

Evaluation of the Wrexham Community Key Fund (Shared Prosperity Fund)

A report to Cadwyn Clwyd

March 2026

Contents

Executive Summary	i
1. Introduction and methodology	1
2. Project design	3
3. Effectiveness of project delivery	2
4. Outcomes & impact	8
5. Conclusions and recommendations	15

Executive Summary

Introduction

York Consulting LLP was commissioned by Cadwyn Clwyd to evaluate the Wrexham Community Key Fund – a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) initiative. This initiative followed the UKSPF 2023-25 round of funding and aimed to provide continuity in funding to meet high demand for support and financial resources among community groups.

The project received £350,000 in UK SPF funding and was delivered by Cadwyn Clwyd and the Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham (AVOW) between April 2025 and March 2026.

The evaluation methodology included a review of key documents, analysis of management information, consultations with key stakeholders and grant managers, and a survey of grant recipients followed by in-depth interviews with a selection of grantees.

Project design

The Wrexham Community Key Fund offered grants of up to £50,000 to community groups across Wrexham. Capital and revenue funding was available for projects which aimed to improve outdoor, sport and community facilities, as well as those which provided new opportunities for community members.

In addition to the grant funding, project officers from Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW offered wrap-around support throughout, including guidance during the application, procurement and project delivery processes.

Project delivery

There is clear evidence of a strong partnership between Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW. The connections that both organisations have to local community groups enabled wide-ranging promotion of the fund through existing networks, ensuring a wide geographical spread across Wrexham County Borough. The promotion of the Fund was clearly effective, with the number of applications received (76 applications started and 49 completed) far exceeding the number awarded (23).

Views on the application process were mixed, with some applicants describing challenges, particularly with the online Submit system. Despite this, grantees spoke positively about the support offered by project officers throughout the application, suggesting this support helped to mitigate some of the challenges faced.

Grantees also praised the wrap-around support provided during delivery of their projects, praising project officers' responsiveness, guidance and support with procurement and claims processes. Cadwyn Clwyd's flexible approach around upfront payments and enabling small adjustments to expenditure also supported effective delivery.

Outputs

The project exceeded all its target outputs, with 23 organisations receiving grant funding and non-financial support, 10 amenities created or improved, 192 local events or activities supported and 3893m² of green or blue space created or improved. The projects supported by the Fund included cultural activities (6 projects) and improvements to outdoor spaces (7 projects), community hubs and sports clubs (5 projects), church or village halls (3 projects) and organisational operations, including staff and equipment (5 projects).

Outcomes

The project also exceeded its target outcomes, including the increased number of users of facilities or amenities (2236 achieved), the number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes delivered (22 achieved), and the number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of the support (78 achieved).

The success of the Wrexham Community Key Fund was reflected in the comments of the grantees. They reported improved accessibility of facilities and services, new relationships built and strengthened, and communities empowered through co-production and education.

The funding also contributed to helping some organisations make more energy efficient choices and move towards net zero. Projects also demonstrated commitment to promoting the Welsh language and equality of opportunity.

There was a clear need for the funding, evidenced by the high number of applications. Feedback from grant recipients demonstrates that the Key Fund achieved a high level of additionality, i.e., that a considerable proportion of the outcomes and impacts achieved would not have happened in the absence of the project funding.

It is also evident that the Wrexham Community Key Fund has achieved key strategic aims at the UK, national and county level, such as those outlined in:

- UK SPF: Communities and place investment prioritise, including spreading opportunities and improving public services, restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, and empowering local leaders and communities.
- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, including working towards a Wales of cohesive communities, a resilient Wales and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.
- Wrexham County Borough Council Council's 2023 – 2028 plan, including ensuring Wrexham is a fair and safe place, developing the economy and decarbonising the environment.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the delivery of the Wrexham Community Key Fund has been effective, with all outputs and outcomes targets exceeded. The Key Fund has shown good strategic alignment to various priorities, including UK SPF aims of spreading opportunities, restoring a sense of community and empowering local leaders and communities.

The evaluation findings have informed a range of project specific recommendations, mainly related to the application process and exploring opportunities to expand the volume of funding managed in the future.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF): 2025 - 26

Wrexham Community Key Fund

**£350,000
INVESTMENT**



in local community groups to support improvements to facilities and green spaces, installation of renewable energy and digital infrastructure and delivery of cultural activities

**23 COMMUNITY GROUPS
SUPPORTED**

**22 COMMUNITY-LED ARTS,
CULTURAL, HERITAGE
AND CREATIVE
PROGRAMMES FUNDED**



"The funding enabled [organisation] to enhance service quality, reach more survivors, and deliver meaningful recovery outcomes that would not otherwise have been possible."



**8 COMMUNITY HUBS, SPORT
FACILITIES, AND VILLAGE
OR CHURCH HALLS
IMPROVED**



"It is an enormous benefit to keep the development of the club moving in the right direction. (...) The Club has become a community hub and hopefully serves and enhances the community. The Fund can be proud of its contribution."

**78
VOLUNTEERING
OPPORTUNITIES
CREATED**



**3893m²
OF GREEN SPACE
IMPROVED**

"The fund Cadwyn Clwyd have provided is the seed that grew other opportunities and encouraged support from other people in our community."



**7 OUTDOOR COMMUNITY
FACILITIES AND GREEN
SPACES ENHANCED**



Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU
Funded by
UK Government



Contact:
admin@cadwynclwyd.co.uk
01490 340500

1. Introduction and methodology

York Consulting LLP was commissioned by Cadwyn Clwyd to evaluate the Wrexham Community Key Fund – a project focused on strengthening the social fabric of communities through investment in community spaces and relationships.

The project received £350,000 from the UK Government through the continuation of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) 2025-26. The £900 million UK SPF 2025-26 programme sought to fund local investment, kickstart economic growth and promote opportunities in all parts of the UK.

The Wrexham Community Key Fund project aimed to deliver against the UK SPF communities and place investment priority by providing capital and revenue funding for projects seeking to strengthen community infrastructure and deliver community-based projects focused on access to services, promoting Welsh Language and net zero ambitions.

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the delivery of the Wrexham Community Key Fund and review progress against its intended outcomes and impacts.

Methodology

The evaluation methodology included a review of key documents, analysis of management information, consultations with key stakeholders and grant managers, and a survey of grant recipients followed by in-depth interviews with a selection of grantees.

Document review

A document review was undertaken to inform the fieldwork with stakeholders and grant recipients. The following documents were reviewed:

- Cadwyn Clwyd's UK SPF 2025-26 bid documentation.
- Promotional materials for the Key Fund, application forms and guidance documents.
- Data-collection mechanisms developed for the monitoring of outputs, outcomes and impact.

The insight drawn from the document review and inception meeting was instilled into the logic model for the Wrexham Community Key Fund.

Management information analysis

The analysis of management information was carried out to understand the project's performance against targets. This involved reviewing:

- Grant applications.
- Grant award panel meeting minutes.
- Quarterly progress reports.
- Project and grant recipient claim forms.

Fieldwork

Table 1.1 summarises the fieldwork completed during the evaluation of the Wrexham Community Key Fund between October 2025 and March 2026.

Table 1.1: Summary of completed fieldwork

Component	Fieldwork
Consultations with stakeholders	Consultations with the project officer from Cadwyn Clwyd (1)
Survey of grant recipients	Distributed to 23 grant recipients. Received 16 responses (70% response rate) with 13 agreeing to participate in a follow-up consultation.
Interviews with grant recipients	Completed 9 interviews with grantees.

2. Project design

The Wrexham Community Key Fund project provided capital and revenue grants of up to £50,000 to community groups in Wrexham. The project was delivered by Cadwyn Clwyd – a social enterprise which provides guidance and support to communities and enterprises in North East Wales and further afield – in partnership with the Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham (AVOW) – the County Voluntary Council for Wrexham appointed by the Welsh Government to support third sector organisations. Delivered between April 2025 and March 2026, the project aimed to:

- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in places where they are weakest.
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in places where this has been lost.
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in places lacking local agency.
- Provide continuity in funding (following the UK SPF: 2023-25) to meet high demand for support and financial resources among community groups.

Groups could apply for capital and revenue funding to support community projects which:

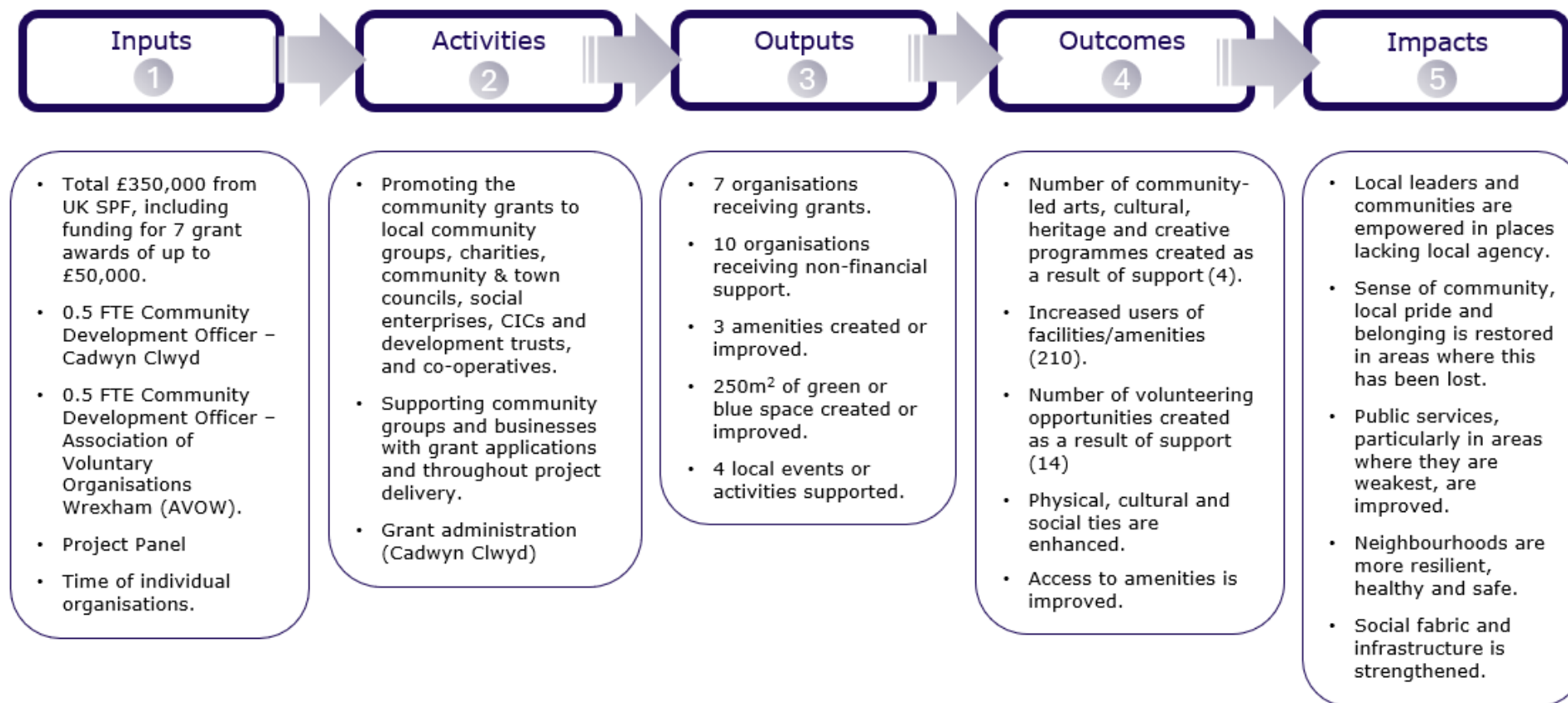
- Provide community spaces for local civil society and community groups to use.
- Enable locally owned renewable energy generation and waste management.
- Create and improve community local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses, and embankments.
- Deliver and support community led local arts, heritage and creative activities.
- Deliver access to services via local sports facilities.
- Provide digital infrastructure within community owned assets and facilities.

A range of organisations were eligible to apply, including voluntary and community groups, community councils and town councils, registered charities, social enterprises, Community Enterprise Companies (CIC), development trusts and co-operatives. In addition to providing grant funding, the project offered a wrap-around support function, including officer support and guidance, to help community groups access the fund and deliver their projects.

Logic model

The project logic model (Figure 2.1) was developed by York Consulting and informed by a review of project documentation and conversations with key stakeholders. It sets out the intended activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project. The logic model was used to develop the evaluation questions which informed the design of evaluation research tools and analysis of project data.

Figure 2.1: Wrexham Community Key Fund Logic Model



Key progress indicators

The key progress indicators outlined in Cadwyn Clwyd's UK SPF 2025-26 bid are set out in the tables below. They include target outputs and outcomes, as well as project expenditure.

Table 2.1: Planned outputs

Output indicator	Target
Number of organisations receiving grants	7
Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	10
Number of amenities created or improved	3
Number of local events or activities supported	4
Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m ²)	250

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Wrexham Community Key Fund SPF 2025-26 bid

Table 2.2: Planned outcomes

Outcome indicator	Target
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes created as a result of support	4
Increased users of facilities/amenities	210
Number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of support	14

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Wrexham Community Key Fund SPF 2025-26 bid

Project budget

The project was awarded £350,000 in SPF 2025-26 funding. Table 2.3 outlines how the planned project budget was allocated.

Table 2.3: Wrexham Community Key Fund project budget

Cost	Amount
Key fund revenue grants	£175,000
Key fund capital grants	£123,000
Project delivery staff - AVOW	£18,984.50
Project delivery staff – Cadwyn Clwyd	£12,400
Marketing and publicity	£2,500
Overheads – accommodation (AVOW & Cadwyn Clwyd)	£4,211.50
Project management, administration, and evaluation	£13,904
Total	£350,000

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Wrexham Community Key Fund SPF 2025-26 bid

3. Effectiveness of project delivery

Grant management

Staffing

The Wrexham Community Key Fund project was overseen by a project officer from Cadwyn Clwyd, with support from a project officer from AVOW. These officers promoted the fund, supported applications from potential grantees and offered advice and guidance to grant recipients during delivery of their projects.

A grant panel, made up of representatives from Cadwyn Clwyd, AVOW and Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) reviewed the submitted applications and made decisions on grant awards.

The grant management systems and documentation developed for the 2023–25 UK SPF project were already in place, meaning only minor adjustments to the application forms and guidance were required. As a result, the team was able to begin delivery immediately once grant approval was received from WCBC.

There is clear evidence of a strong partnership between Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW, which helped ensure wide reach across the voluntary and community sector in Wrexham. However, capacity constraints within AVOW (beyond the organisation's control) meant that the Cadwyn Clwyd project officer ultimately took on a larger proportion of the grant management responsibilities than originally planned.

Promotion and initial engagement

The strong connections that both organisations have to local community groups enabled effective promotion of the fund through existing networks. Varied communication channels were used, including targeted emails, newsletters, bilingual social media posts, press releases and physical leaflets, through which past successful projects were showcased to encourage new applicants. Communication was also targeted at certain groups underrepresented in previous funding rounds, such as rural communities and small social enterprises, with AVOW's experience of working with such groups helping to ensure applications were received across a wide geographical spread and a variety of organisation types.

The promotion for the Wrexham Community Key Fund was clearly effective, with the number of applications (76 initiated and 49 completed) far exceeding the total number of grants awarded (23). In addition, grantees heard about the fund through a range of different channels, highlighting the effectiveness of the wide-ranging and varied approach to promotion. Of the 9 grantees interviewed for the evaluation, 4 heard about the funding through their connections with AVOW, 1 from Cadwyn Clwyd, 2 from WCBC, and 2 from other networks, including One Voice Wales and local news posts.

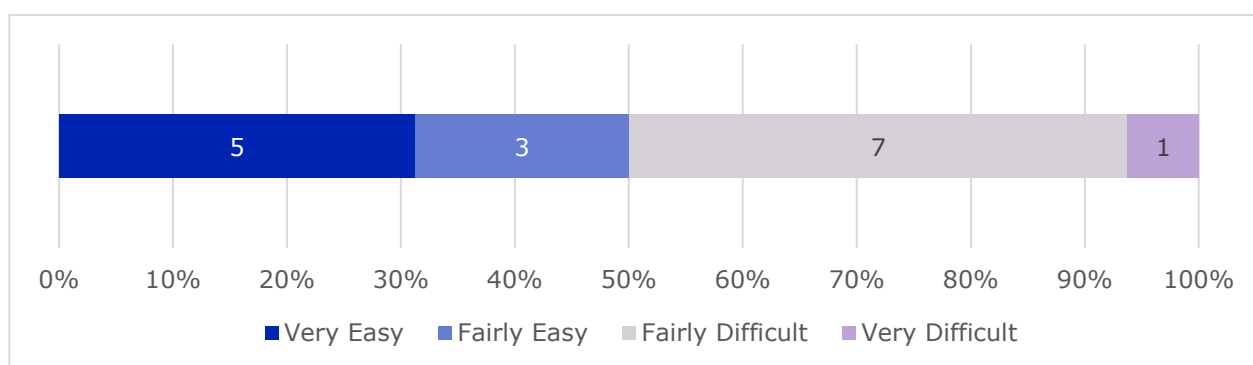
Application process

Views on the application process were mixed. As shown in Figure 3.1, half found the application process very (5) or fairly easy (3), whilst the other half found the process fairly (7) or very difficult (1).

It is worth noting that, following feedback from the previous SPF project about what grantees felt was an onerous application process, potential grantees were not required to complete an expression of interest form prior to making a full application.

Despite this, interviewees still described challenges, with the most frequently reported challenge being the requirement to complete every field in the application form, particularly within the financial information section. Respondents noted that they were required to populate irrelevant fields (e.g., placing '0') and often had to troubleshoot to understand why the form would not submit. Others cited difficulties included gathering procurement quotations and tight deadlines, especially where organisations found out about the fund late in the application window. A few grantees commented that the application was more time-consuming than other, similar funds they had applied to in the past.

Figure 3.1: Ease of the application process



Source: Survey of grant recipients (n=16)

Grantees were more positive about the support they received from project officers - almost all survey respondents found the support either fairly or very helpful - suggesting this helped to mitigate some of the challenges described above. Several grantees also spoke positively during interviews about the support received from project officers.

Award process

Applications were submitted to the steering group panel, comprising of representatives from Cadwyn Clwyd (1), AVOW (3) and Wrexham County Borough Council (2). Conflicts of interest were declared and based on this some panel members were not involved in decisions related to certain applications.

Prior to the meeting, members of the panel scored each application by the following factors:

- Contribution to UK SPF: 2025-26 Project Continuation priorities.
- Level of community involvement evident in the application.
- Extent to which UK SPF: Project Continuation outputs and outcomes would be achieved.
- Value for money.

Projects were then thoroughly discussed at the panel meeting, particularly those scoring at or below the threshold for approval. The first round received 37 applications, with 16 of these approved for funding. Following this round, £10,000 of capital funding remained, so a subsequent funding round was opened in September 2025. This second round received 12 applications, with 7 approved.

Common reasons for not approving funding included applicants having previously received other SPF funding, the panel viewing some projects as lacking capacity to deliver, and/or low scores being awarded based on the criteria listed above.

Project delivery support

The project officers continued to support the grant recipients throughout the delivery of their projects, **which was clearly valued by the grantees**. Survey responses indicate that all found the support from Cadwyn Clwyd either very helpful (12/16) or fairly helpful (4/16). Interviewees especially praised the project officers for:

- Their communication and responsiveness
- Helpful initial face-to-face meetings and ongoing relationship building.
- Their guidance and support with procuring external services and submitting claims.

"It's really good to meet the person you're communicating with" - Grantee

Grantees also valued Cadwyn Clwyd's flexible approach, including the provision of upfront payments for smaller organisations lacking initial funds, and the willingness to approve adjustments to project plans when circumstances changed. This flexibility helped ensure that funding could be used effectively and to its full potential.

"[Project officer's] support throughout has meant advice was easily gained and we were able to focus on implementing the project." – Grantee

"I can't fault the support they provided." - Grantee

Case study 1 – Wheelchair Rugby League

The project aimed to provide members of the local community, particularly those with physical and hidden disabilities, a safe and welcoming space to explore disability sports. It included the replacement of outdated wheelchairs, ensuring that equipment is now safe and reliable for all participants. This improvement has helped members feel a stronger sense of belonging and confidence.

Since the project's implementation, the club has welcomed several new members and expanded its visibility within the community. It has hosted various Scouts and Guides groups and visited local schools to teach children about inclusivity and disability awareness. These outreach efforts have strengthened the club's public profile and promoted a more inclusive community culture.

Outputs

As shown in Table 3.1, the project exceeded all its target outputs, with 23 organisations receiving grant funding and non-financial support, against targets of 7 and 10, respectively. The number of amenities created or improved also exceeded its target, with 10 amenities created or improved against a target of 3, and 192 local events or activities were supported against a target of 4. The target of 250m² of green or blue space created or improved was also exceeded by a large margin (3893m²).

Table 3.1: Progress against planned outputs

Output indicator	Target	Actual
Number of organisations receiving grants	7	23
Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	10	23
Number of amenities created or improved	3	10
Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m ²)	250	3893
Number of local events or activities supported	4	192

Source: Wrexham Community Key Fund – SPF claim form March 2026

Types of project funded

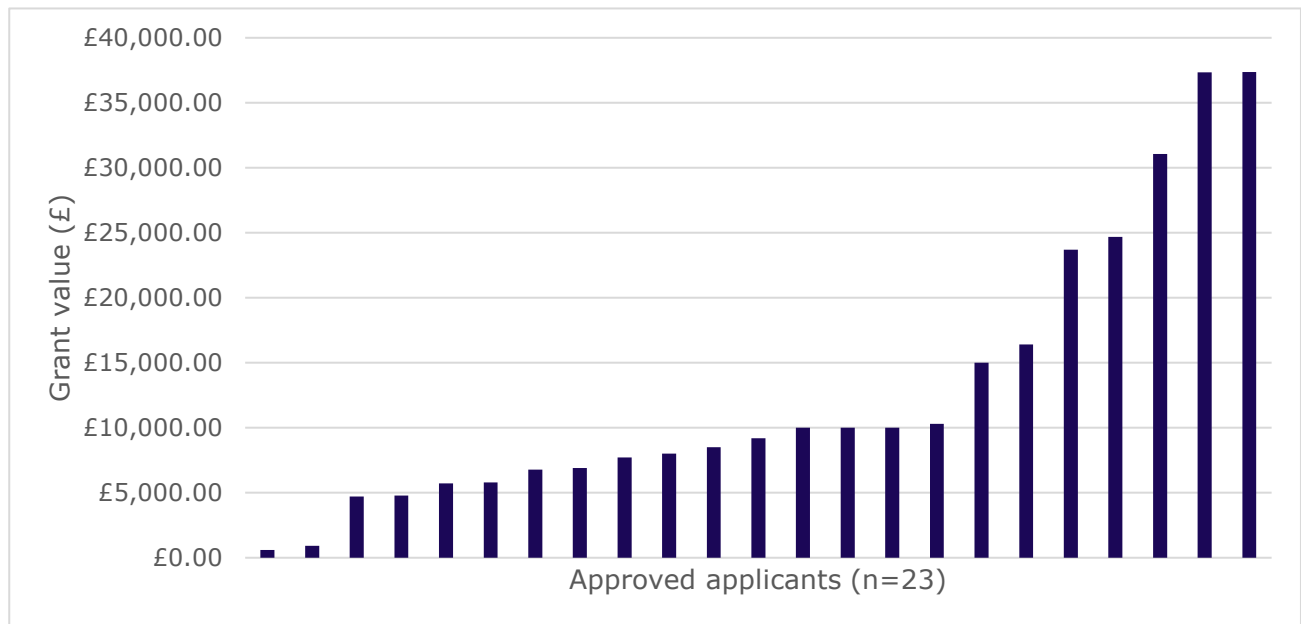
The Wrexham Community Key Fund has supported a wide array of organisations, from community councils, music and arts charities, family support charities, sports organisations, and other community facilities and hubs. The grant funding also supported a variety of different types of projects, ensuring that the widest possible range of local residents in Wrexham benefitted from the funding. The funded projects can be categorised as follows:

- Improvements to outdoor spaces (7 projects).
- Cultural projects, including in music and the arts (6 projects).
- Improvements to other community facilities, including community hubs and sports clubs (5 projects).
- Improvements to organisational operations, including funding staff and equipment (5 projects).
- Improvements to church or village halls (3 projects).

Grant amounts

Within the grant budget there was a small underspend of £2,540, with £295,459.35 spent out of £298,000 allocated. Figure 3.1 outlines the distribution of grant awards, combining capital and revenue grants. Many of the supported projects required less than the full grant amount available, meaning that a larger number of organisations could be supported with smaller amounts of funding per grant than initially envisaged.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of approved projects by value

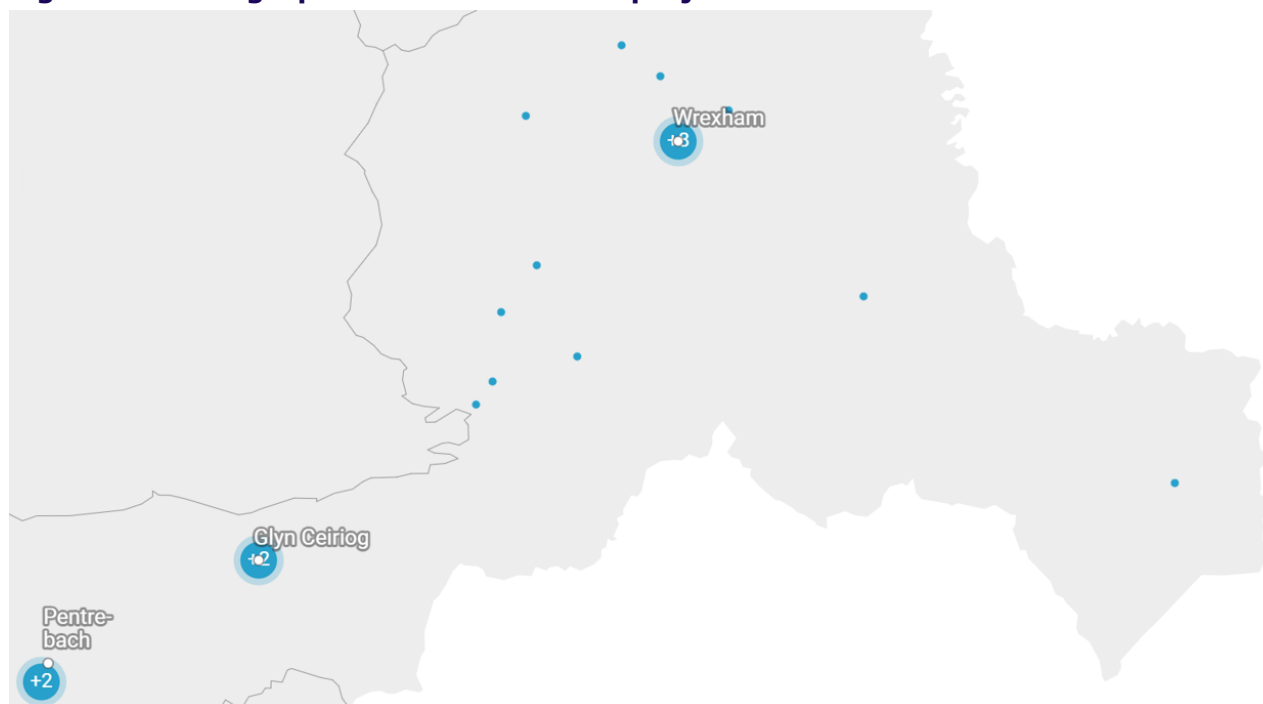


Source: Wrexham Community Key Fund - Outputs & outcomes March 2026

Geographical distribution

Figure 3.3 shows the geographical spread of the projects funded by the Wrexham Community Key Fund. The map demonstrates that projects are widely distributed across the Wrexham Borough County and not just focused on the City of Wrexham (8 projects).

Figure 3.3: Geographical distribution of projects



Source: YCL analysis of funded organisations, March 2026.

Challenges and enablers

Challenges described by Wrexham Community Key Fund stakeholders and beneficiaries included:

- **Claim forms:** Some grantees mentioned they found it difficult to gather all the evidence for invoicing, particularly for charity revenue projects which involved providing various activities for their clients. Additionally, many mentioned struggling to complete and quantify outputs, describing it as a 'tick box' exercise. Interviewees also suggested that the process was more time consuming and complicated than other funds they had received grants from. This appeared to be a particular challenge for smaller organisations, without dedicated staff (such as finance manager) to manage the process.
- **Timeline of delivery:** The delivery period fell across the Christmas season, which some grantees highlighted as a challenge. This included delays in construction-related projects, as contractors took time-off during the holidays, resulting in scheduling difficulties. Additionally, delivery took place during winter months, which created further barriers, especially for projects involving outdoor improvements. Cold weather, limited daylight, and poor ground conditions were all cited as factors that hindered timely completion.

Enablers described by Wrexham Community Key Fund stakeholders and beneficiaries included:

- **Wrap-around support:** Grant recipients clearly valued the support provided by the project officers throughout the application process and project delivery. The close contact and responsiveness helped project officers build relationships with organisations and get to know the projects. Interviewees spoke positively about guidance received from Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW at various stages in the process, which was especially valued by organisations less experienced with grant funding. Additionally, Cadwyn Clwyd was flexible in allowing adjustments to plans when changes in circumstances led to underspend, enabling organisations to utilise all the available funding. Cadwyn Clwyd's flexibility in providing upfront payments for organisations with limited cashflow was also valued.
- **Strong communities:** Many grantees mentioned that their organisations were well-connected with community members and other local organisations. From long-standing relationships with organisations and businesses that could deliver sessions or provide supplies at a lower price, to established relationships with families in local communities that increased engagement with projects, these factors clearly supported effective and efficient project delivery.
- **Promotion:** The promotion of the fund was wide-ranging and effective, as evidenced by the number of applications received. Project officers used existing networks with local community groups alongside various promotional activities, including social media posts and press releases, to ensure strong visibility of the fund across Wrexham. Both AVOW and Cadwyn Clwyd are well connected within local communities, which was reflected in grantee survey and interview feedback. Many grantees mentioned they were familiar with AVOW and aware of Cadwyn Clwyd's local work, which helped draw their attention to the fund.

4. Outcomes & impact

Progress against outcome targets

Table 4.1 demonstrates that the project exceeded all its target outcomes. The number of increased users of facilities/amenities achieved was particularly high, with 2236 against a target of 210 users. The number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of the support also far exceeded its target, with 78 opportunities created against a target of 14. Additionally, the number of community-led programmes as a result of support exceeded its target of 4, with 22 programmes delivered.

Table 4.1: Progress against planned outcomes

Outcome indicator	Target	Actual
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support	4	10
Increased users of facilities/amenities	210	2236
Number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of support	14	78

Source: Wrexham Community Key Fund – SPF claim form March 2026

Impact of the funding

The survey of grant recipients reflects the success of the fund, with all 16 respondents highlighting that the fund led to **increased opportunities for community organisations/members** and **improved quality of experience for community members**. Other impacts included the following:

- Increased sense of community spirit (14).
- Improved operation of the organisation receiving the funding (14).
- Expanded organisation membership/participation (12).

The interviews with 9 grant recipients provided further insight into the benefits the funding brought to the organisations and the impact it had on the local communities.

Spaces for everyone: Through a wide range of projects, the fund had a positive impact on a diverse demographic of recipients across Wrexham. The projects improved many spaces, from playgrounds for children and other outdoor community spaces to facilities which are used for socialising and providing warm meals for older people. Several projects also provided new and/or improved equipment to increase participation amongst members with disabilities. In addition to improvements to infrastructure, charities used the fund to deliver various sessions for families and people of all ages, including creative activities and emotional support.

Empowerment and education: Initiatives delivered using the funding provided opportunities for creative development, particularly in music and art. Additionally, some projects involved members in co-production of materials and were committed to providing opportunities for education (e.g., teaching local school children about inclusivity in sport and offering peer support sessions or mixed-age group activities for elderly and young people to share experiences). The fund empowered organisation staff and local communities to continue the

work they do and encouraged further improvements to facilities and outdoor spaces in the area.

"It felt like a very generous fund which allowed us to have bigger ambition and afford to pay external coordinators" – Grantee

"The fund Cadwyn Clwyd have provided is the seed that grew other opportunities and encouraged support from other people in our community." – Grantee

Fostering relationships and pride in communities: Many grantees mentioned the fund helped to build on existing relationships as well as developing new partnerships with members of the communities. This was evidenced through communities getting involved in project delivery and early signs of increased usage and participation.

"It is an enormous benefit to keep the development of the club moving in the right direction. (...) The Club has become a community hub and hopefully serves and enhances the community. The Fund can be proud of its contribution." – Grantee

Long-term sustainability: The grantees saw the fund as a stepping stone for their organisations to pursue an idea that will subsequently create new opportunities in the future. This included refurbishments to facilities, purchasing new equipment, or initiating various activities for local communities. Many grantees envisioned even greater impact of the fund in the next year, including greater participation from a wider demographic and increased revenue from attracting more usage and private hire of spaces.

"We've been absolutely thrilled with the results of the projects and are pretty determined to keep them running. There's been really good engagement from families." – Grantee

Case study 2: Oasis of Life centre renovations

This project involved renovation of a kitchen in a church building, which acts as a community hub. Since the renovation, the hub has been able to serve warm meals for over 100 older adults per week, host cooking classes and allow community members to utilise the kitchen. These new activities have enabled the building to become a warm refuge for the community's most vulnerable residents. The grantee noted that, without this funding, they would not have been able to launch the programme, which has had a profoundly positive impact on both the organisation and the wider community.

"The Wrexham Community Key Fund is a godsend to the Oasis of Life Centre community as it made what was just a dream become a reality."
- Grantee

Cross-cutting themes

The funded initiatives also had a positive impact on the SPF cross-cutting themes: Welsh language, net zero, and equal opportunities.

Impact on Welsh language

Organisations ensured inclusion of Welsh speakers by providing signage, project information and promotional material in Welsh and English. Some also mentioned adapting services to meet the needs of Welsh speakers, where necessary. Additionally, some organisations incorporated the Welsh language in their activities, to encourage engagement.

Impact on net zero

Initiatives included refurbishment projects which supported more efficient energy usage, such as central heating improvements and insulation. Some projects also included things like collection of rainwater to water green spaces and reusing and upholstering furniture as opposed to buying new, to reduce waste. Grantees also mentioned that their organisations were committed to educating members on environmentally friendly habits, such as recycling, and used public transportation for client sessions and trips.

Impact on equality of opportunities

Many organisations were committed to reaching a diverse demographic of recipients with their initiatives, providing spaces and services for everyone to benefit from. Some projects focused their outreach on inclusion of people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups, as well as promoting understanding of inclusion in the community via education. Others ensured their services were accessible by, for example, offering opportunities for different age groups and genders or offering evening sessions for individuals with work commitments.

Additionality

Overall, there was a clear need for the fund among local communities in Wrexham. This was evidenced by the high interest in the fund (with 76 applications started and 49 completed), as well as feedback from grantees.

In the survey, all 16 respondents rated the value of the funding to their organisations as very important. When asked what they would have done if the grant funding was not available:

- Seven said the project would not have happened at all.
- Five indicated it would have happened at a slower pace or at a later date, with most stating that it would have taken them much longer to raise or source the necessary funds and possibly place the organisations under additional financial pressures.
- Two suggested their project would have happened at a much smaller scale.
- One said they would have delivered lower quality activities that were not as responsive and sensitive to the needs of those engaged.

This feedback demonstrates that the Key Fund achieved a high level of additionality, i.e., that a considerable proportion of the outcomes and impacts achieved would not have happened in the absence of the project.

"This project would have been put on the back burner until the Club had saved sufficient funds to justify the expenditure. No doubt other matters would crop up needing funds and so the whole project would have been subject to an indefinite delay." – Grantee

Case study 3: Wrexham Domestic Abuse Recovery Workshops & Refuge Sensory Garden

The project embedded creative activities, such as art, crafts and music, as therapeutic tools for expression and healing into the support and recovery work delivered at the safety unit. A sensory garden was also developed, offering a welcoming, outdoor space for clients. Support for families provided through the project included trips to the theatre and various workshops, which helped participants improve their confidence and provided an escape from their difficulties. The charity was able to increase its outreach through partnership organisations referring people to their workshops and increase accessibility of available support by creating more sessions (e.g., evening sessions), resulting in helping a wider demographic of domestic abuse victims across the Wrexham area. The fund and its impacts have also boosted staff morale and received positive feedback from clients.

"The funding enabled DASU to enhance service quality, reach more survivors, and deliver meaningful recovery outcomes that would not otherwise have been possible." – Grantee

Strategic Fit

Table 2.2 below outlines the fund's alignment with UK SPF objectives, national policies and WCBC priorities, demonstrating strong strategic fit.

Table 2.2: Fund alignment with UK, Welsh and county strategic priorities

UK SPF aims: Communities and place	
Spread opportunities and improve public services , especially in those places where they are weakest.	The fund has opened new possibilities and improved facilities for community groups across Wrexham , who may have limited opportunities or struggle to access mainstream funding.
Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging , especially in those places where they have been lost.	Many grantees reported that their projects helped increase a sense of community spirit.
Empower local leaders and communities , especially in those places lacking local agency.	- The fund has enabled volunteer-led organisations to improve their facilities, increase opportunities for members, and restore community spirit, empowering groups to develop their contributions to the local community and engage community members. - The wrap-around support offered has also enhanced the capacity of local groups, equipping less

	experienced organisations with necessary skills to apply for future funding.
National policy: Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	
A Wales of cohesive communities: <i>Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities</i>	The funded projects have helped strengthen community cohesion by fostering both existing and new partnerships among local residents. Many community members recognised the value of the work and chose to get involved, contributing to the improvements in local facilities and shared spaces.
A resilient Wales: <i>A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment... and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</i>	The fund encouraged organisations to consider their contributions to net zero in various ways, including increasing energy efficiency of their facilities, restoring green spaces and gardens, choosing more environmentally friendly strategies to run operations, and educating members about the importance of adopting environmentally friendly habits.
A Wales of vibrant culture and Thriving Welsh Language: <i>A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</i>	The fund helped organisations promote creativity, through exposure to music and art, and improving access to various sport and community facilities. Many were also committed to encouraging the use of the Welsh language, adopting diverse strategies – from bilingual signage and information, to integrating Welsh into workshops and activities
County strategy: Wrexham County Borough Council's 2023-2028 plan¹	
Ensuring Wrexham is a Fair and Safe Place: a fair, equitable and inclusive community.	The fund enabled community groups to enhance local amenities and facilities, making them more accessible for a wide range of users.
Developing the Economy: a strong, thriving and fair economy that supports our communities.	Improvements to buildings and amenities have created new revenue opportunities for organisations, for example by making facilities more appealing for private hire, helping to support local economies.

¹ Wrexham County Borough Council plan (2023-28): [Six Council Priorities](#).

Decarbonising our Environment: create sustainable and resilient communities that are able to adapt to future environmental challenges	Funding was awarded to projects committed to making progress towards net zero, including improving energy efficiency and adapting environmentally friendly habits.
---	--

Added Value

Evaluation evidence indicates various key success factors that Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW have brought to delivery of the Wrexham Community Key Fund. These include:

- Incorporating **diverse publicity strategies** to reach a wide range of community groups across the county.
- **Strong partnerships with communities** and understanding their needs to offer targeted, wrap-around support, which empowers organisations to continue improving their communities.
- **Streamlined and improved practices**, drawing on past feedback, allowing for more efficient and timely delivery of the project.
- **A credible award process**, which ensured good strategic alignment of initiatives with SPF priorities, national policy and the WCBC 2023 - 2028 plan.

Together, these factors indicate that Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW's delivery of the Wrexham Community Key Fund demonstrates strong added value.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Management of the Key Fund has been very effective, despite challenges such as delivery partner capacity constraints and short timescales.

Although applicants were no longer required to submit an expression of interest, some still experienced challenges during the application process, which appear to primarily centre around difficulties using the online Submit system. Nonetheless, grantees praised the support from project officers as helping to resolve issues in most cases.

Feedback suggests that the model of wrap-around support continues to add significant value, supporting smaller and/or less experienced third sector organisations and community groups to access funding. The delivery organisations' connections to local community groups (particularly within AWOW's networks) also represent strong added value, enabling the funding to reach a wide range of community groups.

The fund has evidently had a positive impact on communities, enabling improvements to spaces and services, increased opportunities and improved experiences for community members, and fostering relationships and pride in communities. Groups and organisations have been empowered to test ideas that they will further develop and deliver in the future, meaning the funding will continue to have an impact over the medium to long-term.

By strengthening social ties, enhancing physical infrastructure, promoting culture and supporting projects designed to adapt to the changing economic and environmental climate, the fund has shown strong strategic fit with SPF objectives, national policy and WCBC priorities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings detailed in this report, we would recommend consideration of the following for any future grant management projects:

- Whether any changes could be made to the online application form to make it more user-friendly. This could include clearer instructions and/or changes to the structure of online forms, as well as producing guides in alternative formats, such as video explainers, to improve accessibility and understanding.
- Given the successful delivery of the fund, added value of the wrap around support model and high demand for grant funding locally, there is scope for Cadwyn Clwyd and AVOW to manage a greater volume of grant funding in the future. Scaling up the availability of financial support will create potential for greater added value through an increased number of successful applications.
- It appears that the demand for grants of lower value was high, with 20 out of 23 grants approved being below £25,000. Therefore, it seems reasonable to aim to support a greater volume of grants at lower amounts in the future, to meet demand for this level of funding in the area.
- For future projects where over 50% of applicants are unsuccessful, it may be valuable to gather evaluation feedback from these organisations, to understand their experiences and whether they gained any benefits from the initial grant application stage.