

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

A report to Cadwyn Clwyd



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FLVC
Flintshire Local Voluntary Council
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Executive Summary

Introduction

York Consulting LLP was commissioned by Cadwyn Clwyd to evaluate the Flintshire Community Key Fund – a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) initiative focused on strengthening the social fabric of communities through investment in community spaces and relationships. The project received £953,850 in UK SPF funding and was delivered by Cadwyn Clwyd and Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC) between June 2023 and March 2025.

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 Flintshire Community Key Fund project provided grants of between £2,000 and £50,000 to community groups in Flintshire. The funding sought to fund projects aiming to spread opportunities and improve public services, restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging and empower local leaders and communities.

Three types of grants were available: small Key Fund grants of between £2,000 and £10,000; large Key Fund grants of between £10,000 and £50,000; and pre-project development grants of £10,000. Capital and revenue funding was available for projects which improved community facilities, sports facilities and green spaces, as well as supporting renewable energy generation, digital infrastructure and cultural activities.

Project delivery

Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC promoted the grant through their existing networks and a range of other channels, including targeted engagement with local groups prior to launching the fund. Promotion of the fund was clearly effective, with the number of expressions of interest received (82) far exceeding the number of grants awarded (49).

After the first application round in September 2023 successfully awarded almost all the available grant funding, Flintshire County Council awarded a further £250,000 of grant funding for distribution via the Key Fund. This was distributed via a further two application rounds in April and October 2024.

A grant funding panel made up of representatives from Cadwyn Clwyd, FLVC and Flintshire County Council awarded funding based on which projects represented the best value for money in achieving the Key Fund's aims. Of the 82 applications received, 33 were unsuccessful, most commonly due to a lack of evidence of community support or concerns over alignment with UKSPF priorities.

Grant recipients praised the wrap around support provided during the application process and delivery of projects, with some feedback suggesting that this was a key enabler for smaller and/or less experienced organisations to access the funding. Grantees generally found the

application process straightforward, particularly with help from the project officers, although some noted challenges in securing the required numbers of quotes for grants above £2,500.

The Flintshire Community Key Fund exceeded its UKSPF outputs targets, with 49 organisations receiving grant funding and non-financial support against a target of 42. Through these projects, a total of 43 amenities were created or improved, surpassing the initial target of 34. The target for green or blue space created or improved was exceeded by a considerable margin (11,220m² against a target of 50m²).

Most of the supported projects used the funding to make improvements to buildings and/or outdoor space, including sports and recreation facilities, community centres, church or village halls and community cafes.

Outcomes and impact

The outcome targets for the number of new users and number of users with improved perceptions of the facilities supported by the grant funding were exceeded by a large margin (7,260 and 5,759 respectively, against targets of 300). Most grant recipients responding to the evaluation survey identified increased opportunities for community members as the primary impact of the grant funding.

Feedback from grant recipients provided during interviews gives further insight into the impact of the grants for organisations and communities. Impacts highlighted include increased use of facilities following safety and accessibility improvements, reduced costs due to energy efficiency savings and building improvements enabling organisations to increase the range of activities they offer.

There was evidently a clear need for the funding, with grant recipients stating that they would not have had access to any alternative funding sources to deliver their projects in the absence of the Key Fund.

Conclusions and recommendations

Delivery of the Flintshire Community Key Fund has been highly effective, with the model of wrap-around support adding significant value to the grant management process. A wide range of positive impacts are evident for communities across Flintshire. The project has met the SPF objectives of enhancing physical, cultural and social ties and access to amenities and community-led projects, whilst also contributing to Flintshire County Council strategic priorities.

The evaluation findings have informed a range of project specific recommendations, mainly related to the application process.

1. Introduction and methodology

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

The project received £953,850 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). The £2.6 billion UK SPF aims to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK, through investment in three priority areas:

- Communities and place.
- Support for local businesses.
- People and skills.

The project aimed to deliver against the communities and place investment priority by providing capital and revenue funding to projects seeking to strengthen community infrastructure and deliver community-based projects focused on access to services and net zero ambitions.

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the delivery of the Flintshire 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, a survey of grant recipients with in-depth follow-up consultations and further consultations with key stakeholders and grant managers.

Document review

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

- Cadwyn Clwyd's SPF 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 Flintshire 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 Flintshire Community Key Fund between October 2023 and December 2025.

Table 1.1: Summary of completed fieldwork

Component	Fieldwork
Consultations with stakeholders	Consultations with delivery staff from Cadwyn Clwyd (1) and FLVC (2).
Survey of grant recipients	Distributed to 40 grant recipients. Received 24 responses (60% response rate) with 19 agreeing to participate in a follow-up consultation.
Consultations with grant recipients	Completed 14 interviews with grantees Includes 4 recipients of small grants and 10 recipients of large grants

2. Project design

The Flintshire Community Key Fund project provided grants of between £2,000 and £50,000 to community groups in Flintshire. The project was delivered by Cadwyn Clwyd – social enterprise which provides guidance and support to communities and enterprises in North East Wales and further afield. – in partnership with the Flintshire Local Voluntary Council – an umbrella and support organisation for over 1,200 voluntary and community groups in Flintshire, which provides services to the third sector based on a Welsh Government Infrastructure Agreement. Delivered between June 2023 and February 2024, 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.

Three types of grants were available: small Key Fund grants of between £2,000 and £10,000; large Key Fund grants of between £10,000 and £50,000; and pre-project development grants of £10,000. Groups could apply for capital and revenue funding through the small/large Key Fund grants 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.

Groups could also apply for pre-project development support to undertake work such as feasibility studies, specialist consultancy, professional fees and preparatory project stages. This could include asset transfers, new community buildings and architect and surveyor costs.

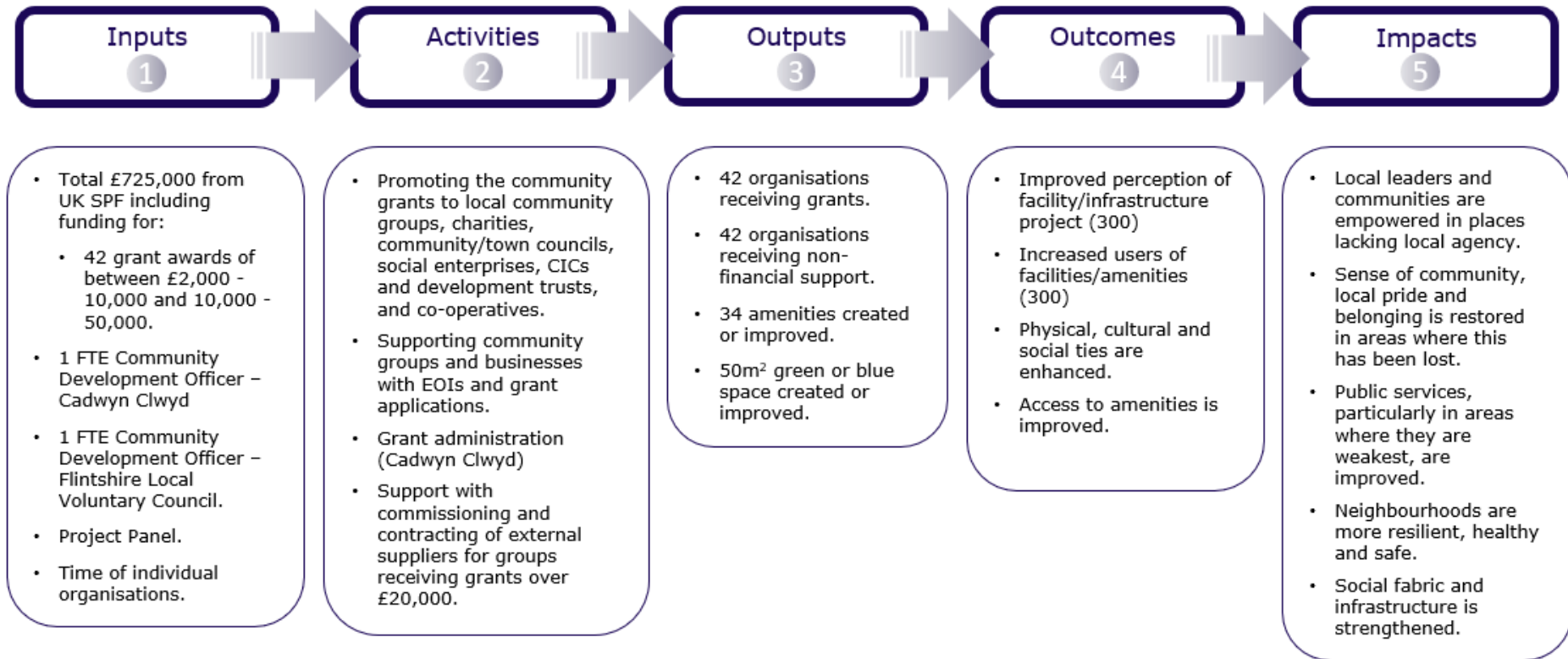
A range of organisations were eligible to apply, including voluntary and community groups, community councils and town councils, registered charities, social enterprises, Community Interest Companies (CIC), development trusts and co-operatives.

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.

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 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: Flintshire Community Key Fund Logic Model



Key progress indicators

The key progress indicators outlined in the SPF bid are set out in the following tables. They include target outputs and outcomes, as well as project expenditure.

Figure 2.2: Planned outputs

Output indicator	Target
Number of organisations receiving grants	42
Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	42
Number of amenities created or improved	34
Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m ²)	50

Source: Flintshire Community Key Fund SPF bid

Figure 2.3: Planned outcomes

Outcome indicator	Target
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure (number of people)	300
Increased users of facilities/amenities	300

Source: Flintshire Community Key Fund SPF bid

Project budget

The project was awarded £953,850 in SPF funding. Figure 2.4 outlines how the planned project budget was allocated. It is worth noting that the initial approved amount of Key Fund grants to be managed through the project was £475,000. After a successful first funding round, Flintshire CC approved a further £250,000 of Key Fund grants for the project.

Figure 2.4: Flintshire Community Key Fund project budget

Cost	Amount
Key Fund grants	£695,000
Pre-project development support	£80,000
Project delivery staff - FLVC	£56,550
Project delivery staff – Cadwyn Clwyd	£66,300
Grant processing, financial admin, project management	£30,000
Office costs, rent, utilities, business rates	£29,410
Communication, PR, distribution	£10,440
External consultants end of project evaluation	£9,000
Total	£953,850

Source: Flintshire Community Key Fund SPF bid.

3. Effectiveness of project delivery

Grant management

Staffing

The Flintshire Community Key Fund project was delivered by a project officer from Cadwyn Clwyd, with support from a project officer at FLVC. Project officers promoted the fund, supported expressions of interest and 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 (1), FLVC (1) and Flintshire County Council (1) reviewed the submitted applications and made decisions on grant awards. The two project officers also sat on the grant panel in a non-voting, advisory capacity.

There is evidently a strong working relationship between the two organisations, supported by previous partnership work on other grant management projects and a shared focus on building capacity with the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

Promotion and engagement

Both Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC promoted the grant through their existing networks. This included targeted engagement with local groups before the application process was launched in September 2023, to ensure groups were prepared. Bilingual marketing materials were developed and shared via email, social media, the Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC websites, through stakeholder networks and at in-person events such as sector funding fairs.

Of the 14 grant recipients who took part in an evaluation interview, 9 heard about the grant through FLVC (either via email, a funding event or through an existing relationship with the project officer), four via Cadwyn Clwyd and one through their local councillor.

Promotion of the fund was wide ranging and effective, as evidenced by the 82 applications received (for a target of 42 grant awards). Both organisations clearly have strong relationships with local community groups, which supported this high level of engagement with the fund.

Expression of interest and application

Between September 2023 and October 2024, there were three rounds of funding offered:

- **Round 1, September 2023:** Groups were asked to submit an initial EOI for £475,000 of grant funding. A total of 47 EOIs were received, with 42 groups asked to make a full application. Of these, 38 submitted a full application, 23 of which were approved (£443,013 funding awarded).
- **Round 2, April 2024:** The project was awarded an additional £250,000 in grant funding to distribute to local groups. This round saw 30 applications to the fund, with 14 approved (£281,986 funding awarded).
- **Round 3, October 2024:** A project extension to March 31st 2025 was approved by the LA, to enable distribution of £40,000 in project underspend, through small grants for capital projects or equipment up to £5,000. This round received 14 applications, with 12 approved (£39,832 funding awarded).

Throughout the three funding rounds, Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC offered advice and guidance on the application process, in particular supporting smaller groups with less experience making grant applications. This included encouraging groups who were unsuccessful in the first funding round to apply a second time, after making improvements to their applications.

Overall, feedback on the application process was positive, although grantees noted some challenges. As shown in Figure 3.1, most (16/24) respondents found the application process either very or fairly easy. Almost all (23/24) also rated the support they received during the application process as very helpful. During interviews, grantees praised the support they received from Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC, with some highlighting that the online application portal also worked well and helped to streamline the process.

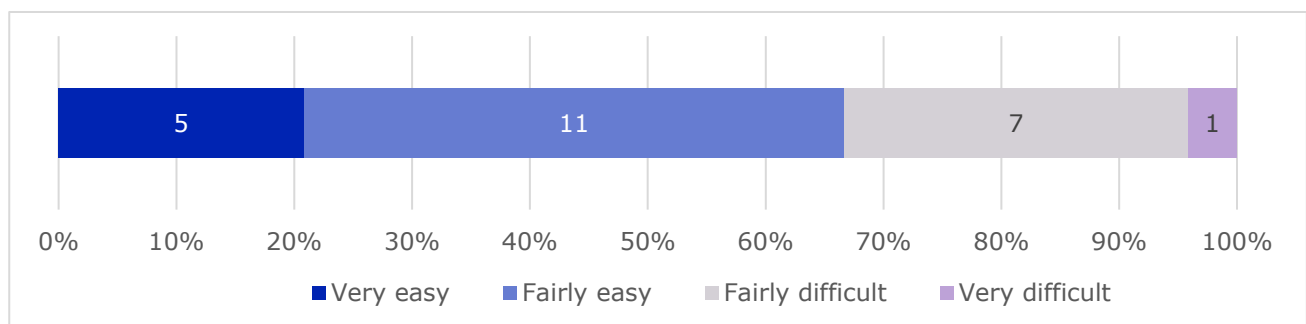
"They provided so much support, it would've been far more difficult without them." - Grantee

"They were there to help if we needed guidance. Fantastic. Could just pick up the phone. Also great to have someone to bounce ideas off." – Grantee

A considerable minority of survey respondents, however, found the application process either fairly difficult (7/24) or very difficult (1/24). The main challenge that grantees reported was gathering quotes to include within their application. Several grantees described the need to share three quotes for services or equipment as "onerous" and "time consuming". This was either due to having to chase suppliers for quotes, a scarcity of relevant suppliers locally, or for larger grants, reluctance from some companies to provide quotes for work they may not do.

Despite Cadwyn Clwyd providing a guidance document, a small number of interviewees felt further clarity on the application form would have been helpful, to understand in more detail what each question was asking for.

Figure 3.1: How would you rate the application process for this funding?



Source: Survey of grant recipients (n=24)

Award process

Applications were reviewed by the steering group during panel meetings following each round of applications. Prior to the meeting, members of the panel scored each application by the following factors:

- Contribution to UKSPF priorities
- Community involvement
- UKSPF outputs and outcomes

- Value for money

Projects above a certain threshold were subsequently discussed at the panel meetings. Of the 82 applications, 33 were not approved. Particularly in the second application round (April 2024), several projects were deemed to be viable projects but lost out to stronger applications in the oversubscribed and competitive process. Common reasons that projects were not approved included:

- A lack of evidence of community support.
- Concerns that the project was not aligned with SPF priorities.
- A lack of detail within the application.

Other reasons included concerns about possible duplication of existing activities in the area and projects being a continuation of existing activity rather than new activity.

Project delivery support

Project officers continued to support grant recipients throughout delivery of their projects, which was clearly valued by grantees. Almost all survey respondents (23/24) rated the support they received during delivery of their project as being very helpful.

Support provided included help with procurement processes for larger grants, offering advice and guidance on completing grant claim forms and managing the payment of funds. Interviewees praised the project officers for their responsiveness and flexibility. Support with submitting claim forms and invoices was particularly valued, with grantees appreciating the guidance provided on what was needed to successfully claim the grant. Others highlighted Cadwyn Clwyd’s flexibility around releasing the grant funding, with funds released upfront where there was a clear need.

“We felt genuinely supported rather than monitored.” - Grantee

Outputs

As shown in Table 3.1, the project exceeded its target outcomes, with 49 organisations receiving grant funding and non-financial support against a target of 42¹. This is because a larger number of lower value grants were awarded than initially anticipated. Through these projects, a total of 43 amenities were created or improved, surpassing the initial target of 34. The target for green or blue space created or improved was exceeded by a considerable margin (11,220m² against a target of 50m²).

Table 3.1: Progress against planned outputs

Output indicator	Target	Actual
Number of organisations receiving grants	42	49
Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	42	49
Number of amenities created or improved	34	43
Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m ²)	50	11,253

Source: Flintshire Key Fund - outputs & outcomes February 2025

¹ There were 52 grants awarded, with three organisations receiving two grants.

The Flintshire Community Key Fund has supported a wide array of organisations, from community councils, charities, sports organisations and CICs, reflecting the diversity of the VCS in Flintshire.

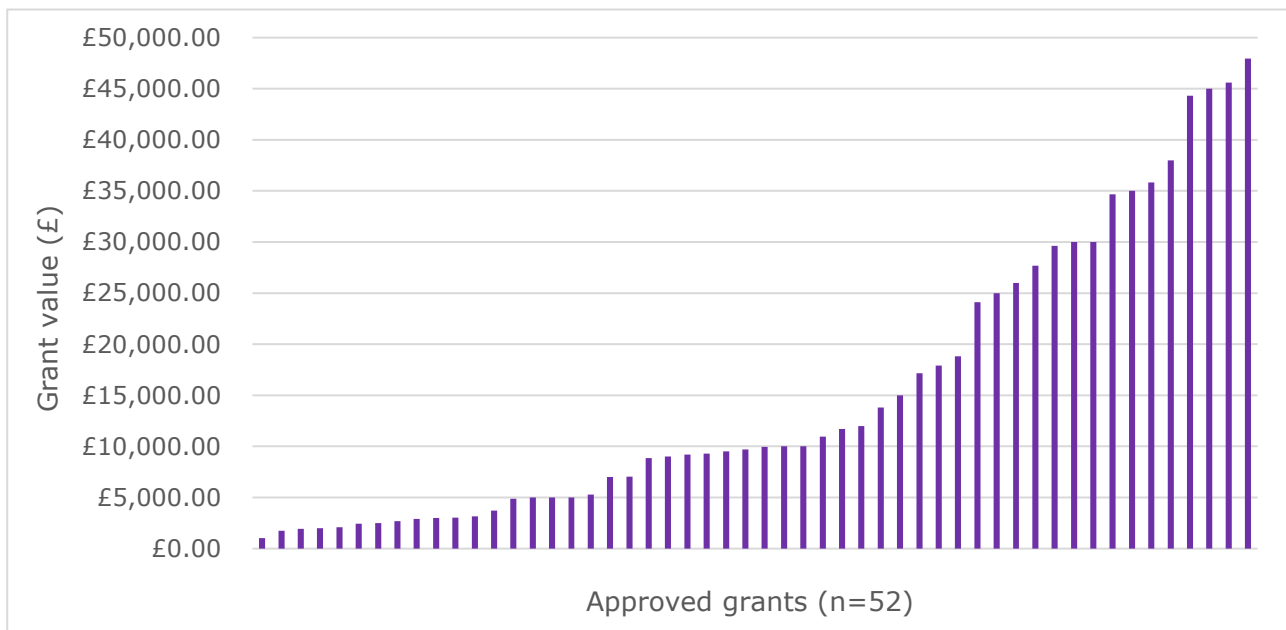
Most of the supported projects used the funding to make improvements to buildings and/or outdoor space, including:

- Sports or recreation facilities (14 projects)
- Community centres or hubs (13 projects)
- Church or village halls (12 projects)
- Community cafes (2 projects)
- Other community facilities (4 projects)

Of these projects, seven involved improvements to energy efficiency or the installation of renewable energy technology. Other grant recipients included community groups making improvements to digital infrastructure or charities delivering projects to support young people, mental health and wellbeing or the Welsh language.

Total grants awarded exceeded the amount allocated for Key Fund grants (£793,076.53 against £725,000). This was enabled through underspend on project costs. Figure 3.2 outlines the distribution of grants awarded to each group by value. Distribution of small and large grants was broadly similar, with 27 small grants (under £10,000) and 25 large grants (over £10,000) awarded.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of projects by value



Source: Flintshire Community Key Fund – December 2024 progress report

Figure 3.3 shows that the funded projects are distributed across Flintshire, demonstrating that communities throughout the county have been supported. There is some clustering around the areas of Connah’s Quay, Deeside and Mold, but this is to be expected given their greater population density.

the procurement process, while those with limited cashflow were able to receive their grant up-front or have it repaid in stages.

"The support we have received from Cadwyn and FLVC both in putting together the initial proposal for the project and throughout its execution has been excellent. They have always been available to contact and supportive throughout with helpful information and advice at each stage."

– Grantee

- **Partnership relationships:** The strong working relationship between Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC facilitated successful delivery, which was crucial given the short timescales. The two organisations worked at speed to launch the fund, with most of the fund awarded by October 2024. As a result of this effective and efficient management, the LA awarded the project a further £250,000 in grant funding, enabling a wider group of local organisations to benefit from the financial and wrap around support provided by Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC.
- **Promotion:** The promotion of the fund was wide ranging and effective, as evidenced by the 82 applications received (for an initial target of 42 awards). Both Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC clearly have strong relationships with local community organisations that enabled this level of engagement with the fund.

Case study 1 – Trelawnyd Memorial Hall

Trelawnyd Memorial Hall is run by Trelawnyd & Gwaenysgor Community Council. The Community Council are planning some major works to the hall, including moving the kitchen, installing insulation and a more efficient heating system, and conducting general repairs to the building. They applied to the Flintshire Community Key Fund for pre-development support with these works. The funding paid for professional fees related to the planning permission process, including the development of architect plans which will be crucial to securing further grant funding for the work.

The improvement works, once completed, will support the Council to widen the scope and improve the quality of activities they can offer the community. The works will also improve the energy efficiency of the Memorial Hall, contributing to reducing energy costs and the carbon footprint of the building.

4. Outcomes & impact

Progress against outcome targets

As shown in Table 4.1, the targets for both the number of new users and number of users with improved perceptions of the facilities supported by the grant funding were exceeded by a large margin. The figure for the improved perceptions outcome is based on the numbers of people that organisations reported as using the facility/infrastructure during the year, rather than data measuring perceptions over time. Nonetheless, the outcomes achieved are considerably higher than what was initially anticipated, demonstrating the wide reach of the funding. The larger than expected number of projects supported (see Table 3.1) may have also contributed to success against the planned outcomes, with more users able to access a greater number of supported facilities.

Table 4.1: Progress against planned outcomes

Outcome indicator	Target	Actual
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure (number of people)	300	7,260
Increased users of facilities/amenities	300	5,759

Source: Flintshire Community Key Fund - SPF claim form February 2025

Impact of the funding

Most survey respondents reported that the primary impact of the funding was increased opportunities for community organisations/members (12 respondents). Other respondents highlighted different impacts as being the primary impact of the funding, including:

- Increased quality of experience for community members (5)
- Increased sense of community spirit (2)
- Expanded organisation membership/participation (2)
- Improved operation of your organisation (1)
- Other (2): improved wellbeing of young people and securing further funding as a result of the project.

It is worth noting that survey respondents were asked to identify the primary impact of the funding by selecting only one option from the above list. Interview feedback suggests that for many projects, the funding had a range of impacts, such as increasing opportunities for existing participants whilst also expanding organisational membership or participation.

Interviews with 14 of the 49 grant recipients provided more detailed insight into the impact of the grants on organisations and communities receiving funding. These included:

- Making spaces safer and more accessible, such as fixing uneven floors and building wheelchair accessible paths, leading to increased use of the space or facility. For example, a community café reported an increase in young families visiting after installing baby changing facilities.
- Reduced costs due to energy efficiency savings. Some organisations that used the funding to install solar panels reported considerably decreased energy bills, with one organisation

saving £3,000 in energy bills over 6 months whilst another saw their electricity bill reduce from £300 to £15 per month. In the case of one village hall, the reported savings from solar panels meant the building was no longer at risk of closure.

- Building improvements enabling an increase in the range of activities organisations can offer, with some grantees reporting increased requests to hire the space or the opening up of new avenues for income generation as a result. New activities highlighted include streaming of live events, film nights or virtual lectures due to improvements in Wi-Fi connectivity, or being able to host Christmas fairs, carol concerts and coffee mornings in newly improved spaces.
- Buildings becoming more welcoming and comfortable, leading to new people and groups accessing the space. For example, a group of parents of children attending a cricket club set up a book club after renovations were made to the clubhouse.
- Enabling progress of larger-scale building and space improvement projects, through the funding of professional fees for pre-development work, which will facilitate access to larger grants in the future.

In addition, feedback from some grant recipients indicates that the wrap around support provided during the application process and delivery of projects has built individual and organisational capacity to make future funding applications.

"Now we are set up for applying for grants, it will be much easier." – Grantee

There was evidently a clear need for the grant funding within the community. Demand was high, as indicated by the project being oversubscribed. Survey feedback from grantees also suggests the funding was highly valued by the participating groups, with all 24 survey respondents rating the value of the funding to their organisation as 'very important'. In addition, all interviewees reported that they would not have been able to deliver their projects without the funding, due to having no or limited other funding available within their organisation and/or no other external funding sources being available. Together, these findings suggest a high level of additionality and that the project filled a clear gap in funding availability in Flintshire.

"We are extremely grateful for this opportunity to improve the sustainability of the charity, reduce our carbon footprint and ensure that many more children receive our vital lifesaving education. Thank you so much! It will have such a long-term benefit for the charity, not just this year but for many years to come, it is such an investment for us that we wouldn't have been able to afford without your support." – Grantee

"We wouldn't have been able to do it at all [without the grant]. It's such a big outlay." – Grantee

Case study 2 – Connah’s Quay Cricket Club (CQCC)

Alongside several junior and men’s cricket teams, the clubhouse at Connah’s Quay Cricket Club is used by local dance groups, darts teams and Deeside Support 4, a charity that supports neurodivergent individuals. The other users of the clubhouse were consulted in the application stage to make sure that their needs were met by the project. The club applied for a Flintshire Community Key Fund grant to improve the clubhouse, replacing unsuitable flooring throughout and remodelling the women’s and disabled bathrooms.

The project has enabled a greater degree of accessibility in the clubhouse. Suitable flooring and removal of steps throughout the building has decreased the risk of injury; the disabled toilet has been expanded, with a safety alarm installed, a boiler removed and child changing table added; and the women’s toilet has been expanded.

While it is too early to demonstrate any financial impact for the club, there has been significant impact on the external users of the clubhouse. Alongside increasing accessibility for the dance groups, Deeside Support 4 and the darts teams, parents of the junior cricket teams are now using the improved space for a newly established book club.

Impact on net zero

Several of the funded projects have had an impact on progress towards net zero. The funding enabled the installation of solar panels on the roof of Caerwys Town Hall, Talacre Community Centre and Cymau Community Centre. In addition, several projects made energy efficiency improvements, such as renovating heating systems, adding roof insulation or installing energy-efficient lighting.

Impact on equality of opportunities

A range of funded projects also aimed to increase access to opportunities and activities for certain groups. For example, improvements made to changing rooms and toilets to encourage girls’ participation in sports, adaptations to buildings and spaces to improve disability access, projects facilitating partnerships with new organisations to reach certain disadvantaged groups and making activities and spaces more inclusive for neurodivergent individuals or those with mental health difficulties.

Impact on Welsh language

The impact of the funded projects on promotion of the Welsh language was less clear, although some grant recipients mentioned the use of bilingual signs and materials. A small number highlighted positive impacts on Welsh language promotion, such as one organisation hosting a Welsh language class since the grant funded building improvements were completed. Another commented that involvement with the grant had raised awareness of the lack of Welsh language provision within the organisation, something which was subsequently made a priority at the most recent Annual General Meeting.

In addition, Cadwyn Clwyd actively promoted the Welsh language throughout delivery of the project, including:

- Producing bilingual promotional materials and communication about the fund.
- The project officer, as a first language Welsh speaker, supporting groups in their preferred language.

- Offering advice to grant recipients on Welsh language requirements and signposting groups to other sources of support.

Case study 3 – Holywell Museum

The Museum was founded in 2018 as a Community Interest Company, aiming to be a place where objects pertinent to the history and development of Holywell and its surrounding villages can be preserved for display and interaction by the community. The museum is funded solely by the proceeds from the museum café, shop, and fundraising efforts.

Funding from the Flintshire Community Key Fund was used to complete the museum's Café Transformation project. This involved replacing and adding kitchen appliances, (including a new coffee machine, microwave, air fryer, toaster, fridge-freezer, dishwasher, countertop and display unit), acquiring new tables and chairs, panelling and painting walls, decorating the disabled toilet and installing baby changing facilities.

The café transformation has positively benefitted the community, increasing equality of opportunities through improved accessibility. The museum manager reported that there were very few places with baby changing facilities in Holywell and that, since the improvement works, they had seen an increase in young families visiting the museum and café. They were also keen to offer a low-cost café option in Holywell and the grant funding has supported them to keep their prices down. In addition, following the improvements to the facilities, the café now hosts a Welsh language class. There has also been an impact on net zero, through the installation of LED lights and the new appliances being more energy efficient.

Delivery against UKSPF aims and local policy

The Flintshire Community Key Fund aimed to support the following UKSPF aims, linked to the communities and place priority:

- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

Through the impacts described above it is evident that these aims have been achieved, with the grant funding empowering organisations across Flintshire (Figure 3.3) to increase the opportunities they offer community members and widen access to their facilities and activities. Grant recipients across a range of projects also described community members' excitement and pride at the improvements to buildings and spaces made using the grant funding.

"The building looks more cared for, people want to come along now." – Grantee

"There are good feelings in the village and surrounding areas. Everyone's proud, it's now a really nice place."- Grantee

"We have had lots of comments from users and the public at the community bar that the refurb has been a great transformation." – Grantee

The Flintshire Community Key Fund has also supported progress towards certain priorities and sub-priorities within Flintshire County Council's 2023 – 2028 plan², including:

- **Supporting communities in Flintshire to reduce their carbon footprint.** This is evidenced in the seven projects where grant funding has enabled improvements to energy efficiency or the installation of solar panels.
- **The promotion, good management, and protection of green spaces to deliver multiple benefits to the environment, residents and visitors.** The funding has supported improvements to 11,253m² of green space, a large proportion of which includes sports and recreation facilities used by residents and visitors alike, with increased use of these facilities by a wider group of people a key impact of the funding reported by many grant recipients.
- **Resilient communities where people feel connected and safe.** Through the impacts described by grant recipients, it is evident that the grant funding has strengthened and increased opportunities for people to connect and feel safe within their communities, whether that be through an increased range of activities on offer, widened access to existing activities or enhanced buildings and spaces providing more welcoming, accessible and safe places to meet.
- **Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.** The fund has enhanced community infrastructure, promoted sustainable projects, and improved environmental quality. It has funded initiatives such as village hall renovations, renewable energy projects, fostering local pride and sustainable living. Additionally, the fund backs cultural and social activities, strengthening social ties and cultural identity, while improving access to services through digital infrastructure and sports facilities. These efforts collectively contribute to resilient, healthy, and safe neighbourhoods, aligning with the Act's goals of sustainable development and community wellbeing.

"This is a really important fund for our community and we value it greatly - it is helping us maintain the Town Hall which provides so much value to our community." – Grantee

"The difference this level of grant funding has made to our community centre, its users and to the small Committee that runs it has been immense. Over the years we had managed to complete a great deal of the necessary up-grading of the Centre and this Grant meant we have been able to finish all the major works. The future of our Community Centre is secure and we can turn our attention to increasing its use for our local communities rather than fund raising to get the works done ourselves." – Grantee

² Flintshire Council Plan 2023 – 28: <https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Council-Democracy/Council-Plan-and-Well-Being-Objectives/Council-Plan-2023-28.pdf>

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Management of the Flintshire Community Key Fund has been highly effective across all areas of delivery. This is despite challenging delivery timescales. Successful delivery has been enabled by an effective partnership between Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC and the strong connections that both partners have with a wide range of local community organisations.

The model of wrap-around support adds significant value to the grant management process. Grantees clearly value the support provided during the application process and delivery of their projects. This has enabled smaller community groups and organisations with limited prior experience of grant applications to access the funding.

The project has exceeded its target SPF outputs and outcomes, in part due to the high demand for the grant funding leading to a greater number of lower value grants being awarded than initially intended. The funding has had a variety of positive impacts, including making community spaces safer and more accessible, reduced costs due to energy efficiency savings and building improvements enabling organisations to offer a wider range of activities and broaden the groups they engage with. In some cases, the funding helped to progress larger-scale projects, including facilitating access to and building capacity for future grant applications. Linked to these impacts, there is evidence that funded projects have made a positive contribution to promoting equal opportunities and progress towards net zero, with some contributions to promoting the Welsh language also apparent.

There was evidently a need for the grant funding within the community and grantee feedback suggests a high level of additionality, with the project filling a gap in funding availability locally. It has evidently met the SPF objectives of enhancing physical, cultural and social ties and access to amenities and community-led projects, whilst also contributing to Flintshire County Council strategic priorities.

Recommendations

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

- Reviewing the application process to ensure that application forms are as streamlined as possible, with consideration given to creating shorter application forms where smaller amounts funding are being requested.
- Review communication of the guidance document to ensure understanding by grantees, plus subsequent reminders and follow-ups, including providing good practice examples.
- Given the high demand for the grant funding and effectiveness of delivery, including the wrap around support model, there is evidently scope for Cadwyn Clwyd and FLVC to manage grant funding of a larger volume in the future. This would enable a greater number of local organisations to benefit from both financial and non-financial support.