has had a wider community impact. Jo, who organised a Christmas Fayre, praised the group's involvement, stating that their support enhanced the event for children by helping them make festive gifts. She described them as an asset to the community, demonstrating the broader value of the project beyond its immediate members.

Overall, She Shed has transformed lives, offering companionship, creative opportunities, and a sense of belonging. The project has not only tackled social isolation but also enabled members to contribute to their communities, proving to be a powerful initiative that enhances both individual and collective well-being.

Feedback from participation in training

The feedback from beneficiaries who attended CVSC training sessions indicates a generally positive response, with participants highlighting the value of knowledge-sharing, networking, and confidence-building. However, this feedback is based on a small sample, and while useful for identifying themes, it does not fully represent the impact of the training programme on all participants.

Overall experience

Most participants found the training sessions beneficial, particularly in fundraising, inclusion, and volunteer management. Conwy Connect, for example, reported that their fundraising workshop helped them explore new funding strategies, such as introducing sponsorship models. Similarly, Youth Shedz found that their session on LGBTQ+ inclusion reinforced their existing good practice and provided confidence in creating inclusive spaces.

However, some participants found session descriptions unclear, which made it difficult to select relevant workshops. Pigtown Theatre noted that they attended a youth volunteering session that covered information they were already familiar with, missing out on a potentially more useful digital training session due to a lack of clear guidance on content.

Relevance and application of training

Participants who found the training relevant were able to implement changes within their organisations:

- Conwy Connect is now working to formalise volunteer roles, improving how they recruit and support volunteers.
- Youth Shedz has used insights from the inclusion workshop to better support young volunteers, ensuring clear pathways from service users to paid staff roles.
- Emma, Pride Cymru found that delivering an LGBTQ+ inclusion workshop allowed them to raise their profile, connect with other organisations, and expand their network, contributing to a broader conversation about inclusivity in Conwy.

For others, the training acted more as a confidence booster rather than introducing entirely new concepts. Youth Shedz described the training as reassuring, validating their approach and reinforcing best practices they were already implementing.

Challenges and areas for improvement

While there were positive outcomes, several participants identified areas where training delivery could be improved:

- Better session descriptions: Some attendees felt they had missed out on more relevant sessions due to unclear descriptions.
- Scheduling flexibility: Participants suggested running certain sessions multiple times to reduce clashes and improve accessibility.
- More focus on digital skills: Pigtown Theatre and others highlighted the need for training on AI, digital marketing, and fundraising diversification, which they felt was missing from the current offering.
- More inclusive training opportunities: Emma, Pride Cymru noted that CVSC itself could adopt a more inclusive approach in its marketing and outreach to ensure wider participation from underrepresented groups.

The feedback suggests that CVSC's training sessions provided valuable insights, networking opportunities, and practical skills, particularly in volunteering, inclusivity, and funding strategies. However, as this is based on a small sample, it is not fully representative of the entire training programme's impact. Future improvements could focus on improving session clarity, expanding digital skills training, and offering multiple opportunities for key sessions to ensure greater accessibility and relevance.

8.4 Stakeholder feedback

The evaluators interviewed a representative of Conwy County Borough Council, a key stakeholder in this programme for their view on the success and impact of the programme and particularly, how well Community & Voluntary Support Conwy had managed the programme.

The feedback was as follows:

CVSC have a clear understanding of the Voluntary Sector funding landscape, and their experience in delivering funding programmes has been key, allowing them to provide expert support to voluntary and community organisations.

Their dual approach, offering financial support and capacity-building initiatives such as governance workshops and training, helps contribute towards strengthening the sustainability of third sector organisations across Conwy.

Their relationships with local organisations have made them an important partner in delivering the UKSPF objectives in Conwy.

9 Conclusions

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund, funded through the UKSPF, has demonstrably contributed to the core objectives set by the UK Government, Welsh Government, and Conwy County Borough Council. The programme has successfully addressed volunteering, capacity building, community engagement, cost-of-living support, and sustainability through strategic grant allocation, training, and infrastructure support.

Across the programme, over 1,000 volunteering opportunities were supported, with projects delivering significant social, economic, and cultural benefits to communities across Conwy. The fund also enabled local organisations to build resilience, strengthen governance, and develop sustainable funding models, ensuring lasting impact beyond the funding period.

Effectiveness in achieving UK Shared Prosperity Fund interventions; outputs and outcomes

The programme has exceeded several of its targets, notably in areas of volunteering, community participation, and cost-of-living support, while providing capacity-building support to a wide range of organisations. Some minor shortfalls were identified in grant distribution and training engagement due to external challenges such as reclassification of funding and limited availability of training spaces. However, the overall target for delivery of training was exceeded.

W9: Volunteering and Social Action – The programme delivered 1,004 volunteering opportunities against a target of 90, highlighting the strong demand for community-led initiatives.

W11: Capacity Building – A total of 189 organisations received non-financial support, surpassing the target of 106.

W12: Community Engagement – Community participation was evidenced by the delivery of 19 events

W13: Cost-of-Living Support – Over 1,400 households received financial and energy efficiency support, demonstrating the programme's ability to address pressing economic challenges.

W14: Sustainability Initiatives – The fund supported feasibility studies and sustainability projects that are now forming the basis for longer-term investment in community resilience.

Alignment with UK Shared Prosperity Fund evaluation criteria

Clear and evidence-based findings

This evaluation is grounded in robust quantitative and qualitative data drawn from financial reports, stakeholder interviews, and direct engagement with beneficiaries. Case studies illustrate the real-world impact of the fund, and statistical analysis provides an evidence-based assessment of achievement against UKSPF targets.

Data quality and collection methods

The programme has effectively used a combination of surveys, interviews, and financial tracking to ensure data integrity. Beneficiary feedback has been systematically gathered to assess social impact, and financial monitoring mechanisms have ensured transparency in spending.

Lessons learned and future considerations

While the programme has delivered impressive results, key lessons have emerged:

Volunteer Coordination: Many projects experienced higher-than-expected volunteer engagement, highlighting the need for structured volunteer management frameworks.

Funding Application and Reporting: Some grant recipients found administrative requirements challenging, suggesting that future rounds of funding could benefit from simplified reporting structures.

Community Asset Development: Feasibility studies funded through the programme have proven invaluable, demonstrating that early-stage investment in community asset transfers can unlock further funding and sustainability.

Sustainability and long-term impact

The long-term impact of the programme will be dependent on the ability of funded organisations to secure ongoing funding, retain volunteers, and sustain the initiatives developed through UKSPF support. Some key areas identified for continued investment include:

Further support for digital and financial literacy among third-sector organisations.

Sustained funding for cost-of-living interventions, particularly in rural and deprived areas.

Strengthening local supply chains and partnerships to enhance economic resilience.

Final assessment

The CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has successfully met and, in many cases, exceeded its intended objectives under the UKSPF. By providing critical financial and strategic support to voluntary and community sector organisations, it has contributed to stronger, more resilient communities in Conwy.

Moving forward, it is essential to leverage these successes by continuing to invest in community-led solutions, streamlining funding processes, and ensuring the longevity of impactful projects. The evaluation highlights the need for sustained partnership working, flexibility in funding mechanisms, and enhanced volunteer management strategies to ensure that these gains are maintained and built upon in future funding cycles.

This evaluation has followed UKSPF guidance, ensuring clarity, transparency, and alignment with national and regional policy objectives, making a strong case for continued investment in the voluntary and community sector in Conwy.

10 Recommendations

Recommendations

The evaluation of the CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund has demonstrated significant achievements in volunteering, capacity building, community engagement, and cost-of-living support. To sustain and build upon this success while ensuring alignment with UKSPF evaluation guidance, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthening volunteer engagement and retention

Develop a structured volunteer management framework to support organisations in engaging, training, and retaining volunteers effectively.

Establish a Volunteer Learning and Development Programme to provide ongoing skills training, enhancing the transition from volunteering to employment.

Explore mentorship and peer-support networks to connect experienced volunteers with new recruits, ensuring knowledge transfer and long-term engagement.

Implement a consistent evaluation process to assess the impact of volunteer contributions and identify best practices for engagement.

Enhancing capacity building for Third Sector organisations

Expand the CVSC training programme to include tailored sessions on financial sustainability, digital skills, impact measurement, and governance.

Provide more dedicated grant-writing workshops to improve access to future funding opportunities for community groups and social enterprises. Consider online and digital models of delivery to increase access.

Develop a resource hub with toolkits, templates, and case studies to support organisations in implementing best practices.

Promote evidence-based capacity-building models, ensuring training sessions align with sector needs and best practice methodologies.

Improving funding and sustainability strategies

Strengthen engagement with Welsh Government and UK Government funding streams, including Community Facilities Programme, National Lottery Community Fund, and Volunteering Wales Grants.

Facilitate workshops to help third-sector organisations develop social enterprise models and diversify income streams to reduce reliance on grants.

Explore match-funding opportunities to enable organisations to leverage additional investment for their projects.

Ensure funding applications and disbursements are proportionate to project size, reducing administrative burdens on smaller organisations.

Expanding social inclusion and community-led initiatives

Continue supporting inclusive projects that empower underrepresented groups, including disabled individuals, older people, and ethnic minority communities.

Develop an asset-based community development approach, ensuring that funding builds long-term community resilience.

Establish partnerships with local businesses and anchor institutions to create opportunities for corporate volunteering and sponsorships.

Promote longitudinal evaluations to track the lasting impact of funded initiatives on social inclusion and participation.

Strengthening local collaboration and strategic partnerships

Work more closely with Conwy County Borough Council to align future programmes with regional development strategies and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Encourage joint applications for funding with neighbouring voluntary sector organisations to create scalable, collaborative projects.

Develop thematic networks (e.g., mental health, youth engagement, environmental sustainability) to enable organisations to share knowledge and collaborate on solutions.

Incorporate collaborative evaluation frameworks that involve multiple stakeholders, enhancing the credibility and reach of impact assessments.

Improving impact measurement and reporting

Implement a **streamlined monitoring and evaluation framework** to ensure that future programmes capture both **quantitative and qualitative impact data**.

Invest in **digital reporting tools** to enable **real-time tracking** of project outcomes and beneficiary engagement.

Ensure ongoing **beneficiary feedback loops** to refine services and funding allocations based on community needs.

Advocacy and future policy engagement

Use the evidence from this evaluation to advocate for continued investment in voluntary sector-led initiatives at local and national levels.

Ensure CVSC plays an active role in policy discussions on community development, volunteering, and economic inclusion.

Share best practices and case studies with other regional and national voluntary sector networks to showcase the success of this programme.

Publish evaluation findings and lessons learned in accessible formats to inform stakeholders and improve future policy design.

Future initiatives should focus on leveraging new funding opportunities, deepening community engagement, and enhancing the capacity of third-sector organisations to drive long-term, sustainable change. The implementation of proportional, evidence-based evaluations, combined with strengthened collaborative reporting frameworks, will ensure that CVSC continues to meet UKSPF requirements while maximising the impact of its funding programmes.

Appendix 1 Summary interviews grant recipients

This section provides a condensed overview of grant recipient interviews, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and impacts across funded projects. Each project contributed to the UKSPF objectives by delivering volunteering opportunities, capacity building, community engagement, and cost-of-living support.

Betws y Coed Memorial Hall – Grant: £6,300

Outcomes achieved: W11 (Capacity Building), W12 (Community Engagement)

Key impact: Conducted structural and energy efficiency surveys to assess feasibility for community ownership. Engaged local groups in discussions about the hall's future.

Challenges: Limited visibility due to location in a business district. Balancing different user expectations.

Sustainability: Identified funding streams for repairs and a long-term management plan.

Cyngor Cymuned Dolwyddelan – Grant: £9,980

Outcomes achieved: W11, W12, W14 (Sustainability)

Key impact: Developed a five-year community plan to enhance infrastructure planning and engagement.

Challenges: Limited councillor engagement and complex community asset management issues.

Sustainability: Strengthened strategic planning for future funding applications.

Dwygyfylchi Bowling Club – Grant: £4,728

Outcomes achieved: W9 (Volunteering), W11, W12

Key impact: Expanded club participation through structured volunteer training and a Winter League.

Challenges: Volunteer coordination and visibility of the club.

Sustainability: Increased youth participation and partnerships with local schools.

Llanfairfechan Croquet Club – Grant: £18,648

Outcomes achieved: W9, W12, W13 (Cost-of-Living Support)

Key impact: Membership grew from 50 to 66. Engaged refugees, disabled veterans, and older adults.

Challenges: Planning permission delays for infrastructure improvements.

Sustainability: Developing a mental health partnership and expanding winter programmes.

Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Dyffryn Conwy – Grant: £26,583

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12

Key impact: 234 volunteers trained to support an annual agricultural event. Free entry for children

increased accessibility.

Challenges: Managing increased attendance and ensuring sufficient volunteer coverage.

Sustainability: Strengthening youth engagement for long-term event management.

Conwy Mind – Keeping Connected Project – Grant: £43,240

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12

Key impact: Recruited and trained 20 volunteers for a befriending service. Increased mental health service engagement.

Challenges: Balancing volunteer and service user numbers.

Sustainability: Plans to expand to in-person befriending and youth services.

She Shed Abergele – Grant: £3,705

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12

Key impact: Provided a safe, inclusive space for women to develop new skills and social networks.

Challenges: Initial funding limitations and securing premises.

Sustainability: Expanding training partnerships and community outreach.

Conwy Disabled Archery – Grant: £1,641.56

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12

Key impact: Grew participation from 6 to 15 disabled archers. Mental health benefits included suicide prevention impact.

Challenges: Venue accessibility and high demand for sessions.

Sustainability: Seeking a dedicated space and expanding school outreach.

The Hummingbird Project North Wales CIC – Grant: £6,000

Outcomes achieved: W9, W12, W13

Key impact: Distributed hundreds of winter coats and Keep Warm packs, supporting cost-of-living needs.

Challenges: Awareness-raising and meeting high demand.

Sustainability: Expanding referral networks and securing additional funding.

Making Sense CIO – Grant: £45,800

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12

Key impact: Provided creative engagement training in 10 care settings, improving well-being for residents.

Challenges: Staff engagement variability in care homes.

Sustainability: Embedding creativity into care policies and training.

Age Connects North Wales Central – Grant: £57,839.94

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12, W13

Key impact: Expanded the Home Life Project and an energy advice service, supporting older people.

Challenges: Recruitment issues for specialist roles.

Sustainability: Strengthening social enterprise models for financial independence.

Trefriw Community Council – Grant: £865

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12

Key impact: Restored a historic village sign, enhancing local heritage.

Challenges: Finding skilled signwriters.

Sustainability: Building confidence for future heritage funding applications.

Penmaenmawr Phoenix Football Club – Grant: £27,852.35

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12, W14

Key impact: Installed solar panels and a borehole, reducing operational costs and ensuring sustainability.

Challenges: Unexpected drilling costs.

Sustainability: Becoming a model for sustainable grassroots football clubs.

Clwb Achub Bywyd O'r Môr Llanfairfechan – Grant: £11,163.76

Outcomes achieved: W9, W11, W12

Key impact: Doubled club membership and trained 10 new lifeguards.

Challenges: Retaining newly trained members.

Sustainability: Expanding partnerships with schools and water sports clubs.

Conclusion

This condensed summary showcases the diversity of projects funded by the CVSC Capacity Building Key Fund. The programme delivered strong outcomes in volunteering, capacity building, community engagement, and sustainability, helping third-sector organisations build resilience and long-term impact.

Future funding should focus on:

- Strengthening partnerships for sustainability.
- Expanding successful community-driven models.
- Supporting organisations in leveraging match funding and new investment.

This summary provides an accessible overview of project impact, with a full dataset available in the standalone Appendix 1 document.

Appendix 2 Staff interviews

Interview summary – Chief Officer

Role and responsibilities

The Chief Officer was responsible for the strategic oversight of the UKSPF-funded programme, including line management of key staff involved in delivery. This role included direct oversight of the Capacity Building Project Manager and the Grants Officer, ensuring programme objectives were met and that financial and governance requirements were adhered to. The Chief Officer was also the main point of contact for the UKSPF project, taking ultimate accountability for its success and compliance.

Application and funding process

The Chief Officer was involved in writing the initial UKSPF funding application, alongside the previous Chief Officer and other senior staff. The application process was conducted on short notice in May–June 2023, following an opportunity to bid into the regional funding pot. A decision was made to apply for a county-wide Key Fund to ensure equitable access across all areas of Conwy, rather than being geographically restricted as with some previous funding streams. The capacity-building element of the programme was identified as a priority due to its alignment with CVSC's strategic objectives.

Selection of UKSPF outcomes (W9-W15)

The decision to align the programme with UKSPF outcomes W9–W14 was based on:

- Fit with existing CVSC priorities, particularly around community development and sustainability.
- Avoiding large capital investments, as the short project timescales made such spending impractical.
- Flexibility in funding criteria, ensuring a wide range of voluntary and community groups could benefit.

The project was designed to maximise accessibility by minimising restrictive funding criteria, allowing a broad spectrum of community activity to be supported.

Programme successes and achievements

Several key successes were identified, including:

- Expanding CVSC's reach into new communities, particularly those that had not previously engaged with the organisation.

- Raising the profile of CVSC, as many funded organisations had not been aware of the organisation's support services before applying.
- Funding a significant number of new groups, demonstrating that the Key Fund was reaching organisations that otherwise might have struggled to access financial support.
- Quick turnaround in fund delivery, with the panel and decision-making process set up rapidly to ensure grants could be allocated efficiently.

Challenges encountered

Despite its successes, the programme faced several challenges:

- Delays in accessing advance payments from Gwynedd Council, leading to significant cash flow difficulties for funded groups.
- Confusion around paperwork and claim procedures, with multiple iterations of forms creating administrative burdens for both CVSC and grantees.
- Duplication of funding streams, as the local authority launched similar funding pots, leading to applicant confusion and additional administrative work.
- Capacity issues within Gwynedd Council, which managed the regional funding and was under-resourced, causing slow response times and inefficiencies.

Financial oversight and compliance

The Chief Officer played a role in ensuring compliance with financial and governance requirements. The delays in advance payments significantly impacted project delivery timelines and placed additional strain on relationships with grantees, as organisations had anticipated quicker funding disbursement. Regular discussions took place with Gwynedd Council to resolve these issues, although clearer processes from the outset would have mitigated many of these challenges.

Measuring long-term impact

The UKSPF programme outlined three key long-term outcomes:

1. A sense of pride in place and local community investment.
2. Increased participation in voluntary and community activities.
3. Enhanced community cohesion through volunteering.

While these outcomes extend beyond the funding period, CVSC has incorporated them into monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track their progress. However, the lack of additional funding for post-programme evaluation means that long-term tracking is limited.

Lessons learned & recommendations

- Clearer financial administration processes at the outset would have avoided delays and reduced administrative burdens.
- Stronger alignment between different funding pots (e.g., CVSC's Key Fund vs. Conwy Council's funding streams) would have minimised confusion for applicants.
- A longer funding period would have improved project sustainability and allowed for more effective implementation of grant-funded initiatives.
- Future funding applications should prioritise ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that long-term outcomes are adequately tracked beyond the delivery period.

Interview summary – Capacity Building Project Manager

Role and responsibilities

The Capacity Building Project Manager was responsible for overseeing the UKSPF-funded Key Fund and coordinating the associated training programme. This included managing grant applications, supporting voluntary organisations in accessing funding, promoting training opportunities, and ensuring compliance with UKSPF requirements. The role also involved monitoring financial aspects in collaboration with the Business Manager and tracking the overall progress of the programme.

Grant application and management

The Capacity Building Project Manager played a key role in designing and administering the Key Fund. Responsibilities included developing application forms and guidelines, assessing grant applications alongside other team members, and ensuring applicants were given appropriate guidance and feedback. A proactive approach was taken to encourage applications, including direct outreach to organisations, drop-in events, and email marketing. Despite efforts to provide in-person support, drop-in sessions had lower than expected attendance, potentially due to inadequate promotion or a general preference for online engagement.

Smaller organisations, particularly those unfamiliar with the funding process, received additional support. The process was designed to be as accessible as possible, minimising barriers such as expression-of-interest stages and complex application requirements. Many applicants were diverted from other funding streams, ensuring they could still access support through alternative means.

Training programme development and delivery

The UKSPF Stage 2 application outlined a set list of training topics, and most of these were delivered as planned. The selection of topics was based on a combination of staff expertise,

perceived sector needs, and feedback from previous training sessions. Some changes were made in response to demand, such as repeating Bid Writing workshops due to high interest.

To maximise attendance, training was promoted through social media, email lists, local radio, and direct engagement with potential attendees. However, take-up remained lower than expected, particularly for standalone training events. The UKSPF-funded conference proved to be an effective method of increasing attendance, as it allowed multiple sessions to be delivered in a single event. Free training sessions led to issues with non-attendance, and while introducing a cancellation fee improved accountability at the conference, there were concerns about implementing this across all training sessions.

Community engagement and outcomes measurement

One of the key programme outcomes was to foster a sense of Pride in Place. This was challenging to measure formally, so qualitative feedback from monitoring reports was used to capture project impact. Key indicators such as the number of volunteer roles created and events held were tracked, but much of the social impact was captured through open-ended feedback from grant recipients.

Project finance and compliance

Financial management was carried out in collaboration with the Business Manager. The Capacity Building Project Manager was responsible for tracking spending, ensuring compliance with UKSPF regulations, and preparing claims for Cyngor Gwynedd. While the internal tracking system improved over time, some initial claims were returned due to incorrect categorisation, highlighting the complexity of UKSPF financial reporting requirements.

Challenges and lessons learned

- **Short funding timelines:** The compressed timeframe for fund allocation and project delivery was a significant challenge. Many organisations struggled to complete projects within the required period, and delays in receiving funding led to recruitment and implementation setbacks.
- **Complexity of UKSPF Requirements:** Some applicants were deterred by the intervention-based approach, which required them to align their projects with specific UKSPF outcomes. To mitigate this, a flexible outcome-setting process was introduced, where project impact indicators were agreed upon post-application.
- **Volunteer engagement:** Encouraging participation in training and funding opportunities required extensive outreach. While email and social media marketing were effective in attracting grant applicants, training sessions needed more direct promotion to secure attendance.

- Sustainability of organisations: The fund helped smaller organisations purchase essential equipment and training, contributing to long-term capacity building. However, for larger organisations, it primarily acted as a short-term funding boost rather than a sustainability measure.

Future recommendations

- Longer funding periods would improve project planning and implementation, allowing organisations more time to deliver impactful initiatives.
- Streamlining the grant process further, especially for smaller organisations, would reduce barriers to entry and encourage broader participation.
- Enhancing training outreach strategies, such as requiring pre-registration follow-ups and considering hybrid delivery models, could improve attendance.
- Investing in digital tools for impact measurement and reporting could provide stronger evidence of outcomes, particularly for social and community-based initiatives.

Interview Summary – Grants Officer

Role and responsibilities

The Grants Officer was responsible for supporting applicants through the UKSPF funding process, ensuring that organisations understood the application requirements, and providing guidance on project development. The role also involved assessing applications, delivering training on bid writing and income diversification, and monitoring the progress of Key Fund projects.

Grant application support and assessment

The Grants Officer worked closely with community organisations to help them navigate the application process, offering pre-application advice, clarifications, and technical support. The approach taken was highly conversational and interactive, ensuring applicants fully understood what was required and could refine their applications accordingly.

The assessment process was thorough and supportive, incorporating detailed discussions with applicants. Where submissions required clarification, applicants were given the opportunity to revise and strengthen their applications. A key part of the assessment involved ensuring financial viability, such as identifying discrepancies in accounts and checking for secondary funding sources.

Training delivery and capacity building

The Grants Officer developed and delivered training sessions on bid writing and income diversification, which were run both as standalone workshops and within larger conferences.

These sessions were designed to be accessible, practical, and free from jargon, ensuring that organisations of all sizes could engage.

The training covered:

- How to develop strong funding applications, focusing on clarity, social value, and community benefit.
- Alternative funding sources and diversification strategies, helping organisations move away from reliance on single grants.
- Practical exercises, including real-life examples of successful and unsuccessful bids, to illustrate best practices.

Feedback from participants was extremely positive, with some groups directly attributing successful funding applications to the training they received. Participants also reported that they felt more confident in developing bids independently.

Monitoring and evaluation of Key Fund projects

The Grants Officer was involved in monitoring UKSPF-funded projects, ensuring they were on track and addressing any challenges faced by grantees. However, due to a programme extension, monitoring was delayed, creating a backlog of projects to review.

Key monitoring activities included:

- Checking that grant recipients met their spending requirements, ensuring that funds were used appropriately.
- Working with organisations to adapt budgets, particularly where project delays or changes in external circumstances required adjustments.
- Encouraging organisations to repurpose underspent funds, ensuring that money remained within the community and was used effectively.

Challenges encountered

The Grants Officer identified several challenges:

- Short funding timescales meant that some organisations struggled to implement projects before deadlines.
- Delays in planning permissions impacted infrastructure projects, causing complications in spending allocations.
- Last-minute changes in programme timelines created confusion, requiring adjustments to project monitoring and financial oversight.

- Low attendance at some training sessions, particularly when sessions were scheduled during the working day, highlighting the need for more flexible training delivery.

Adaptations and problem-solving

To address these challenges, the Grants Officer worked closely with grantees to adjust budgets, rethink project implementation strategies, and find creative solutions for underspent funds. An example included repurposing a project's underspend into a community Christmas event, ensuring the money benefited the local area rather than being returned.

Future recommendations

- More flexible funding timelines would allow organisations to plan more effectively and avoid rushed spending.
- Improved coordination of training to include evening or weekend sessions, allowing greater participation.
- Early-stage engagement with grantees on potential project barriers, such as planning permissions, to avoid delays.
- A stronger digital component for training, such as recorded sessions or webinars, to allow greater accessibility.

Interview summary – Business Manager

Role and responsibilities

The Business Manager was responsible for overseeing the financial administration of the UKSPF-funded programme, ensuring accurate monitoring of grant expenditures and compliance with reporting requirements. The role involved tracking payments, completing claims submitted to Gwynedd Council, and ensuring the financial integrity of the programme through detailed financial oversight and reporting structures.

Grant administration and financial monitoring

The Business Manager played a key role in processing all UKSPF-related financial transactions, ensuring that funds were allocated correctly within designated budget categories. Due to the complexity of UKSPF reporting requirements, the Business Manager created a separate financial tracking spreadsheet, which monitored actual spend, committed spend, and planned spend, enabling better real-time financial oversight.

The monthly claims process was based on these internal records, with additional scrutiny required to match payments against Gwynedd Council's pre-defined expenditure categories. One of the main challenges identified was that some grant expenditures did not easily fit within the prescribed headings, requiring adjustments to ensure compliance with claim requirements.

Financial oversight and compliance

Managing UKSPF financial compliance required adapting to locked, pre-formatted reporting templates provided by Gwynedd Council, which limited flexibility in categorising expenses. The Business Manager identified that some headings were too rigid, making it difficult to accurately reflect the nature of the programme's spending. Additionally, claim rejections due to minor discrepancies created additional administrative burdens, requiring adjustments and resubmissions.

To address these challenges, the Business Manager maintained ongoing communication with Gwynedd Council, seeking clarification on reporting requirements and advocating for more adaptable financial reporting processes.

Challenges encountered

Several financial and administrative challenges were identified:

- Delays in claim processing, caused by the complexity of the reporting system and the time taken for claim approvals.
- Categorisation issues, where certain costs could not be easily mapped to pre-defined budget lines, leading to time-consuming adjustments.
- Capacity constraints within Gwynedd Council, which slowed down responses to queries and extended processing times.
- Time-intensive monitoring, as tracking financial data against project outcomes required ongoing adjustments and reconciliations.

Monitoring and reporting improvements

The Business Manager implemented several improvements to streamline financial monitoring, including:

- Developing a comprehensive financial tracking system that clearly separated committed, planned, and actual expenditure.
- Proposing the use of Power BI and automated financial reporting tools to improve efficiency in tracking and presenting financial data.
- Suggesting more detailed financial reporting mechanisms that would allow multiple interventions to be reported under different UKSPF categories, reflecting the cross-cutting impact of funded projects.

Impact on programme delivery

Despite administrative challenges, the Business Manager's work ensured that:

- Grantees received timely payments, minimising financial disruption to funded projects.

- Financial records were maintained accurately, providing an audit-ready account of UKSPF spending.
- Processes for future financial monitoring were improved, with recommendations for more streamlined grant reporting structures.

Lessons learned & recommendations

- Introducing more flexible financial reporting mechanisms would allow for better alignment between project spending and UKSPF reporting categories.
- Enhancing the integration of monitoring tools (e.g., CRM and finance systems) would provide a clearer link between financial and programme outcomes.
- Earlier engagement with funders on claim processes would reduce administrative burdens and streamline financial oversight.

Staff Interview summary: Senior Funding Officer, CVSC

The Senior Funding Officer at CVSC played a crucial role in providing guidance, support, and strategic oversight for the Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Key Fund. Their work primarily focused on ensuring that applicants were well-prepared, funding was allocated effectively, and projects aligned with the UKSPF's broader objectives.

Application support and capacity building

Although the Senior Funding Officer did not directly assess applications for the Key Fund, they played an advisory role, offering guidance to potential applicants. Many groups that sought funding had previously engaged with CVSC's other grant schemes, and the officer's role involved helping them understand the Key Fund criteria, refining their applications, and strengthening their bids.

Applicants, particularly those from smaller voluntary organisations, often required mentoring and advice to navigate the funding process. The officer worked with them to:

- Clarify the expectations of the funding panel and pre-emptively address potential questions.
- Encourage collaboration with other groups, where relevant, to increase impact and sustainability.
- Provide informal feedback on draft applications, offering pointers on how to strengthen their proposals without actively writing them on their behalf.

By offering this level of pre-application support, the Senior Funding Officer helped organisations build their confidence and capacity, ensuring a higher quality of applications and a greater chance of securing funding.

Project development and financial strategy

The officer also worked closely with applicants to explore additional funding sources. Although the Key Fund did not require match funding, many groups sought to combine multiple funding streams to increase the scale or longevity of their projects. This included:

- Identifying opportunities for groups to combine UKSPF funding with other CVSC grant streams, such as the Gwynt y Môr Fund.
- Helping organisations sequence their funding strategically, ensuring they could demonstrate successful project delivery before applying for additional grants.
- Liaising with the Key Fund Manager to ensure that projects were directed to the most appropriate funding stream based on their needs and objectives.

This approach ensured that voluntary organisations maximised their funding opportunities, rather than applying for grants in isolation.

Monitoring and evaluation

Once funding was awarded, the officer played a role in supporting project monitoring and financial oversight. This included:

- Ensuring that funded groups adhered to financial reporting requirements and spent their grant within the stipulated timeframes.
- Providing guidance on budget modifications, particularly where projects needed to adjust their expenditure within UKSPF guidelines.
- Tracking organisational development, allowing grantees to demonstrate the impact of their funding for future applications.

They also noted that delays in the disbursement of funds from Gwynedd Council, the regional UKSPF lead, occasionally created challenges for organisations that needed immediate access to funding. These delays impacted project start times and in some cases, made it difficult for groups to secure additional match funding in time.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Timing constraints: The short window for applying, receiving, and spending UKSPF funding created difficulties, particularly for smaller organisations with limited administrative capacity.
- Administrative burden: Some grantees required additional support in navigating compliance requirements, particularly in terms of financial reporting.

- Sustainability planning: Many groups were eager to continue their projects beyond the UKSPF funding period, and the officer played a role in guiding them towards future funding options.

Future opportunities

Looking ahead, the Senior Funding Officer suggested that more long-term strategic funding approaches could benefit voluntary organisations. This could include:

- Blended grant schemes, where groups receive both immediate funding and longer-term sustainability support.
- More tailored support for new applicants, ensuring that first-time grantees receive guidance on monitoring, reporting, and long-term financial planning.
- Streamlined administrative processes, particularly in grant disbursement, to avoid delays that impact project delivery.

Interview summary – Volunteering Admin Assistant

Role and responsibilities

The Volunteering Admin Assistant was responsible for supporting organisations with volunteer-related funding applications, advising on volunteer policies, and assisting with the planning and delivery of training programmes under the UKSPF-funded initiative. The role also involved promoting volunteering opportunities and safeguarding training, working closely with organisations to build their capacity and sustain volunteer engagement.

Volunteer support and grant applications

The Volunteering Admin Assistant provided direct support to organisations applying for the Volunteer Support Fund. Engagement was primarily through the Volunteer Organisers Network, which included volunteer coordinators and managers from local organisations. These groups were given priority in accessing funding opportunities, and while there was initial interest, uptake was slower than expected.

To address this, the Volunteering Admin Assistant collaborated with the funding team to increase awareness of available grants. In addition to promotional efforts, one-on-one support was provided to organisations needing assistance with volunteering policies. Examples included working with Conwy Connect to review outdated policies and supporting Share and Care in formalising volunteer management procedures. Flexibility was key in supporting different organisations, as some, like Rotary Clubs, operated under umbrella policies rather than standard volunteer policies.

Training programme development and delivery

The Volunteering Admin Assistant played a role in both planning and delivering training, particularly around safeguarding and youth volunteering. This included:

- Coordinating safeguarding training delivered by external partners, such as WCVA.
- Consulting on session content to ensure relevance to third-sector organisations.
- Delivering training on youth volunteering, which aimed to challenge misconceptions and encourage more organisations to engage young people.

A key observation from training sessions was that some organisations had not previously considered involving young volunteers. The sessions sparked discussions on potential barriers, such as supervision requirements and perceived risks, and helped organisations understand the benefits of youth involvement, including their potential contribution to fulfilling Welsh Baccalaureate volunteering requirements.

Community engagement and volunteer recruitment

One of the project's goals was to encourage more individuals to engage in volunteering, particularly underrepresented groups. While the Volunteering Admin Assistant facilitated discussions and training on expanding volunteer participation, feedback indicated that some organisations still required more support in implementing inclusive volunteer policies. Additionally, volunteer engagement varied depending on the organisation's structure and willingness to adapt policies.

The Volunteering Admin Assistant identified that shorter, more focused training sessions had higher engagement compared to longer sessions, which were seen as a greater commitment. Providing refreshments and hosting in-person discussions also increased participation.

Promotional efforts and challenges

Promotion of training and funding opportunities was done through multiple channels, including social media, email lists, Eventbrite listings, and the organisation's website. Despite proactive engagement, some sessions were more successful than others, with no clear pattern in attendance levels.

Key observations included:

- Longer training sessions were less attractive to participants, with many preferring shorter, topic-specific sessions.
- Timing of promotion played a role in attendance, with some events needing earlier announcements to gain traction.
- Face-to-face networking and direct engagement were more effective in encouraging participation compared to digital-only promotion.

Challenges and lessons learned

- Slow uptake of volunteer support fund: Initial enthusiasm for the fund did not translate into high application rates. Increased direct support helped, but additional engagement strategies may have been beneficial.
- Training accessibility: Some organisations remained hesitant to engage with training, particularly in areas like safeguarding, due to time constraints or a lack of perceived relevance.
- Variation in organisational readiness: Some groups had well-established volunteer policies, while others required significant input to develop governance structures and procedures.
- Engaging youth volunteers: Encouraging organisations to include younger volunteers required challenging perceptions and providing practical solutions to common concerns, such as supervision and training requirements.

Future recommendations

- Develop more concise, high-impact training sessions to increase accessibility and engagement.
- Continue working closely with organisations on policy development, particularly those new to structured volunteer management.
- Introduce structured follow-up mechanisms to capture long-term impact on volunteer recruitment and retention.
- Expand efforts to promote youth volunteering, providing case studies and real-life examples of successful youth engagement.

Appendix 3 Volunteer Interview

Q: What motivated you to become a volunteer?

A: I have been involved in supporting the local Eisteddfod for 18 years. My passion for cultural events and community spirit inspired me to contribute my skills. With my financial background, I felt I could make a real impact as a treasurer, and it has been an incredibly rewarding experience.

Q: How has volunteering benefited you personally?

A: It has given me a strong sense of satisfaction and enjoyment. Over the years, I have built lifelong friendships, and the volunteer team has become like "one big family." The experience has enriched my life by allowing me to stay engaged with the community and contribute to something meaningful.

Q: Have you faced any challenges in your volunteer role?

A: Yes. One of the biggest challenges has been recruiting younger volunteers, particularly after COVID. It has become more difficult to encourage new people to step in. However, having a strong support network within the volunteer team has made a big difference in keeping morale high.

Q: What skills have you developed through volunteering?

A: I have greatly improved my communication skills, teamwork, and confidence, especially in speaking at committee meetings. Being a treasurer has also strengthened my ability to work with people of all ages and manage financial responsibilities effectively.

Q: Did you receive any formal training for your role?

A: Not formally, but I had the opportunity to shadow the previous treasurer for two years before taking on the role independently. That mentorship was incredibly helpful. However, I believe more structured training opportunities would benefit future volunteers.

Q: What impact do you think volunteering has on the community?

A: Without volunteers, the Eisteddfod simply wouldn't exist. Volunteers are essential to keeping cultural traditions alive and ensuring that events like these continue to bring generations together. Our contributions help sustain the community and create lasting memories for everyone involved.

Q: What are your thoughts on improving volunteer recruitment and support?

A: I think there needs to be more active recruitment efforts and structured support to attract and retain volunteers. CVSC could play a greater role in helping groups like ours find and train new members to share responsibilities more effectively.

Q: Would you recommend volunteering to others?

A: Absolutely. It's a fulfilling and meaningful way to give back to the community. Not only do you gain valuable skills, but you also get to be part of something bigger than yourself, making a real difference in people's lives.

Conclusion

This interview highlights the profound impact of volunteering on both individuals and the community. Volunteers gain valuable experience, strengthen their connections, and help sustain important cultural and social initiatives. Moving forward, increasing structured training, recruitment efforts, and volunteer recognition will be key to ensuring the continued success of programmes like the Eisteddfod.

Appendix 4 Summary of training feedback

CVSC Third Sector Conference (November 8, 2024)

The CVSC Third Sector Conference received positive feedback from attendees, highlighting its value as a networking and learning opportunity for voluntary organisations. Key takeaways from the feedback include:

Strengths of the conference:

Networking opportunities: Attendees appreciated the chance to connect with other professionals and organisations.

Diverse range of workshops: Sessions on safeguarding, volunteer management, and equality, diversity, and inclusion were well-received.

High-quality speakers and sessions: The LGBTQIA+ inclusion workshop received specific praise for its approachability and relevance.

Well-organised event: The venue, structure, and support from staff were commended, with particular mention of the sensory room for its inclusivity.

Areas for improvement:

Session timing adjustments: Some attendees suggested shorter breaks and avoiding late afternoon sessions to ensure greater participation.

Repetition of workshops: Requests for repeating key sessions to allow broader attendance.

Food and dietary accommodations: Calls for improved vegan food options and better cross-contamination management.

Future suggestions:

More audience interaction: Q&A sessions in panel discussions to enhance engagement.

Showcasing community impact: Highlighting local initiatives such as windfarm community grants.

Improved communication & updates: Regular meetings or an online platform for continued engagement.

Feedback from individual training sessions

Conwy Connect – *Fundraising & volunteer engagement*

Conwy Connect found the fundraising and volunteer engagement training beneficial in exploring new sponsorship models and formalising their volunteer management approach. They valued the practical insights and networking opportunities, connecting with organisations facing similar

challenges. However, they suggested that clearer session descriptions would help attendees choose the most relevant training opportunities.

Emma, Pride Cymru – *LGBTQ+ inclusion workshop*

The LGBTQ+ inclusion workshop provided an opportunity to raise awareness, expand networks, and facilitate meaningful discussions around inclusivity. While participants appreciated the safe and open discussions, feedback indicated that CVSC itself could take a more inclusive approach in its outreach and marketing to ensure broader participation from diverse organisations.

Pigtown Theatre – *Youth volunteering*

While attending a youth volunteering session, Pigtown Theatre found that much of the content covered familiar ground, limiting the value gained. They suggested that detailed training descriptions would help organisations select the most relevant sessions. Additionally, they identified a gap in digital skills training, particularly in AI and online fundraising, which they believe would benefit the sector.

Youth Shedz – *LGBTQ+ Inclusion workshop*

Youth Shedz found the session useful and reassuring, confirming that their approach to volunteer engagement and inclusivity aligns with best practices. They appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their support systems for young volunteers but suggested that offering sessions multiple times would increase accessibility and reduce scheduling conflicts.

Managing change in the voluntary & community sector (23/10/24)

Key takeaways:

- Understanding strategies for managing change and organisational adaptation.
- Using case studies and group discussions to apply learning.
- Developing a change management plan for their organisations.
- Identifying and overcoming barriers to change.

Participant Feedback:

- *“Very interactive. [the tutor] is an excellent trainer.”*
- *“Great session, very relevant and engaging.”*
- *“Lots of case studies and discussion opportunities.”*
- *“Great venue and inclusive session.”*

Suggested improvements:

One participant suggested restructuring the 'disaster' case study to align better with problem-solving discussions later in the session.

Effective recruitment for the voluntary & community sector (24/10/24)

Key takeaways:

- Creating effective job descriptions and recruitment strategies.
- Using scenario-based training to demonstrate key interview skills.
- Clarifying role expectations to improve the recruitment process.

Participant feedback:

- *“Brilliant, airy room, amazing food.”*
- *“[The tutor] v is extremely knowledgeable and personable – great course content.”*
- *“Really interactive, just the right length, and well-structured.”*
- *“[The tutor] is a powerhouse! So knowledgeable and full of real-world experience.”*

Conclusion

The training provided by CVSC has been widely appreciated, with key themes of practicality, relevance, and networking opportunities emerging across all sessions. While overall feedback has been highly positive, participants identified areas for improvement, including clearer session descriptions, increased accessibility, and a broader range of training topics, particularly in digital skills. The insights from these evaluations will be used to refine future training programmes, ensuring they continue to meet the evolving needs of the voluntary sector.

Appendix 5 References

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Wales and the Shared Prosperity Fund: Priorities for the Replacement of EU Structural Funding (2 October 2020). Available at: [Wales and the Shared Prosperity Fund Report](#) (accessed February 2025)

Appendix 6 Conference timetable

Cynhadledd Trydydd Sector Third Sector Conference

Amser	Prif Neuadd	Conwy	Deganwy	Rhuddlan	Orme Suite	Gwrych	Mesani
09:00-10:00	Cofrestru yn Agor Gweinir te a choffi yn y Brif Neuadd				Ffair Cyllid a Gwybodaeth	Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
10:00-10:20	Croeso Prif Neuadd					Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
10:30-11:15	Tirwedd y Trydydd Sector yng Nghymru	Diogelu Holi ac Ateb	Gwethio Gyda'n Gilydd dros Gwmy Iachach	Dylunio Gwasanaethau Digidol	Ffair Cyllid a Gwybodaeth	Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
11:15-11:45	Egwyl Gweinir te a choffi yn y Brif Neuadd				Ffair Cyllid a Gwybodaeth	Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
11:45-12:30	AI ar gyfer y Trydydd Sector	Dosbarth Meistr Risg	Fforwm Costau Byw	Cynnwys Gwirfoddolwyr Ifanc	Ffair Cyllid a Gwybodaeth	Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
12:30-13:15	Cinio Gwasanaethwyd yn y Brif Neuadd					Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
13:15-13:45	Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blyneddol CCGC Prif Neuadd					Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
14:00-14:45	Codi Arian Trwy Ddigwyddiadau	Hanfodion Ymddiriedolwyr	Gymuso Gwirfoddolwyr gyda Gofynion Mynediad	Cynyddu incwm drwy rhoddion	Ffair Cyllid a Gwybodaeth	Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
15:00-15:30	Egwyl Gweinir te a choffi yn y Brif Neuadd. Adloniant yn y Brif Neuadd				Ffair Cyllid a Gwybodaeth	Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
15:45-16:30	Ysgrifennu Cynnig 101	AD yn y Sector Gwirfoddol	Adrodd Straeon Gwirfoddolwyr	LGBTQIA+ a'r Trydydd Sector	Ffair Cyllid a Gwybodaeth	Ystafell Dawel (NuroCove)	Gofod Ymneilltuo
16:30-18:30	Sesiwn Cymdeithasol Trydydd Sector - Ymunwch â ni yn Y Review (Llawr Cyntaf, Venue Cymru) am ddiol a sgwrs!						

Third Sector Conference Cynhadledd Trydydd Sector

Time	Main Hall	Conwy	Deganwy	Rhuddlan	Orme Suite	Gwrych	Mezzanine
09:00-10:00	Registration Opens Tea & Coffee served in Main Hall				Funding & Information Fair	Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
10:00-10:20	Welcome Main Hall					Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
10:30-11:15	Landscape of the Third Sector in Wales	Safeguarding Q+A	Working Together for a Healthier Conwy	Designing Digital Services	Funding & Information Fair	Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
11:15-11:45	Break Tea & Coffee served in Main Hall				Funding & Information Fair	Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
11:45-12:30	AI for the Third Sector	Risk Masterclass	Cost-of-Living Forum	Involving Young Volunteers	Funding & Information Fair	Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
12:30-13:15	Lunch Served in Main Hall					Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
13:15-13:45	CVSC Annual General Meeting Main Hall					Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
14:00-14:45	Fundraising Through Events	Trustee Essentials	Empowering Volunteers with Access Requirements	What it takes to increase donation income today	Funding & Information Fair	Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
15:00-15:30	Break Tea & Coffee served in Main Hall. Entertainment in Main Hall				Funding & Information Fair	Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
15:45-16:30	Bidwriting 101	HR for the Voluntary Sector	Telling Volunteer Stories	LGBTQIA+ and the Third Sector	Funding & Information Fair	Quiet Room (NuroCove)	Breakout Space
16:30-18:30	Third Sector Social - Join us at Y Review (First Floor, Venue Cymru) for a drink and a chat!						

Appendix 7 All training sessions provided