

# Evaluation of the Supporting Local Business Denbighshire Key Fund (Shared Prosperity Fund)

A report to Cadwyn Clwyd

February 2025

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# Executive Summary

York Consulting was commissioned to evaluate the Denbighshire Supporting Local Business Project, developed by Cadwyn Clwyd and submitted to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK-SPF) in June 2023. The project aimed to enhance productivity, job creation, and business growth in Denbighshire, focusing on micro and small businesses.

The evaluation methodology involved:

- A review of key documentation and management information.
- Stakeholder consultations with grant managers and beneficiaries.
- Analysis of performance against key indicators.
- Assessment of the project's contribution to cross-cutting themes (Welsh Language, Net Zero, Equal Opportunities).

## Project design

The Project components were:

- A business grant scheme (Prosperous Denbighshire) - financial support for innovation, efficiency, and low-carbon solutions.
- A business networks key fund (Collaboration Fund) – encouraging collaboration among business groups, chambers of trade, and social enterprises, focusing on innovation, entrepreneurship, business growth, and net-zero ambitions.

The strategic objectives of the Fund were to:

- Align with UK-SPF priorities to strengthen the private sector.
- Create jobs and enhance community cohesion.
- Support networking and collaboration for innovation.
- Increase private sector investment in productivity, low-carbon solutions, and export growth.

The project also sought to focus on rural and urban economic disparities, and address rural depopulation, seasonal tourism employment, and economic inequality.

The Project was managed by Cadwyn Clwyd with support from Denbighshire County Council and collaboration with, Business Wales. The primary target was micro and small businesses, which represent over 90% of the business base in Denbighshire.

During project delivery, Cadwyn Clwyd was awarded funding from Denbighshire County Council to deliver the People and Skills Fund, to fund projects providing quality employability support, learning and training that enable people of all ages to fulfil their potential.

## Key findings

Prosperous Denbighshire Fund:

In total, 99 grants were awarded covering £1,314,858.36 in funding.

- **Geographic Impact:** Grants were distributed on a relatively even basis across Denbighshire.
- **Sector Impact:** Most funding went to hospitality and service industries; manufacturing received 5% of grants.
- **Business Impact:** Key benefits included efficiency gains, cost reductions, increased trade, and improved productivity.
- **Challenges:** Some applicants found the process repetitive, and the requirement for upfront expenditure created barriers.
- **Support & Feedback:** Cadwyn Clwyd staff were highly praised for their assistance, but improvements in application process efficiency were suggested.

#### Collaboration Fund:

- Four projects were funded. The total value of the projects was £267,792.
- Projects focused on supporting business collaboration around decarbonisation, tourism marketing and events, and networking.
- Most of the projects were successfully delivered. One experienced initial challenges due a lack of clarity around the need for the project and stakeholder engagement, which was resolved towards the end of the project.
- The evidence from the four projects funded demonstrates that the Collaboration Fund brought considerable benefit, including supporting businesses to transition towards net zero, upskilling business leaders and establishing business networking opportunities within the county.

#### People and Skills Fund:

- Eight projects were selected for funding. The total value of all projects was £377,970 with a range from £2,500 to £186,792.
- Projects' planned coverage ranged from confidence building and skills development for all groups, through to those targeting specific groups such as 16-18 year-olds transitioning to college, people with learning disabilities and survivors of childhood sexual abuse.
- Methods of support ranged from training, mentoring to therapies such as counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).
- Given the relatively short timescales for delivery, the projects on the whole performed well in achieving the overall Fund targets.
- A range of outcomes were achieved by project participants who increased confidence, skills levels and generally made positive steps forward in their lives, with some clearly moving closer to the labour market.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Prosperous Denbighshire Fund has had a significant positive impact on Denbighshire's micro and small businesses. The project demonstrated strong management, strategic alignment, and effective fund distribution. While some challenges remain, the recommendations provide a framework for improving future funding initiatives and fostering long-term economic growth.

Recommendations, based on the evaluation findings, were:

- Extend project timelines – Allow more time for project development and implementation in the future.
- Simplify application process – Reduce repetitive requirements and streamline documentation.
- Enhance data collection – Improve sector categorization for better alignment with public sector classifications.
- Increase management capacity – Provide additional funding for administration.
- Strengthen partnerships – Continue collaboration with Denbighshire County Council and Business Wales.
- Promote net-zero solutions – Expand investment in energy-efficient and low-carbon projects, and the advice available to support projects.
- Improve cross-cutting themes integration.

# 1. Introduction and methodology

York Consulting was commissioned to undertake an evaluation for Cadwyn Clwyd of the Supporting Local Business Fund.

The project received £2,322,984 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). The £2.6 billion UK SPF aimed 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 was designed to support Denbighshire's Prosperous Businesses theme and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund supporting local business agenda, with the aim of boosting productivity, pay, jobs, and living standards, particularly for micro and small businesses. It included two key components:

- **Business Grant Scheme (Prosperous Denbighshire Fund)**. Financial support for micro and small businesses to encourage innovation, efficiency, and low-carbon solutions.
- **Business Networks Key Fund (Collaboration Fund)**. Encouraging collaboration among business groups, chambers of trade, and social enterprises to develop collective economic benefits.

During project delivery, a third element of the project was added, aimed at delivering on the People and skills SPF priority:

- **People and Skills Fund:** Grant funding for organisations to deliver on Denbighshire's mission to provide quality employability support, to enable people of all ages to fulfil their potential, both personally and professional.

Key requirements of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the appropriateness of the project strategy in achieving Shared Prosperity Fund priorities, Local Authority strategies and other relevant strategies.
- Assess the summative progress and performance of the outputs and outcomes achieved. This will include rigorous quantitative and qualitative approaches to capturing beneficiary and stakeholder perspectives.
- Assess the operational and administrative effectiveness of the projects.
- Highlight areas of good practice and demonstrate these via evaluation case studies.
- Identify any sub-optimal aspects of delivery and recommend actions to address the issues identified in future programmes.
- Assess the extent to which value for money has been achieved.
- Assess the strength of counter-factual arguments (i.e., what the likely scenario would have been without the project funding being available/invested).
- Assess the contribution of the project to operational themes such as Welsh Language, Net Zero, Equal Opportunities.

- Recommend whether any wider strategic or operational changes are needed in the context of any successor projects/intervention.

## **Overview of Denbighshire**

The last Census showed that Denbighshire had a population of 95,800 as of 2021, an increase of 2,066 since the previous Census. Major Towns & Settlements are divided between two key towns on the coast, Rhyl and Prestatyn, and a number of settlements in the rural hinterland, Denbigh, Ruthin, Llangollen, Corwen, St Asaph with St Asaph bridging the two geographic areas. Denbighshire has a strong Welsh cultural identity, with many residents speaking Welsh, most particularly in the rural areas. Whilst across the county 22.5% speak Welsh, in some communities the percentage is over 50%.

Denbighshire's economy is diverse, with traditional industries like farming coexisting alongside modern technology and tourism. Future growth may depend on infrastructure development, investment in skills, and sustainable economic strategies. The county has a strong agricultural base, with farming playing a key role in the local economy. The county's rural landscape supports livestock farming, particularly sheep and cattle, as well as some dairy farming. Tourism is a major economic drive with several historic sites, and coastal attractions.

Denbighshire has a strong manufacturing sector, with several industrial estates supporting a variety of businesses. St Asaph Business is home to high-tech industries, including optoelectronics and advanced manufacturing whilst Rhyl, Ruthin and Denbigh have a range of manufacturing and engineering companies.

The service sector, including healthcare, education, and finance, is also a key employer whilst public sector jobs form a significant part of the economy. The county is also a focus for renewable energy projects, particularly wind energy. There are good transport links, including the A5 and A55 expressway and strong railway connections which support economic activity by linking Denbighshire to the rest of North Wales, Cheshire, and beyond.

The county faces key challenges, which the Denbighshire Key Fund seeks to respond to. These include rural depopulation, seasonal tourism employment, economic disparities between coastal and inland areas, and significant levels of deprivation in pockets of the economy, including West Rhyl, which has the highest level of deprivation in Wales<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, there are also key opportunities across the county, including growth in digital businesses, sustainable tourism and further investment in renewable energy and advanced manufacturing.

## **Evaluation methodology**

The methodology included a comprehensive review of information and data and consultations with key stakeholders, project managers and grant beneficiaries. From this, an analysis of outcomes, successes and lessons learned are clearly identified.

This work was correlated with survey work undertaken directly by Cadwyn Clwyd collating Management Information and grantee willingness to participate in a follow-on interview as part of the evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019

The key elements of the work included:

- Development of a Theory of Change (see Figure 2.1)
- Document review, including SPF bid documents, grant application forms, panel minutes and progress reports.
- Management information analysis
- Grant manager interviews
- A survey of grant recipients
- Surveys of some end beneficiaries
- Grant recipient interviews
- A workshop with People and Skills Fund project managers.

The review and analysis of key management information included Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and impact monitoring data. The information would include:

- Number of projects
- Geographic distribution of projects and value of projects
- Sectors
- Type of project
- KPI achievement
- People and Skills Fund project closure data

Table 1.1 summarises the fieldwork completed between October 2023 and January 2025. All interviews were conducted either on the phone or by Zoom/Teams. Due to the gestation period between the initial approval of grants, and final deadlines, most of the grant beneficiary interviews were undertaken between October 2024 and December 2024. All the grant beneficiary interviewees were identified through the survey issued by Cadwyn Clwyd.

**Table 1.1: Summary of completed fieldwork**

Component	Fieldwork
Consultations with stakeholders	Consultations with delivery staff from Cadwyn Clwyd and stakeholders at Denbighshire County Council
Survey of Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipients	Distributed to 99 grant recipients. Received 95 responses with 62 agreeing to participate in a follow-up interview.
Interviews with Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipients	Completed interviews with 42 Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipients
Collaboration Fund	Interviews with project managers of the 4 projects Surveys of beneficiaries for two projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colomendy Net Zero Project – 23 responses</li> <li>• Denbighshire Business Club – 6 responses</li> </ul>
People and Skills Fund	Evaluation workshop with project delivery staff, involving discussion of each project and sharing of experiences



The analysis assessed how the projects progressed against targets and value for money. It also considered the extent to which each project aligned with SPF priorities and local/regional priorities and the project's overall contribution to promoting the Welsh Language, Net Zero ambitions and Equal Opportunities.

This analysis was informed by the theory of change, drawing out key findings regarding how funding was used, overall project management, outcomes achieved, good practice, challenges, and lessons learnt.

## 2. Project design

### Delivery model

The project was strategically led and managed by Cadwyn Clwyd, working with key partners, including Denbighshire County Council, Business Wales and Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council, as well as sub-contractors delivering specific elements of the Key Fund. Delivered between June 2023 and February 2025, the project included three key components:

- Prosperous Denbighshire Fund
- Collaboration Fund
- People and Skills Fund.

### Prosperous Denbighshire Fund

Financial support for micro and small businesses to encourage innovation, efficiency, and low-carbon solutions. The grants were offered at two levels:

- Larger projects: 70% capital and revenue grant, with a maximum total project spend of £50,000 (£35,000 grant funds and £15,000 applicant cash match funding).
- Micro business Start Up & Small Business grant: up to 100% revenue grant with a maximum total project spend of £2,000. To enable the fund to reach as many businesses as possible, a cash match contribution would be scored higher at panel. There was a minimum grant application value of £1,000.

The focus of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund was on micro and small businesses (turnover ≤ £10.2M, balance sheet ≤ £5.1M, or ≤50 employees), representing over 90% of businesses in Denbighshire. The project covered the entire county of Denbighshire, with Cadwyn Clwyd staff working across different locations, including remote, office-based, and community settings.

In addition to providing grant funding, the project offered a wrap-around support function, including project officer support and guidance from Cadwyn Clwyd, and support from Business Wales to help businesses access the grants.

### Collaboration Fund

The aim of the Business Collaboration Fund was to promote and support networking and collaboration, through interventions that brought businesses and partners together within and across sectors to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and stimulate innovation and growth. The project focused on innovation, entrepreneurship, business growth and net Zero ambitions, and aimed to involve business groups, chambers of trade, and social enterprises in developing collective economic benefits and providing support to micro and small businesses.

Initially planned as grants up to £20,000 available to support business collaboration projects, Cadwyn Clwyd instead worked closely with local organisations to develop specific work packages to put out to tender, based on local need.

### People and Skills Fund

The People and Skills Fund provided funding for interventions with the following types of activities and outputs:

- Employment support for economically inactive people, including intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer to mainstream provision and to gain and retain employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English and ESOL) support.
- Courses, including basic skills (digital/English), and life skills and career skills provision for people who are not economically inactive and who are unable to access other training or wrap around support.
- Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.
- Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.
- Support for engagement and softer skills development for young people.
- Support to achieve qualifications, licences and skills.
- Engagement with community groups and engagement with mainstream healthcare.
- Supporting people into supported employment.

## **Aims and objectives**

The business support project objectives were:

- Alignment with the UK-SPF's goal of strengthening the private sector, seeking to:
  - Create jobs and boost community cohesion by investing in industries, supporting startups, and improving retail, hospitality, and leisure facilities.
  - Encourage networking and collaboration among businesses to share knowledge and drive innovation.
  - Increase private sector investment in productivity-enhancing activities, energy efficiency, low-carbon solutions, and export growth.
- Alignment with specific UK-SPF interventions:
  - Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems through business grants and network support.
  - Supporting the social economy (e.g., social enterprises) via grants.
  - Funding for business support hubs and incubators.
  - Business support to drive employment growth in high-unemployment areas.

The strategic aims of the project, as described in the original application were to:

- Contribute towards 'levelling up' the Denbighshire Gross Value Added figures for the county.
- Tackle the challenges faced by businesses detailed in the Denbighshire County Council 2021 Business Survey, namely, to reduce fixed costs and to address the impact of climate change and net zero ambitions.

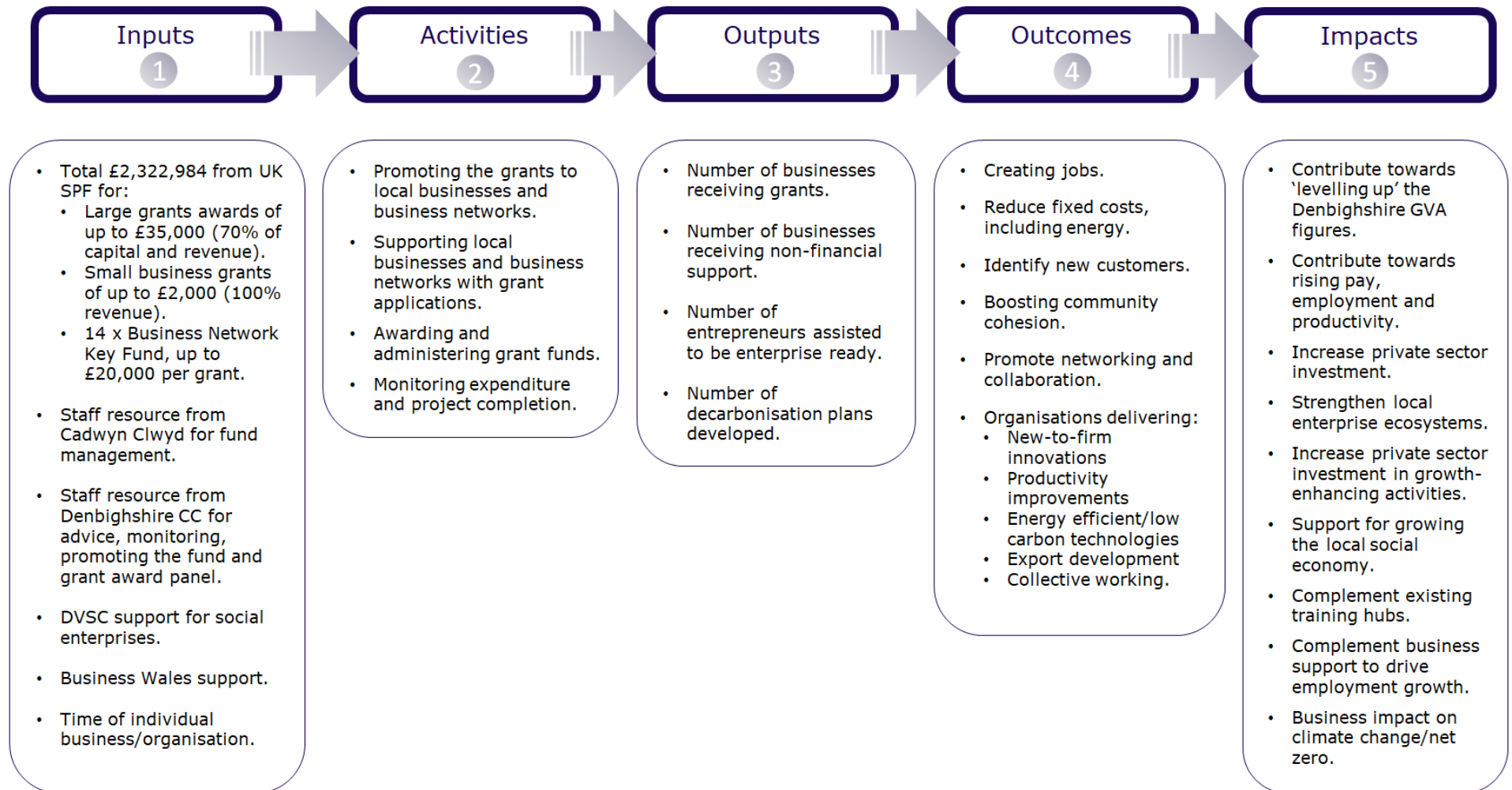
The People and Skills Fund aimed to deliver against the 'Learning and Growing: People and Skills' SPF priority, which seeks to support the provision of quality learning and training that enables people of all ages to fulfil their potential, both personally and professionally. The

objective of the Fund was to delivery on Denbighshire’s mission to provide quality employability support that enables this aim to be achieved.

## **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. Note that the logic model was developed prior to the establishment of the People and Skills Fund, meaning that it encompasses only the Prosperous Denbighshire and Collaboration Fund business support projects.

**Figure 2.1: Supporting Local Business Denbighshire 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 across the three strands of activity.

**Figure 2.2: Planned outputs**

Output indicator	Target
Enterprises receiving grants	110
Enterprises receiving non-financial support	180 (100/75/5)
Potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	30
Decarbonisation plans developed	40
Economically inactive people engaged with support services	50
People accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment	150
People supported to access basic skills courses	250
People supported to engage in life skills	250
People supported to participate in education	100

*Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025*

**Figure 2.3: Planned outcomes**

Outcome indicator	Target
Jobs created	25
Jobs safeguarded	25
New enterprises	25
New or improved products or services	50
Adoption of new technologies or processes	75 (50/25)
People engaged in life skills support following interventions	150
People gaining qualifications, licences and skills	150
Active or sustained participants in community groups	100
People engaging with mainstream healthcare services	10
People in supported employment	250

*Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025*

## Project budget

The project was awarded £2,322,984 in SPF funding. Figure 2.4 outlines how the planned project budget was allocated.

**Figure 2.4: Denbighshire Supporting Local Business Key Fund project budget**

<b>Cost</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Grants – Prosperous Denbighshire	£1,342,500
Grants – Business Collaboration Fund	£267,792
Project delivery – staff costs	£108,000
Project management, administration and evaluation	£83,692
Marketing and publicity	£20,000
Overheads – accommodation	£59,000
People and Skills Fund	£420,000
Evaluation	£22,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,322,984</b>

*Source: SPF Claim Form, August 2024*

### 3. Project delivery

Cadwyn Clwyd managed and strategically coordinated the project delivery, collaborating closely with Denbighshire's Business Support team for both strategic and operational input. Additional capacity was provided through sub-contracting promotion and the collation of case studies. Unfortunately, the primary officer responsible for the project had to take long-term sickness leave towards the end of the summer, and another officer took on this role.

#### Prosperous Denbighshire Fund

Interviews with the Denbighshire Officers demonstrated their commitment to the process and an appreciation of the opportunity to contribute to the project. They also provided valuable insight into the Local Authority's priorities, including sectors, spatial focus and types of investment. It was evident that the team were passionate about the Fund and had applied significant time and resources to ensure that all aspects of the management, delivery and promotion of the project were in place.

#### Promotion

Bilingual digital and physical flyers were developed to promote the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund. These were shared with key stakeholders for distribution amongst their networks, such as Business Wales, Denbighshire County Council, DVSC, the Federation of Small Businesses, Bank of Wales, and more. Flyers and information about the Fund were also shared via social media (Instagram, Facebook, X and LinkedIn) and the Cadwyn Clwyd website. As the project progressed, press releases to local media and case studies of approved projects were used to further promote the Fund.

During January to April 2024 the project officers held 16 drop-in sessions throughout the county, with over 80 businesses attending:

- January: Corwen, Ruthin, Clawddnewydd & Prestayn
- February: Llanarmon-yn-Ial, Denbigh, St Asaph, Llangollen
- March: Rhyl, Prestatyn, Ruthin, Llangollen, Denbigh
- April: Colomendy, St Asaph, Ruthin.

Project officers also attended external stakeholder business events and roadshows to disseminate information about the Fund.

When asked during interviews where they had heard about the funding, grant recipients most commonly cited:

- Previous awareness of or relationship with Cadwyn Clwyd
- Social media/websites
- Word of mouth.

A small number could not recall where they had originally heard of the grant opportunity.

The number of grants awarded suggests that promotion of the fund was effective. Although there was some concern about uptake during the early months of the project, the varied and ongoing promotion of the Fund ensured a significant uplift in interest and applications before the final deadline in June 2024.



## Grant management process

Applicants were required to submit initial Expressions of Interest (EOIs) online (this first phase was phased out early on due to duplication, and Cadwyn Clwyd invited applicants to go straight to completing the online application form). A grants panel was established involving members of Cadwyn Clwyd and Denbighshire County Council. The panel met monthly.

Full applications, including supporting documentation, were reviewed by a Cadwyn Clwyd project officer to ensure the application fit the criteria, costs were eligible and all supporting documents had been uploaded to Submit. Full applications were then reviewed by the grant panel. Members of the panel scored each application individually, against the following criteria:

- Innovation
- Economic benefit
- Delivery of outcomes
- Value for money.

After scoring the applications the individual scores were brought together and considered by the panel and a consensus was reached on a score. This provided a balanced and transparent process for deliberating on each application.

A lot of time was spent working with business applicants to develop their applications and subsequently supporting them in the delivery of the projects. From the team's perspective this was felt to be a valuable use of their time and offered an opportunity to engage with the businesses, getting an understanding of their needs and concerns in the process.

Feedback from stakeholders and scrutiny of grant panel minutes indicates that the panel was effective and that a pragmatic and positive relationship was established between officers of Denbighshire County Council and Cadwyn Clwyd.

## Reasons for applying

During evaluation interviews, there were a wide variety of reasons noted by beneficiaries for applying for the grant support. These covered three main areas:

- **Business growth:** market opportunity, trialling/testing, professionalism of the business (reputation improvements), and innovation/diversification.
- **Efficiency:** Increasing capacity, cost reduction, energy saving and upgrades.
- **Financial:** Affordability, risk reduction, philanthropic/social, sustainability/net zero and delivering wider social benefits.

It is clear from the consultations that in many instances, the reason for investing in low carbon and environmental solutions was motivated by both the desire to adopt greener practices for ethical reasons and the goal of reducing overheads to enhance the business's financial performance.

***"Energy costs are a massive issue for us, and this provided the solution for us. We also got funding for a vinyl cutter which allows us to produce our own vinyl stickers for both retail and trade."***

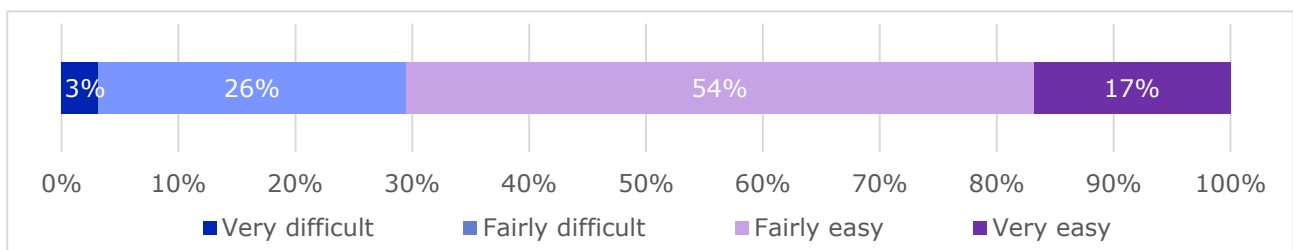
***"Promoting the green lifestyle and the solar panel system presents a positive picture and makes the business look good."***

A key feature noted by some business respondents was the flexible nature of the grant programme, with a wide range of sectors and types of expenditure included. Several interviewees noted that the grant was the first they had ever received or been eligible for.

### **Perceptions of the process**

As shown in Figure 3.1, the survey of grant recipients highlighted mixed views about how they found the application process. Of the 95 respondents, a majority found the process either 'very easy' (17%) or 'fairly easy' (54%). However, a considerable minority stated that they found the application process either 'fairly difficult' (26%) or 'very difficult' (3%).

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



Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipient survey, December 2024 (n=95)

Similarly, interviewees provided mixed responses when asked about the application and award process. On the positive side, a number were complementary about the ease and efficacy of the process, including the following comments:

***"First time I've applied for funding. Very easy to follow and I didn't get any issues with it."***

***"The process was clever, and it impressed me."***

In some instances, respondents' positive perceptions of the process were reinforced by the support provided by Cadwyn Clwyd staff.

***"Cadwyn Clwyd were excellent. I had never applied before, and the process was quite complicated, but [Cadwyn Clwyd Project Officer] provided support that went above and beyond the call of duty."***

***"[Cadwyn Clwyd Project Officers] ... were fantastic. I would give them 20 out of 10. I wouldn't have carried on the process without them."***

On a more critical note, some felt that the process was over-complicated and repetitive.

***"The forms are very repetitive. It might be useful for some businesses to differentiate, but many of the questions we were entering were the same information in different formats. This is wasting everyone's time."***

There appears to be a correlation between the grant value and the perception of the process. Specifically, processes involving lower grant levels were perceived as more cumbersome and complicated.

***"So long-winded, and I dedicated hours/days to it. Only applying for £4,000 so got to the point where the amount of time I put in didn't justify the money received. May have been better to just spend that time working on projects and getting revenue to then buy the equipment."***

The limited time-frame available to apply for the grant and to implement a project caused consternation for some, most especially those who applied for the grant towards the latter stages of the scheme.

Two other important points to make:

- A small number of respondents noted that they had not been aware that expenditure would have to be defrayed before a claim could be submitted. This indicates some misunderstanding by grantees, as Cadwyn Clwyd staff confirmed that this was clearly documented in the Guidance Notes and also communicated by the project officer.
- Two respondents also highlighted the fact that they were dyslexic and therefore found the form filling difficult. Project officers confirmed that once they were made aware of grantee's dyslexia, additional help was provided with form filling and collating information and communicated via the telephone (rather than emails) to ensure the applications / claims were submitted. They said that there is also additional support available from Business Wales.

### **Support from Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales**

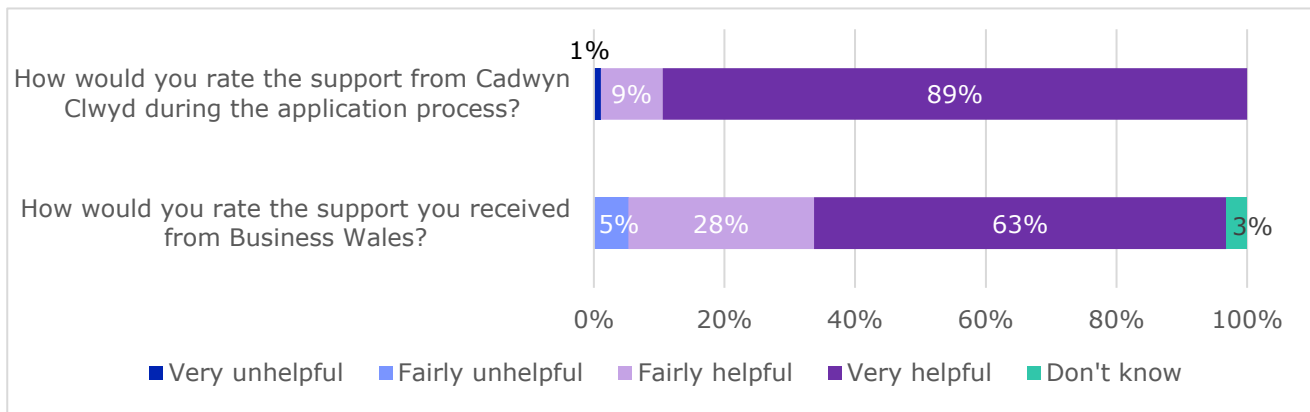
During the application process and following award of the grant, advice and practical support was provided by Cadwyn Clwyd staff as well as Business Wales. Feedback gathered in relation to the support received during both the application process and once a grant had been approved reflect extremely well on Cadwyn Clwyd's staff, and, to a lesser extent, the support received from Business Wales.

A clear message that emerged from interviews with grant beneficiaries was the dedication of Cadwyn Clwyd staff throughout the process. Many of those interviewed lauded the efforts of project officers, and in some instances adamantly stated that a project would not have proceeded were it not for the handholding, advice and support provided.

In survey responses, almost all respondents (89%) rated the support from Cadwyn Clwyd as 'very helpful', whilst this dropped to around two-thirds (63%) when asked about the support from Business Wales.

Nonetheless, feedback from some of the beneficiaries suggest that Business Wales' advisors proved effective in complementing Cadwyn Clwyd's support for grantees during the delivery period, offering advice on business planning, forecasting and policy development.

**Figure 3.2: Perceptions of the support**



Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant recipient survey, December 2024 (n=95)

A few examples of positive comments about the support provided are shown below.

***"[Cadwyn Clwyd Project Officer] came back very quickly on queries."***

***"Excellent support from [Cadwyn Clwyd Project Officer] - very knowledgeable and helpful. Would respond straightaway to emails and was happy to talk me through questions and issues."***

***"Cadwyn Clwyd were always available via phone and email and were quite responsive."***

***"Business Wales helped with the business plan, which contained a business strategy and reasons for why we should be given the funding."***

### **Suggestions for improvement**

When asked about suggestions for improvement, interviewees offered a range of comments. The general categories of comments were:

- Funding amounts (larger and smaller).
- Advice on energy and net zero solutions.
- Improvements to the online process.
- Simplification of the process.
- Better promotion.
- Longer window to apply for funding.
- No changes required.

***"I was looking at funding for the future - nice to have accessibility for smaller amounts."***

***"Perhaps simplify the process, to reduce the need to rely on the team at Cadwyn Clwyd."***

***"Funding windows are too limited, I only just managed to get my investment in place. Rushing encourages poor decisions and poor results."***

## Outputs

A total of 99 grants were awarded, against a target of 110 (114 grants were approved at panel, however 15 of those decided not to proceed with delivery for various reasons). This includes 21 grants to support decarbonisation and 3 to support social enterprises. This slightly below target performance was the result of a higher number of larger grants being awarded than planned. A key issue of concern initially was the take up of the projects. The pattern of uptake led to a decision to change the profile of funding, with the level of funding allocated to the micro-fund reduced, and the larger grant increased. The target number of social enterprises was also reduced from 25 to 5.

**Table 3.1: Prosperous Denbighshire Fund - Target outputs and actuals**

Output	Target	Actuals
Enterprises receiving grants	110	99

*Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims, February 2025*

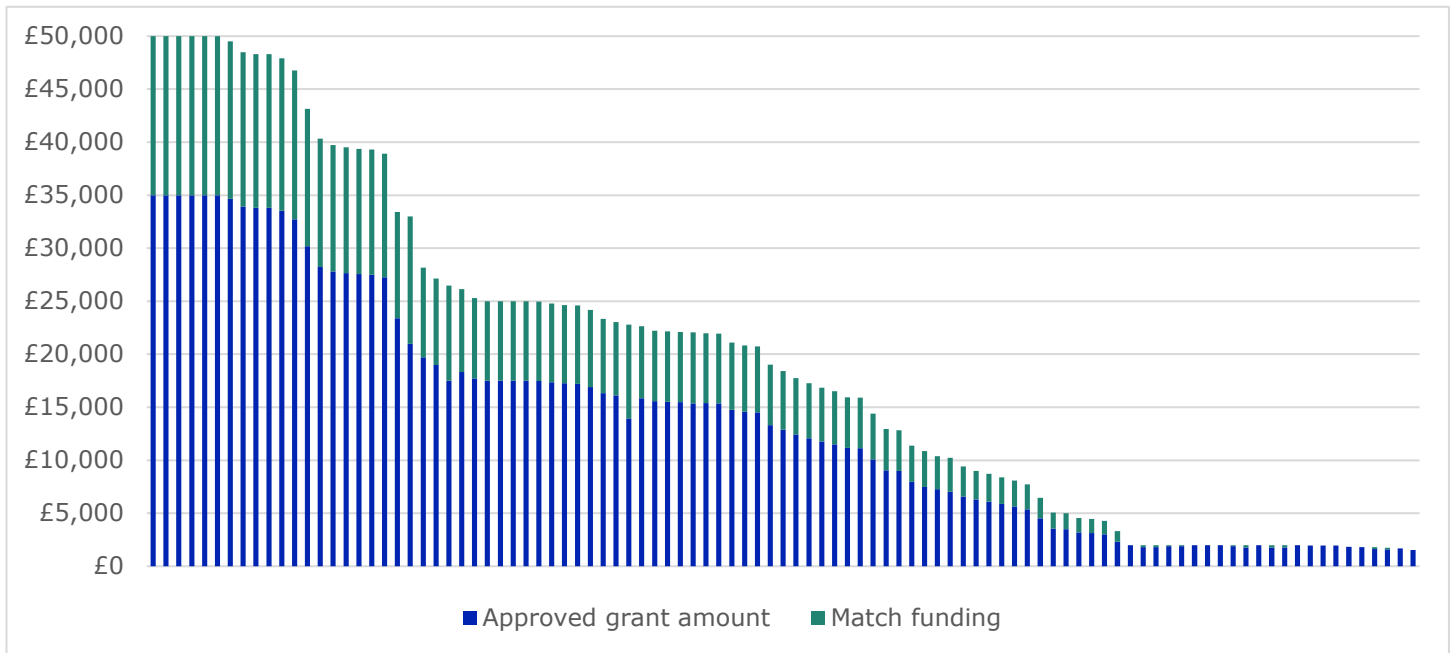
As shown in Table 3.2, a total of £1,314,858 was awarded to businesses through the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund, with £572,486 match funding secured. Figure 3.3 shows the distribution of grants by value and match funding.

**Table 3.2: Prosperous Denbighshire Fund – Budget analysis**

	Amount
Total amount awarded	£1,314,858
Match funding secured	£572,486
Average grant	£13,281
Number of grants under £2,000	24
Number of maximum grants approved	5

*Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims, February 2025*

**Figure 3.3: Distribution of grants by value and match funding**



Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claim form February 2025

## Collaboration Fund

The four Collaboration Projects supported were:

- New Horizons – Colomendy Industrial Estate Net Zero Project.
- Denbighshire Business Club.
- Llangollen Business Event Coordinator.
- Discover Denbigh.

Cadwyn Clwyd developed specifications for the projects based on dialogue with stakeholders about local business needs. They subsequently managed the tendering and recruitment process for selecting organisations/individuals to deliver the projects.

A key challenge identified by stakeholders was developing tangible projects for the Collaboration Fund.

### New Horizons – Colomendy Industrial Estate Net Zero

This was a standout project. Delivered by One Earth Education, it involved the establishment of a decarbonisation hub on the Colomendy industrial estate in Denbigh. In total, 40 businesses engaged with the support on offer, which included:

- Individual business carbon footprint assessments and a carbon assessment of the whole estate.
- 14 custom-built training modules, plus bespoke modules for each business, based on their carbon footprint assessment.
- A webinar series, covering topics such as renewable energy and recycling regulations.
- One-to-one consultancy, to support businesses to develop carbon reduction plans.
- Signposting and support with accessing sources of funding, including the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund.

- Networking events and drop-in sessions.

Across the 40 businesses engaged, 256 individuals received training. The project also supported 12 grant applications, nine of which were successful in securing a total of £338,457 worth of funding for renewable energy installation.

Survey feedback from businesses was overwhelmingly positive about the support provided. Of the 23 respondents, all had completed a baseline carbon footprint assessment and received a bespoke toolkit, with 22/23 reporting that this was 'very helpful'.

Of those who received one-to-one consultancy support around developing a carbon reduction plan, all found this 'very helpful' and 13/16 felt the resulting carbon reduction plan was 'very feasible', whilst three thought it to be 'somewhat feasible'.

Some businesses also reported engagement with the online sustainability training and project webinars, attending in person networking events, receiving technical support with renewable energy installation and support with accessing sources of funding. Equally positive feedback was received on these elements of the support.

***"It was good to have a focus on the employers within Colomendy Industrial Estate, who provide a huge contribution to employments within Denbigh. One Earth provided a collaborative platform for companies to get together. We would appreciate more of this."***

***"Very satisfied - really enjoyed the webinars. We would never have been able to afford this service without funding."***

***"We are really happy with how it has gone. The training was really useful and helpful and better than previous carbon literacy training we have done. We are looking forward to building on what we have done next year."***

Delivery challenges included:

- **Barriers to business engagement:** Many businesses struggled with having the time to engage with the project. Some were also reluctant to engage for fear of being seen to be 'greenwashing' or being exposed as a large emitter (assurances that the carbon reduction report would be anonymised helped to overcome this latter barrier).
- **Budget:** The time and effort put into the project went well above the amount of funding received. This was tolerated due to the project being a pilot but would likely be a significant barrier to the sustainability of any similar projects in the future.

Enablers to the success of the project were:

- **One Earth Education being based on the industrial estate:** This proved to be a key enabler. Regular, in person contact with businesses not only helped to secure engagement but also with mapping and understanding what businesses were even on the estate to begin with.
- **Persistence:** Visiting businesses multiple times and becoming a familiar face around the estate was key to securing engagement.

- **Snowball effect and word of mouth:** Businesses speaking with others about how they had engaged with the project and seeing the visible outcomes of the support, such as solar panel installation.
- **Flexibility of the offer:** Offering a range of services, meaning support could be tailored to business need.

### Denbighshire Business Club

The Denbighshire Business Club was run by Town Square Group, with two project officers based at Costigans Coworking Space in Rhyl.

The Business Club was predicated on a similar project run by Town Square in Caerphilly. The Caerphilly project has been going 5-6 years and has a significant membership with networking and associated events such as business awards and expos. The aim was to do something similar to Caerphilly in Denbighshire, with a focus on spreading activity across the county.

Key activities of the Business Club were:

- 3-months' free membership at Costigan's Coworking Space in Rhyl.
- Workshops on topics such as marketing, finance and social media. These were a mixture of online and in-person format, with between 2 – 10 attendees per workshop.
- Breakfast networking events at venues across Denbighshire.
- A Start-up Hub, involving 6 week or 2-day condensed courses for local entrepreneurs. Four courses were delivered, with a total of 41 entrepreneurs supported (from an initial target of 30).
- A business expo at Llangollen Pavillion.

The Business Club had 188 signups and engaged 267 individuals (some individuals participated in events without signing up to the Business Club).

A range of different types of businesses engaged, including sole traders, CICs, small and large businesses and social enterprises. These were from a variety of sectors including retail, professional services, property and the creative industries.

Based on data collected by the project at sign-up, the main reason businesses joined the Club was to receive support and advice around specific topics such as bookkeeping, marketing, exporting, finance or social media. Stakeholders also commented that there are limited other networking opportunities available in the county, aside from more structured and formal organisations like the Chambers of Commerce.

Key challenges included:

- **Delivering activities around the county** – business owners wanted events in their area, but it was a challenge then getting others to attend from around the county, to have a sufficient volume of attendees to make the networking event worthwhile.
- **Tight timescales** – with funding approved in April, the project had just 9 months to establish the club and deliver the planned activity. Whilst the team got things off the ground very quickly, the timescales did not offer a substantial lead in time to generate interest in the Club, with the added challenge of business engagement then dipping over the summer

Enablers to engaging businesses included:



- The free membership and low-cost events meant that it was not a significant commitment for businesses to engage.
- Being linked to the co-working base at Costigans, as local businesses were already familiar with the space and activities.

The networking breakfasts were viewed by stakeholders as particularly successful and Town Square plan to continue these events on a bi-monthly basis following completion of the project. They are also looking at options for how the council could support the Business Club going forward.

***"I've been able to make a couple of good contacts which would never have happened otherwise - I'm keen to be able to continue to make these types of contacts."***

### **Llangollen Business Event Coordinator**

This project involved business coordination, volunteer recruitment and management, event sponsorship, and business collaboration. The £29,200 budget was fully expended, including Coordinator Salary, volunteer support, promotional materials and event logistics.

The project has successfully established itself and gained momentum, benefiting the town and business community. It has also created a strong foundation for collaboration, sponsorships, and volunteer engagement. Learnings suggest a longer-term approach could further embed change.

Over 30 enterprises have been assisted, in addition to 61 volunteers recruited and 12 volunteer groups engaged. Key business collaborations include the Llangollen Food Festival, and Fringe Festival. The project has built ongoing relationships with major brands, with consideration for expanded sponsorship in 2025.

Challenges included:

- The impact of the economic climate, with post-pandemic recovery still visible.
- The rising cost of living affecting sponsorship opportunities.

Key enablers for successful delivery were:

- Strong coordination from the steering group, with adaptive festival support.
- Business and community engagement, with notably improved collaboration between businesses and events.

### **Discover Denbigh**

This work focused on two strands of activity: the development of a new online presence to promote Denbigh as a destination, and the coordination of efforts to bring businesses and organisations together to drive the project forward, including a legacy funding strategy

The project encountered barriers to progress, influenced by the following challenges:

- There was a lack of clarity around the need for the project and its longer-term sustainability. There were also different interpretations of the project and its focus amongst steering group members, as well as mixed perspectives on project necessity from stakeholders.

- There was no legal entity or corporate body in place to lead, which in turn led to varied priorities and potential conflicts of interest. The project also suffered from a lack of information sharing.
- Volunteer engagement in the initial stages of the project was limited.
- External dynamics were also a challenge, with delayed engagement from the town council and uncertainty about the future of the Denbigh Business Group (DBG), who were a key protagonist in driving the project forward.

Positive developments:

- After initial challenges with volunteer recruitment, the project did engage enthusiastic volunteers committed to the town’s success. There is evidently an active voluntary sector in Denbigh, with engaged tour guides. A Denbigh Volunteer Opportunities Facebook group has also been created.
- Strong content potential has been developed for website updates.
- The project ultimately delivered its targets and actions despite initial delays and challenges.

Overall, there is a definite demand for a centralised information hub for the town, but there appears to be no tangible willingness from anyone to fund or maintain it. Marketing is seen as beneficial but, given the extent to which small businesses are struggling, a more defined return on investment is required to secure engagement. There is also a definite divide between Upper and Lower Denbigh, although web-based resources may bridge this gap.

## People and Skills Fund

### Project selection

The following 8 projects were selected for funding (funded organisation and name of project):

- Bryntysilio - **Confident Denbighshire**
- Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLLM) - **Camau Cefnogol/Supportive Actions**
- North Wales Tourism Ltd (NWT) - **NWT & Hospitality Academy (Denbighshire)**
- RCS Wales - **Work Well Denbighshire**
- ReSource Denbighshire CIC – **Aspire/Dyheu**
- Rhyl Sea Cadets - **Rhyl Sea Cadets**
- Stepping Stones North Wales - **Next Steps**
- Woodland Skills Centre - **Renewing Green**

Projects’ planned coverage ranged from confidence building and skills development for all groups, through to those targeting specific groups such as 16-18 year-olds transitioning to college, people with learning disabilities and survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Table 3.3). Methods of support range from training, mentoring to therapies such as counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). The total value of all projects was £377,970 with a range from £2,500 to £186,792.

**Table 3.3: Key characteristics of projects**

Project	No. planned economically	Age groups	Description	Planned value
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	inactive people			
Bryntysilio	40	16+	Confidence and skills-building through residential outdoor adventurous activities	£186,792
GLLM	116	16-18	Mentoring support for young people transitioning into further education	£68,200
NWT	22	16+	Four-day tourism and hospitality course to give participants sector knowledge and skills	£23,550
RCS Wales	20	16+	Counselling and CBT for people facing mental health barriers to employment	£18,863
ReSource	10	16+	Work placement in community settings for people with learning disabilities	£40,597
Sea Cadets	4	16+	Volunteer training from first aid to water sports	£2,500
Stepping Stones	50	18+	Adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse	£14,000
Woodland	24	16+	People with health/ wellbeing and confidence/ self-esteem needs in woodlands environment	£23,468

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025

## Overall delivery

Given the relatively short timescales for delivery, the projects on the whole have performed well in achieving the overall Fund targets. The full project budget was allocated. A small underspend was also allocated at late notice to one project to maximise delivery. Overall, spending was £377,614.73, a slight underspend of £356.49.

Fund level performance against outputs targets is presented in Table 3.4. The headline targets for engagement of economically inactive individuals and supporting them in education and learning were massively over-achieved.

Despite some individual projects focusing on aspects of mental health and people with additional skills needs, the overall fund struggled to achieve the targets around people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment and the number of people supported to access basic skills.

**Table 3.4: People and Skills Fund performance against output targets**

Output	DCC Targets	Total Claimed
Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	50	325
Number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment	150	55
Number of people supported to access basic skills	250	91
Number of people supported to engage in life skills	250	213
Number of people supported to participate in education	100	249

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025

## Reflections on delivery

Project teams provided the following feedback on the management of the fund:

- The Cadwyn Clwyd team was complimented for their support and encouragement during the project set-up, delivery and closure stages.
- The simple change request process was described as being helpful.

Some of the challenges faced by many projects included:

- Timescale challenges – projects had a limited delivery window once their funding was approved.
- The online claim portal system was reported to have some glitches.
- Projects found it challenging to obtain participant declarations to evidence outcomes and outputs. Some smaller organisations with less experience of funding systems like SPF were learning about the need to make plans for collection of destination information, as participants moved on following support.

Other general challenges included that some projects were concerned about over-programming or allocating beyond their budget (including risks of a surge in demand and subsequent participant disappointment) and so found it hard to hit a specific target. This was harder for projects that had higher variable costs.

For example, with training courses where fixed costs enable increased numbers to be spread with limited increase in marginal costs (such as the NWT project) then it was possible to over-recruit. However, the RCS project involved higher marginal costs (professional counselling fees) for every additional participant, which limited potential over-recruitment. In this instance they were also concerns about the effects on clients and their reputation if they recruit too many and had to let vulnerable people down. There may be need for a triage stage that makes room for decision-making on a given project with an alternative course of action if numbers are achieved.

Lessons learnt around fund management for Cadwyn Clwyd included potentially counselling projects about over-estimating the range of outputs and outcomes that they are be able to achieve. Although timescales in this instance would not allow this, a discussion around project logic and key focus might have highlighted this to help them revise and focus on their critical outcomes.

## 4. Outcomes & impact

### Business support projects

#### Progress against outcome targets

The table below demonstrates the overall outcomes achieved across the Prosperous Denbighshire and Collaboration Fund projects.

**Table 4.1: Support Denbighshire Businesses project outcome targets and actuals**

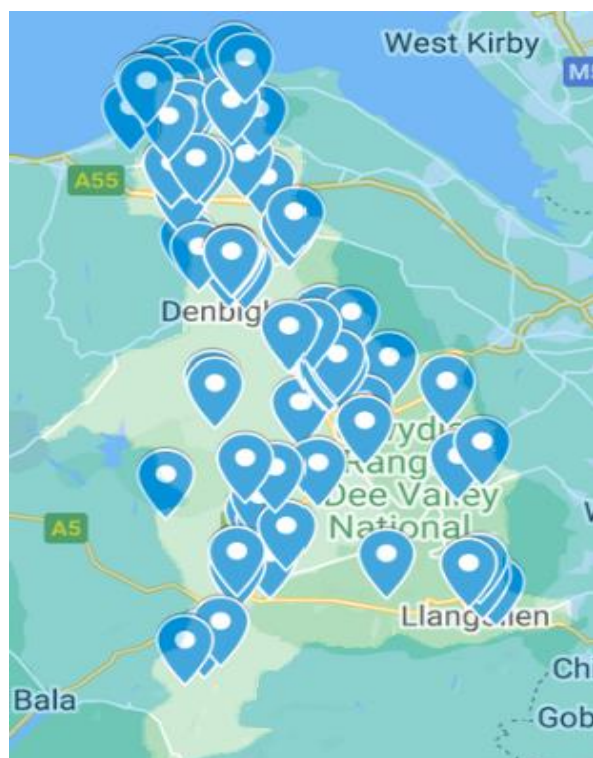
Outcome	Targets	Actuals
Jobs created	25	40
Jobs safeguarded	25	249
Enterprises created	25	25
Enterprises adopting new or improved produced or services	75	72
Enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	50	77

Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims, February 2025

#### Geographic and sector impact

The delivery of the project demonstrated a high degree of geographic equity, as shown by the graphic below. The graphic is based on the postcode of each business supported. As can be seen the distribution of grants is evenly spread across the county.

**Figure 4.1: Distribution of grants across Denbighshire**



Source: Cadwyn Clwyd analysis of grant claims

The table below shows the distribution of projects on a settlement basis, both in terms of the number of grants, and the value of grant provided.

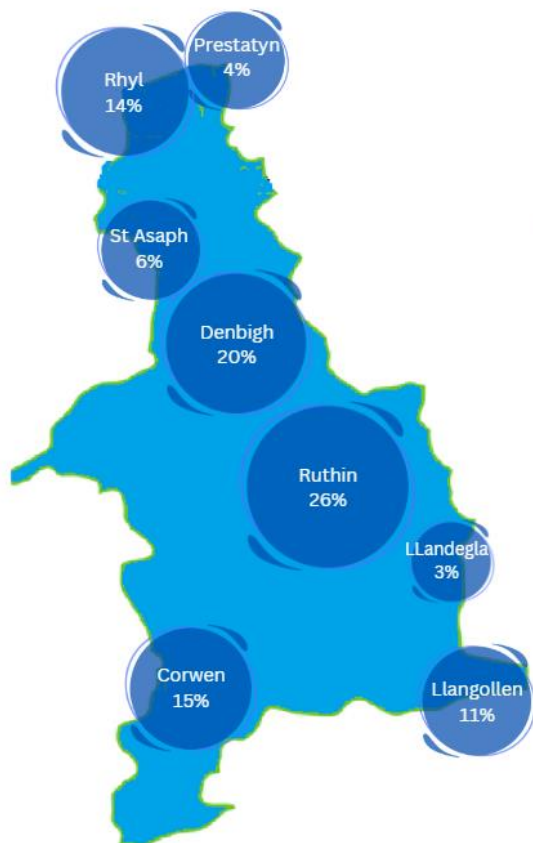
**Table 4.2: Distribution of grants by settlement**

Settlement	Number of grants	%	Value of grants	%
Corwen	15	15%	£276,273	21%
Denbigh	20	20%	£380,697	29%
Llandegla	3	3%	£40,832	3%
Llangollen	11	11%	£152,800	12%
Prestatyn	4	4%	£23,140	2%
Rhyl	14	14%	£127,591	10%
Ruthin	26	26%	£230,265	18%
St Asaph	6	6%	£83,257	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£1,314,858</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims, February 2025

Figure 4.2 is based on Table 4.2 above and highlights the distribution of grant awards by settlement. It also shows the split between the coastal areas and rural hinterland (24% coastal, 76% rural).

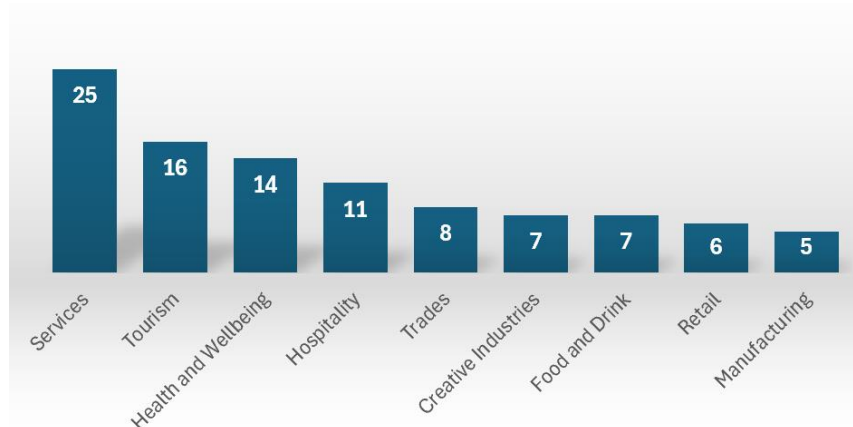
**Figure 4.2: Distribution of grants by settlement**



Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims, February 2025

As noted earlier in the report, the projects were assigned specific sectors created by Cadwyn Clwyd. These do not necessarily align with the definition of sectors traditionally utilised by the public sector. Nevertheless, they provide a useful overview of the type of businesses which have benefitted from the grant.

**Figure 4.3: Sector distribution of grants**

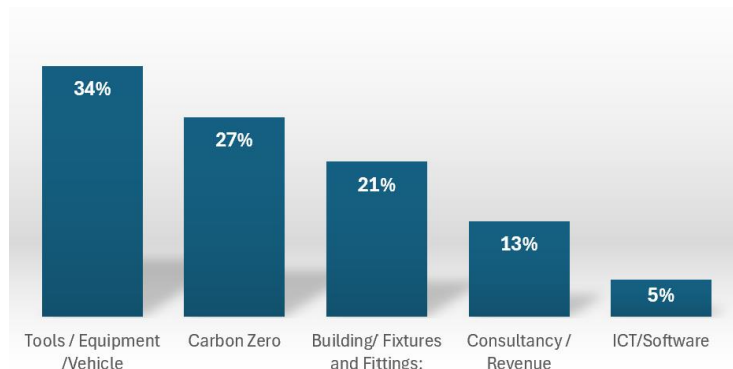


Source: Prosperous Denbighshire grant claims February 2025

As can be seen from the above, the majority of funding falls into traditional hospitality and service industries, with 5% going to manufacturing businesses. According to data from Denbighshire the manufacturing sector is responsible for some 9% of employment across the county, but typically employs more people than other sectors, therefore the percentage of individual businesses is likely to be significantly lower than the percentage of those employed.

The management information collected by Cadwyn Clwyd also offers an insight into the type of investment made using the grant funding, as shown in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4: Distribution of grants by project type**



### Benefits and impacts

Undertaking a final evaluation of a grant programme whilst final claims are still being submitted and projects only now coming to an end in terms of investment will never capture all the economic benefits that will likely accrue.

Several tourist and service industry projects made during 2024 were in anticipation of the 2025 market. More tangible benefits and potential job creation opportunities will undoubtedly emerge during this year.

Similarly, several of the investments made were focused on net-zero solutions and lowering overhead costs. Some of these projects were still in the process of being completed during the evaluation, and the evidence of the benefits will be easier to measure in 6-12 months' time (and even beyond). Nevertheless, there is some early evidence to suggest that businesses who have implemented such measures are already feeling the benefit, with significant reductions in monthly energy bills.

Nonetheless, interviewees identified discernible benefits of the grant funding, including:

- Efficiency gains.
- Improved image and perception of the business.
- Increased capacity.
- New markets reached.
- Raised profile.

These benefits had led to, or were expected to lead to, a range of impacts of the businesses. These included:

- Reduced energy costs.
- Increased trade.
- Local supply chain opportunities.
- Expansion of the business.
- Job creation and/or the safeguarding of existing jobs.
- Improved productivity.

A few respondents said that it was too early to determine the actual impact of the grant investment. Some pertinent quotes are offered below:

***"The profile of being a net zero appeals to some of customers. A lot of windfarms around that reinforces the notion of renewables - can't do this in the rural areas."***

***"Huge difference in energy costs December 2022 electricity bill was £600.00. December 2023 was £164.00. Expected to be even less this year."***

***"The electricity bills are lower. On a sunny day, 65% of the electricity in the daytime is from the solar panel system."***

### **Outcomes in the absence of the support**

There was evidently a clear need for the grant funding within the Denbighshire business community. Feedback gathered through surveys and interviews suggests the funding was highly valued by the participating businesses, with survey respondents rating the value of the funding to their organisation as either 'very important' (92%) or 'fairly important' (6%).

Interview feedback from beneficiaries suggested that the absence of grant funding would have had varying impacts, including projects:



- Not proceeding.
- Progressing at a slower pace.
- Being delivered at a lower level or quality.
- Funded with more risky loan investment.

***"I likely wouldn't have invested at this point."***

***"Investment would have progressed at a much slower pace."***

Together, these findings suggest a high level of additionality and that the project filled a clear gap in funding availability for businesses in Denbighshire.

### **Cross-cutting themes**

The Fund asked applicants to demonstrate their commitment to the three cross-cutting themes of Net-Zero, Welsh language and Equal Opportunities. Most businesses have demonstrable commitments to the net-zero agenda, reflected in the number of projects with a low carbon/energy focus. Of the Prosperous Denbighshire grants awarded, 22 supported direct net zero improvements such as solar panels, electric vehicle charging points or battery storage. A further 11 supported indirect net zero improvements, through improved energy efficiency measures.

The projects also complemented each other with regards to progress towards net zero, with The Colomendy (New Horizons) Net Zero Collaboration Project supporting promotion of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund across the industrial estates. This enabled nine businesses to access grants for renewable energy who otherwise would not have known about the funding. Further detail on the outcomes generated through the Colomendy Net Zero Collaboration Project are detailed below.

However, Equal Opportunities and the Welsh language were less clear, with many of those interviewed finding it difficult to articulate fully how they were considering or implementing measures to support the two themes. There were notable exceptions, but overall, it was felt to be an afterthought. More guidance and support on not only implementing measures to address the issues, but also better defining the benefits to businesses would be beneficial in any future project.

## Colomendy Net Zero Collaboration Project – outcomes

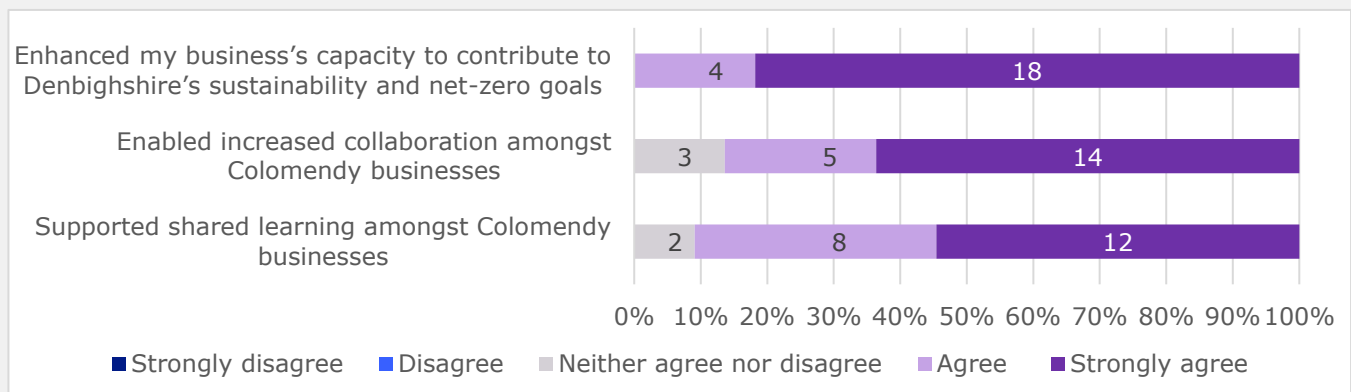
- Projected measurable reductions in CO2 emissions as a result of renewable energy installed: 147.43 tCO2e over the next year with an estimated £49,565 in savings and 737.17 tCO2e over 5 years with an estimated £248,283 in savings.
- Businesses installing renewable energy estimated that 78 jobs had been safeguarded as a result. Several highlighted that they had previously had to make redundancies due to energy prices rises in recent years.
- Many businesses had previously not reported on or reflected on their carbon emissions. The support therefore played a critical role in educating businesses on effective data gathering and reporting practices.
- The project has provided a successful, replicable model of decarbonisation support to use in other industrial zones.

Examples of individual, business-level outcomes included businesses using a shared office space on the estate now working together on a collective net zero policy. One business included the understanding of their carbon impact gained through the project as part of their sustainability week programme. Others have introduced new recycling plans or assigned staff members to a 'green team'.

***"One Earth Education came to us with the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund proposal, which made us think about taking steps towards becoming greener, something we hadn't given much thought before. We hadn't looked in to installing solar panels in much detail before but thought the fund would be really beneficial to our business. The fund helped us take a huge step towards our transition to net zero. Without this funding it may have taken us 5-10 years longer to get started on our greener journey."*** – Colomendy Net Zero Project participant

Survey feedback from businesses also highlights perceptions of outcomes achieved as a result of the project, as shown in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.5: The Colomendy Net Zero project has...**



Source: York Consulting survey of project beneficiaries, November 2024 (n=22)

## People and Skills Fund

The People and Skills Fund generally performed well against outcome targets. Targets for the numbers of people engaged in life skills support following interventions were overachieved, and the number of people in education/training following the support was exceeded by a large margin. In addition, the project supported some individuals into supported employment where no target was initially set for this outcome.

The project was considerable under target in relation to the number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services.

**Table 4.3: People and Skills Fund target outcomes and actuals**

Outcome	DCC Targets	Total Claimed
Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	150	186
Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills	150	97
Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support	100	85
Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	250	96
Number of people in education/training following support	10	209
Number of people in supported employment	0	19

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025

### Project level outcomes

#### *Bryntysilio - Confident Denbighshire*

The project performed well in terms of engaging economically inactive people and progressing people into education/training following support. It struggled with progressing participants into healthcare and supported employment. It generally achieved 75% or more of the remaining targets.

Progress in participants' perceived confidence was evidenced through use of a longitudinal survey before (3.9 out of 10), after 12 days (8.2) and after 3 months (8.8). This is further demonstrated by some participants who have a clearer perspective on their future including one who is applying to the police. Engaging a younger group proved hard due to the limited timescales.

#### *Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLLM) - Camau Cefnogol/Supportive Actions*

The project performed well in terms of exceeding targets for engaging economically inactive people and progressing people into education/training following support. It nearly met all other targets around engagement with life skills support and mainstream healthcare support.

#### *North Wales Tourism Ltd (NWT) - NWT & Hospitality Academy (Denbighshire)*

The project performed well in terms of exceeding all targets including engaging economically inactive people (55 against a target of 22), supporting people to participate in education (29 against a target of 22), supporting people to gain qualifications, licences and skills (25 having

had no explicit target) and progressing people into supported employment (12 having had no explicit target).

#### *RCS Wales - Work Well Denbighshire*

The project achieved 13 out of 20 for the main target of engaging economically inactive people. However, they came close or exceeded the targets for people engaged in life skills support following the intervention, numbers of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support, people engaging with mainstream healthcare services and people in education/training following support. They were less successful with numbers of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment, which may be related to the lower overall numbers of the project.

#### *ReSource Denbighshire CIC – Aspire/Dyheu*

The project surpassed its target of 10 achieving the engagement of 13 economically inactive people. All participants achieved all other targets except the ambition of 5 people moving into supported employment.

Individual outcomes included wellbeing, confidence, empowerment. Additional outcomes for participants are described in Table 4.4, including longer-term ambitions that the project helped them move closer to achieving.

**Table 4.4: Additional Work Well Denbighshire outcomes**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Desired outcome in the future</b>
<b>1</b> ASDAN Expressive arts and Upcycling (Llandrillo)	Paid placement at shop ongoing
<b>2</b> Food Hygiene, Café Volunteer Placement with Key Worker Debbie	Paid placement at Café ongoing
<b>3</b> ASDAN History, Metal Detecting and Upcycling (Llandrillo)	Upskilling and more confidence, having fun, feeling valued.
<b>4</b> Volunteer placement at Cae Dai Gardens and Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Placement at gardens ongoing
<b>5</b> Volunteer placement at Cae Dai Gardens and Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Upskilling and more confidence and aiding recovery.
<b>6</b> Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Upskilling
<b>7</b> Woodland Skills and Health and Safety and Upcycling	Further placement with Woodland skills
<b>8</b> Health and Safety 3 Day qualification	NEBOSH Occupational Health and Safety, moving towards employment at Gardens
<b>9</b> Fundamentals of Professional Cleaning	Paid placement at Shop ongoing
<b>10</b> ASDAN Gardening, Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Upskilling and more confidence, having fun

<b>11</b>	Eternal Media Filming Course	Following passions and possible role as media promoter at Resource
<b>12</b>	PEER MENTOR (support people) Workplace Wellbeing champions Mental Health first AID	No outcome specified.
<b>13</b>	PEER MENTOR (Teach and pass on skills) Level 2 Introduction to Communication Skills for Counselling, Coaching & Mentoring	Teaching BSL and Photography to Volunteers

### *Rhyl Sea Cadets*

There is no evidence of outcomes or outputs against this project.

### *Stepping Stones North Wales - Next Steps*

The project surpassed its target of 50 achieving the engagement of 54 economically inactive people. Some other targets were achieved including people supported to participate in education and number active or sustained to participate in community groups as a result of support. All other targets were either partially met or not met at all, such as the number of people in supported employment. On reflection, the team think they were overambitious about the range of outcomes they hoped to achieve over a short period of time.

The project team observed outcomes for clients including: confidence building, enthusiasm, new skills learnt. They have also had good feedback from those supported. New skills learnt, included social skills, digital skills, maths and English skills, pyrography , macrame, wreath making and flower arranging, stone and slate etching, origami, block printing, bread and pizza making. Participants were support through the means of workshop delivery, art therapy and outdoor activities amongst others.

Feedback on how these skills will improve participants' lives included giving them choice, independence and confidence to go forward. A volunteer mentor will carry on supporting the group members, which helps to continue the support.

This project has helped create proof of concept and the delivery team plan to pitch the idea to other local authorities such as Flintshire.

### *Woodland Skills Centre - Renewing Green*

The project supported 15 economically inactive people against a target of 24 participants. Also, 13 engaged in life skills support following interventions and gained qualifications, licences and skills. The project was not able to achieve the number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support or the number of people in education/training following support.

***"The course makes me happy, its good, I've been sawing wood, making fire; making sure I'm safe. I like being outside in the fresh air."*** - *Renewing Green project Participant*

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

#### Prosperous Denbighshire Fund

Management of the Fund has proved effective, reflected in the evidence from consultation, data and outcomes. The delivery of such a significant budget, whilst maintaining levels of management quality and the distribution of funds on an equitable basis is a key positive of this project. It should also be noted that the Cadwyn Clwyd core team is small, with only a few members of staff directly responsible not just for this project, but for similar projects in Flintshire and Wrexham as well as an array of other projects across the three counties. In addition, during the delivery of the project, a key member of staff had to take a leave of absence due to illness. However, there is no indication of any disruption to service, and businesses had nothing but praise for the dedication, support and help that all the Cadwyn Clwyd members of staff.

The primary issues concerning the management of the project were beyond the direct control of Cadwyn Clwyd, specifically the reporting requirements and the timescale for the project's delivery. Both factors were dictated by the Shared Prosperity Fund.

The process of applying for grants was generally considered straightforward, and the online system user-friendly. However, some applicants believed that a simplified and less repetitive process would be beneficial. This view was more commonly expressed by recipients of lower-level grants.

During the period between approval and claim, there is strong evidence to show that both Cadwyn Clwyd and Business Wales provided effective and much valued support to beneficiaries.

The spread of different business types, across sectors and geographical areas, demonstrates that an effective equitable distribution of funding was achieved.

#### Collaboration Fund

Whilst the number of Collaboration Projects was lower than originally envisaged, this is primarily due to the tight timescale imposed by the Shared Prosperity Fund. The nature of collaboration projects requires a longer lead in time with a need to engage with participants and get agreements a major factor. The evidence from the four projects funded demonstrates that the Collaboration Fund brought significant benefit. The support of Cadwyn Clwyd's CEO in the development and direction of the project was noted as critical to the success of the projects, and again reflective of the organisation's commitment to the project.

#### People and skills fund

Overall, project delivery achieved most of the Fund-level targets. Mobilising project delivery over a short space of time was a credit to the team at Cadwyn Clwyd, the projects funded, partner organisations and volunteers.

A range of outcomes were achieved by project participants who increased confidence, skills levels and generally made positive steps forward in their lives, with some clearly moving closer to the labour market.

## Legacy and longer-term impact

Both the Grant Fund and Collaboration Fund have brought significant reward to the economy of Denbighshire. A wide range of innovative, novel and forward-thinking projects have been supported, and there are likely to be further outputs and outcomes emerging from these projects.

The Collaboration Fund projects have all identified a desire to continue, however none of the projects were fully clear at this stage how follow-on activity would be effectively funded.

From a business owner's perspective, one of the clear attributes of the Prosperous Denbighshire Fund was the wide-ranging flexible nature of the project. The level of intervention for the project was also perceived as being attractive. This helped generate demand and interest. It is also important to note that the project was delivered at a time when the number of funding opportunities for businesses was extremely limited.

In terms of achieving the key aims set out in the SPF application of improving GVA and addressing the challenges of rising costs and climate change for small businesses, both empirical data and qualitative feedback shows that the project met its objectives, and contributed to a more positive economic climate for small businesses.

The outcome of this evaluation suggests that there is:

- Strategic justification for this type of funding.
- An evident gap in current support.
- Demand across the county, and across business sectors.

Through the People and Skills Fund some credible partnerships were formed and funded organisations improved their ability to deliver projects (often to very tight timeframes). Plus their staff and volunteers have developed their This experience will benefit Denbighshire and enable organisations to deliver similar activity in the future.

## Recommendations

Should future funding opportunities present themselves to support such a fund in the future, the Denbighshire Supporting Local Business Fund offers a template for future delivery. In moving forward the following recommendations are offered to enhance the current project and address current capacity challenges.

- **Timeline.** A longer time would inevitably enhance the project considerably but obviously would be dependent on the source and nature of the funding made available. This would prevent a "rush" of projects being implemented at the end of a fund cycle and allow for better qualitative decisions and more effective delivery. This is especially true of Collaboration Projects. All four of the Projects funded noted the need for a lead-in time, involving recruitment, project development and effective delivery. A longer project timeline would also allow for a more sustainable model, allowing collaborators to work together to develop legacy funding opportunities.
- **Application Process.** A review of the question process and opportunities for streamlining the level of information required for smaller-level funds should also be considered, perhaps for those under £10,000. In addition, two respondents noted that they have neurodiverse issues which made completing the application online difficult.

- **Sector definitions:** A review of sector definitions to ensure accurate comparisons with other data from other agencies is recommended.
- **Capacity.** It is remarkable how much has been achieved by such a small team, but moving forward additional funding to support the administration and management of the project needs to be built in.
- **Partnership working.** As noted above, the relationship with Denbighshire County Council has proved positive and should be built into a new project. Similarly, the relationship with Business Wales proved beneficial, and should be continued.
- **Promotion:** The promotion of any future funding programme should build upon the processes developed during this project. They proved effective, and the distribution of the grants across the sectors and across the county is testament to this.
- **Net zero:** The focus on net-zero solutions should continue or even enhanced in any future funding project. Even in the short term, there is significant evidence to suggest that the right investment and energy saving solutions are delivering tangible benefits.
- **Cross-cutting themes.** This is a difficult issue to address effectively but needs to be better considered. However, this can only be done on a longer-term basis, where there may be opportunities to utilise the expertise of Business Wales and its associate contractors to work with businesses to more emphatically develop and implement Equal Opportunities and Welsh Language measures.



# Appendix A: Evaluation of the Denbighshire People and Skills Fund – detailed analysis

## Introduction, methodology and project design

### Introduction

The 'Learning and Growing: People and Skills' theme aims to support the provision of quality learning and training that enables people of all ages to fulfil their potential, both personally and professionally.

The People and Skills Key Fund delivered on Denbighshire's mission to provide quality employability support that enabled the above aim to be achieved.

### Methodology

The research elements that contributed to this evaluation included:

- Review of background information, project bid documents and management data.
- Interviews with project manager and local authority stakeholder.
- Evaluation workshop with project delivery staff – this involved detailed discussion of each project, sharing of experiences and collection of answers to evaluation questions.
- Review of project closure data.

### Project design

Project delivery organisations submitted bids to Cadwyn Clwyd in May 2024 for their planned projects using a well-structured application form. Delivery was planned to be for six months to December 2024. Cadwyn Clwyd evaluated the bids and selected projects that were able to deliver the required output and outcomes.

Interventions included activities with the following types of planned outputs and outcomes:

- **Employment support for economically inactive people:** Often this was intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer to mainstream provision and to gain and retain employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English and ESOL) support. The projects promoted the importance of work to help people to live healthier and more independent lives, alongside building their future financial resilience and wellbeing. Cohorts included people with multiple complex needs (people facing mental health barriers to employment, people with learning disabilities, adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and people with health/wellbeing and confidence/self-esteem needs).
- **Courses including basic skills** (digital/English), and life skills and career skills<sup>2</sup> provision for people who are not economically inactive and who are unable to access other training or wrap around support.
- **Activities such as enrichment and volunteering** to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.

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<sup>2</sup> where not being met through Department for Work and Pensions or Welsh Government provision

- **Tailored support to help people in employment**, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.
- **Support for engagement and softer skills development** for young people.
- **Support to achieve qualifications**, licences and skills.
- **Engagement with community groups and engagement with mainstream healthcare.**
- **Supporting people into supported employment.**

The overall targets are described below in terms of planned outputs (Table 1) and planned outcomes (Table 2).

**Table 1: Planned outputs**

Ref	Targets for Denbighshire People and Skills Fund	Target
OP_1	Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	50
OP_2	Number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment	150
OP_3	Number of people supported to access basic skills	250
OP_4	Number of people supported to engage in life skills	250
OP_5	Number of people supported to participate in education	100

*Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025*

**Table 2: Planned outcomes**

Ref	Targets for Denbighshire People and Skills Fund	Target
OC_1	Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	150
OC_2	Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills	150
OC_3	Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support	100
OC_4	Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	250
OC_5	Number of people in education/training following support	10
OC_6	Number of people in supported employment	0

*Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025*

The total of all outputs and outcomes proposed by projects were higher than those required by Denbighshire County Council, described above. As a portfolio of projects, this helped ensure that the People and Skills Fund achieved these ambitions.

## Project delivery

### Project selection

The following 8 projects were selected for funding (funded organisation and name of project):

- Bryntysilio - Confident Denbighshire.
- Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLLM) - Camau Cefnogol/Supportive Actions.
- North Wales Tourism Ltd (NWT) - NWT & Hospitality Academy (Denbighshire).
- RCS Wales - Work Well Denbighshire.
- ReSource Denbighshire CIC – Aspire/Dyheu.
- Rhyl Sea Cadets - Rhyl Sea Cadets.
- Stepping Stones North Wales - Next Steps.
- Woodland Skills Centre - Renewing Green.

Projects' planned coverage ranged from confidence building and skills development for all groups, through to those targeting specific groups such as 16-18 year-olds transitioning to college, people with learning disabilities and survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Table 3). Methods of support range from training, mentoring to therapies such as counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). The total value of all projects was £377,970 with a range from £2,500 to £186,792.

**Table 3: Key characteristics of projects**

Project	No. planned economically inactive people	Age groups	Description	Planned value
Bryntysilio	40	16+	Confidence and skills-building through residential outdoor adventurous activities	£186,792
GLLM	116	16-18	Mentoring support for young people transitioning into further education	£68,200
NWT	22	16+	Four-day tourism and hospitality course to give participants sector knowledge and skills	£23,550
RCS Wales	20	16+	Counselling and CBT for people facing mental health barriers to employment	£18,863
ReSource	10	16+	Work placement in community settings for people with learning disabilities	£40,597
Sea Cadets	4	16+	Volunteer training from first aid to water sports	£2,500
Stepping Stones	50	18+	Adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse	£14,000
Woodland	24	16+	People with health/ wellbeing and confidence/ self-esteem needs in woodlands environment	£23,468

*Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025*

## Overall delivery

Given the relatively short timescales for delivery, the projects on the whole have performed well in achieving the overall Fund targets.

Fund level performance is presented in Table 4. The headline targets for engagement of economically inactive individuals and supporting them in education and learning were massively over-achieved. This included supporting some individuals into supported employment where no target existed.

Despite some individual projects focusing on aspects of mental health and people with additional skills needs, the overall fund struggled to achieve the targets around people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment, the number of people supported to access basic skills and the number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services.

**Table 4: People and skills fund performance against targets**

Targets	DCC Targets	Total Claimed
Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	50	325
Number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment	150	55
Number of people supported to access basic skills	250	91
Number of people supported to engage in life skills	250	213
Number of people supported to participate in education	100	249
Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	150	186
Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills	150	97
Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support	100	85
Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	250	96
Number of people in education/training following support	10	209
Number of people in supported employment	0	19

*Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025*

The data across all projects resulted in higher aggregate targets which are different to the above targets (Table 5). This data provides an indication of individual project performance which is discussed below for each project. Most projects achieved their number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services (a couple achieved just over half their target). A few projects struggled to achieve their number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills. This was partly linked to engaging sufficient participants to complete the full project delivery and challenges linked to timescales.

**Table 5: Denbighshire People and Skills Fund project level performance**

Output indicators	Total		Bryntysilio		GLLM		RCS		Resource Denbs		Sea Cadets		Tourism		Stepping Stones		Woodlands Skills	
	Target	Claim	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C
Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	286	325	40	50	116	125	20	13	10	13	4	0	22	55	50	54	24	15
Number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment	91	55	-	-	-	-	4	1	-	-	17	0	-	-	70	54	-	-
Number of people supported to access basic skills	113	91	40	36	-	-	-	-	10	13	21	0	22	29	20	13	-	-
Number of people supported to engage in life skills	276	213	40	36	60	53	20	13	10	13	30	0	22	29	70	54	24	15
Number of people supported to participate in education	263	249	40	36	116	125	-	-	10	13	30	0	22	29	25	31	20	15
Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	211	186	40	30	60	51	12	11	10	13	3	0	22	29	40	39	24	13
Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills	151	97	40	27	-	-	-	-	10	13	21	0	0	25	60	19	20	13
Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support	105	85	40	30	-	-	2	3	8	13	17	0	-	-	30	39	8	0
Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	154	96	20	4	35	31	2	7	-	-	17	0	-	-	80	54	-	-
Number of people in education/training following support	192	209	0	27	116	123	4	7	8	13	4	0	-	-	50	39	10	0
Number of people in supported employment	68	19	40	7	-	-	-	-	5	0	3	0	0	12	20	0	-	-

Source: Cadwyn Clwyd Project Data, 2025

## **Project level delivery**

### **Bryntysilio - Confident Denbighshire**

The project successfully delivered four residential cohorts. Most of those recruited, 36 out of 40, attended regularly, although fewer regularly attended their work development days. Delivery also included a female only cohort, which helped secure participant numbers by giving women confidence to attend. Delivery staff reported role modelling equality views by challenging traditional views on gender roles to educate participants to ensure course delivery was inclusive and supportive.

Using outdoor and adventurous activities as a vehicle for growth, aimed to develop participants' sense of self and confidence to help participants shape a path through skills building, education, qualifications, and employment that is right for them. They lived residentially, full board, at Bryntysilio in Llangollen for two weeks. Participants did different activities, building their competencies, and undertook a suitable and inclusive expedition to increase participants' confidence. Bryntysilio then worked with participants, a day a week, for the next 3 months to grow their confidence and skills to focus on a specific role that they wanted to do. This could be gardening, catering, environmental, outdoor instruction, education, building/maintenance and more. Skills, confidence and qualifications were all addressed while having fun at the same time. All needs were supported, transport was available, childcare was available, and different residential cohorts were organised based on age and gender.

#### *Results of delivery*

The project recruited potential participants through a blended campaign of social media and physical posters. They undertook 1:1 interviews of 50 people to determine eligibility of the 40 selected. Support and encouragement of participants before the start of the delivery helped to prepare them to start positively and to stay engaged.

Some learning included the limited value of print media which yielded little to no return for recruitment, and the teams level of contact with potential partners constrained the numbers of referrals from other organisations.

The project focused on developing a strong sense of community among the participants, supported by wearing common clothing with a badge giving a clear sense of involvement. Qualifications achieved include white water rescue.

Participants described having "adventures beyond wildest expectation" with a strong sense of community within and between cohorts.

Challenges identified by the delivery team included the complex needs across all cohorts/ages, the level of emotional investment by Bryntysilio staff needs careful consideration (perhaps operating structured supervision sessions) and the need for a clearer idea of how to organise their records to make reporting easier.

Progress in participants' perceived confidence was evidenced through use of a longitudinal survey before (3.9 out of 10), after 12 days (8.2) and after 3 months (8.8). This is further demonstrated by some participants who have a clearer perspective on their future including one who is applying to the police. Engaging a younger group proved hard due to the limited timescales.

A celebration event was positive for all involved, although the project team reflected that it resulted in a more gentle wind down than they would normally have for adventure courses.

The key lessons learnt by the delivery team included:

- The value of high-quality outdoor education, linked to the outstanding natural environment where Bryntysilio is based.
- Community benefits including contact with like-minded, local organisations.
- The potential of participants who demonstrated that they are more capable than they realise. Staff also realised of the heavy burdens carried by participants.

### Outputs and outcomes

The project performed well in terms of engaging economically inactive people and progressing people into education/training following support. It struggled with progressing participants into healthcare and supported employment. It generally achieved 75% or more of the remaining targets.



Bryntysilio were also able to utilise additional resource during February 2025. This involved the following elements:

- Level 2 Woodland Activity Leader training qualification, for around 6 trainees.
- Denbighshire Open Paddle Sports Session for up to 8 people, a whole day session open to any eligible individual, who will receive a British Canoeing Start award.
- Resource Denbighshire Days, covering three Wednesday day sessions, for around 12 attendees that will cover looking after yourself outdoors, navigation skills, pacing yourself/self-regulation and hill walking. Each participant will achieve an Introduction to Hill Skills certificate.

## **Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLLM) - Camau Cefnogol/Supportive Actions**

The project recruited 125 young people leaving school who were supported to transition successfully to college, reducing their longer-term risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET). Most were able to stay engaged at college with many receiving life skills and mainstream healthcare support.

Camau Cefnogol / Supportive Steps provided a bespoke package of mentoring support for participants aged 16-18 years transitioning into Further Education from school, PRU's or a home education setting. The Project aimed to support their learning journey and provide an enhanced service from completing Year 11 to joining and settling into college life. Participants were supported to adapt and transition to becoming a student at Coleg Llandrillo Rhyl. The college offered a wraparound wellbeing mentoring support service aimed to enable new students to remain engaged in learning up until the end of the project and beyond. The project was planned to be delivered in 2 halves. First to target school applicants and prepare them for college via 1-2-1 and group interventions. The second was working with participants from September to ensure that they remained on their course and were being supported.

### *Results of delivery*

Young people were supported by one of three mentors as part of the college Learner Service, who developed tailored interventions to meet varied needs. Some support needs were complex and multifaceted. In addition, a Learner Resource Fund was available for items such as uniforms, hair and beauty kit, Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure certificates (where working with vulnerable groups), access to birth certificates to open bank accounts (in order to receive Education Maintenance Grant payments) and meal vouchers. Some group-work (known as the Engage Group) was undertaken to support engagement and to discuss overcoming barriers.

Support included induction days for new learners at the end of August before the start of term. This helped those learners into the term induction sessions and the Freshers Fair. In addition, 13 young people acted as Wellbeing Ambassadors, creating volunteering opportunities within the college.

The key successes of delivery included young people being at the centre of the support and involved in all discussions, partnership working between different support organisations (including Denbighshire Youth Support) and the flexibility of the Cadwyn Clwyd Board and Denbighshire County Council to adapt funding. Learners were able to access specialist support to help support them to stay engaged at college.

Some challenges included the initial set-up of the transition support over the summer prior to the start of term, too many staff trying to help some young people creating a degree of confusion and the delay in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer starting in post. When engaging in partnership working, having simpler communications to ensure appropriate issues are escalated the appropriate person was recognised as important to achieve timely responses.

Key lessons learnt through the delivery included the need for earlier engagement with partners regarding the transition process, the effectiveness of the Learner Resource Fund, the continuing for financial support of young people once in college and the positive impact a bespoke mentoring service support had for young people.



### *Outputs and outcomes*

The project performed well in terms of exceeding targets for engaging economically inactive people and progressing people into education/training following support. It nearly met all other targets around engagement with life skills support and mainstream healthcare support.

#### **North Wales Tourism Ltd (NWT) - NWT & Hospitality Academy (Denbighshire)**

Twenty-nine participants completed the workshop training activities mainly at Rhyl City Strategy training rooms and one day at the White House Hotel and Spa in Rhualt near to the A55. Delivery supported learning about the sector, confidence building and included visits to hospitality businesses in North Wales.

North Wales Tourism training courses provided a balanced learning experience for all clients. The 3-day Tourism and Hospitality course was carefully crafted to equip participants with the essential knowledge and skills needed to excel in the Tourism & Hospitality industry. By integrating theoretical instruction, engaging classroom activities, and hands-on practical exercises, participants received a rounded education experience covering all facets of the industry. An integral component of the program is the inclusion of site visits to tourism and hospitality establishments in Denbighshire. These visits offered an opportunity for participants to witness industry professionals in action, observe best practices, and immerse themselves in the actual work environment. Upon successful completion of the course, participants receive a certificate recognising their commitment to professional growth in the tourism and hospitality sector. Furthermore, clients have the chance to be included on the academy database, serving as a resource to signpost clients to work opportunities in the tourism sector.

### *Results of delivery*

The Go North Wales Tourism & Hospitality Academy (sponsored by Harlech Food Service and collaboration from colleges and universities across North Wales) worked with North Wales Tourism to design and delivery this course.

The project was successful at converting those who initially signed up (55) into those who completed (29). Attempts were made to operate the delivery in Llangollen to cover rural Denbighshire but transport was a barrier for participation.

Training delivery supported networking between participants and aimed to support their resilience in finding job opportunities.

The academy's focus on real-world experiences ensures that students are well-prepared to meet the demands of the industry through a diverse range of activities such as team building, interview preparation, site visits to hotels and attractions, and hands-on role play.

### *Outputs and outcomes*

The project performed well in terms of exceeding all targets including engaging economically inactive people (55 against a target of 22), supporting people to participate in education (29 against a target of 22), supporting people to gain qualifications, licences and skills (25 having had no explicit target) and progressing people into supported employment (12 having had no explicit target).

## RCS Wales - Work Well Denbighshire

The RCS existing staff team were mobilised to identify clients who could benefit from accessing counselling support, that would help jobseekers address mental health barriers to employment. Thirteen referrals were provided via Working Denbighshire and from Barod<sup>3</sup> existing clients. The aim was to provide talking therapies to help people develop coping strategies, improve self-esteem, build resilience and leave people better able to engage with employability support and move closer to the labour market.

RCS is a Welsh provider of integrated wellbeing and employability support, aimed at helping people enter, sustain and thrive in employment. The project offered counselling and CBT aimed at helping people overcome mental health barriers to employment, such as low mood, anxiety or stress. There was no need for a formal diagnosis to be able to access support.

Psychological support can help individuals develop self-belief and coping strategies and build resilience, leaving them better able to engage with employability support. Participants received between six and nine sessions of confidential support, either online/phone or face-to-face in accessible community venues across the County and could be referred from other organisations or could self-refer. They worked proactively with Working Denbighshire's BAROD programme, ensuring their specialist counselling support complements BAROD's employability support, mentoring and coaching.

### *Results of delivery*

The project start-up commenced at the beginning of July 2024, with delivery and close down by Nov 2024. Health conditions for applicants could include anxiety, depression, PTSD, grief, social anxiety, and stress.

The project started promptly in July 2024 with their mobilisation phase, utilising existing staff teams, supported by a strong partnership working with key referrers. Marketing materials and social media posts were shared with over 200 Working Denbighshire and Barod clients. They experience higher demand for face to face contact than anticipated.

Some early challenges included the short time frame of programme which meant that the small cohort would need to be ringfenced to Working Denbighshire and Barod clients in the first instance. This created a need to register as many clients as quickly as possible due to timescales (with concerns that they might need to stop recruitment quickly if they reached their total) – however initial interest via the Working Denbighshire and Barod clients quickly waned. In retrospect they may need to

The project involved experienced RCS staff team and therapists that could rapidly register and support clients. Established relationships with referrers led to them receiving 25 referrals, of which 13 went on to register for support. The team made efficient use of RCS CRM system to capture client data, outputs & outcomes.

However, low take-up from Working Denbighshire and Barod's network of clients limited the reach of the project. Not all clients that expressed an interest, went on to register. Not all were ready for counselling, within the programme timescales, as it takes time to build trust in this type of service. Furthermore, the short timescales of the project impacted on meeting the target number of clients, although a short extension allowed the team to continue taking

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/jobs-and-employees/working-denbighshire/residents/project-barod.aspx>

The Project Barod team supports Denbighshire residents aged 16 or over to overcome barriers like low motivation or wellbeing challenges and get back into work or training.

referrals for another two weeks and enabled existing clients to complete their final therapeutic support.

The project encountered some challenges with the online claim portal system and in obtaining client declarations to evidence outcomes/outputs. They also found the outcomes were more achievable when RCS staff delivered the therapeutic support than subcontracted staff, especially regarding the follow-up for evidence of outcomes such as employment.

The team felt that SPF potential outputs and outcomes did not align with the intentions of unique programmes such as those offering therapeutic support, even though they felt they offered significant value through their delivery.

### *Outputs and outcomes*

The project achieved 13 out of 20 for the main target of engaging economically inactive people. However, they came close or exceeded the targets for people engaged in life skills support following the intervention, numbers of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support, people engaging with mainstream healthcare services and people in education/training following support. They were less successful with numbers of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment, which may be related to the lower overall numbers of the project.

### **ReSource Denbighshire CIC – Aspire/Dyheu**

The Aspire project offered free support and opportunities for 10 individuals (aged 16 and over with complex learning needs and interested in learning new skills) to gain confidence, make social connections, explore interests, try something new, and look at courses and tailored pathways towards employment. The core concept was of a person-centred approach, led by individuals interests, aspirations and unique support needs.

ReSource is a social and environmental CIC, committed to raising aspirations for economically inactive individuals whilst promoting positive environmental actions. Project Aspire/Dyheu saw ReSource offering a minimum of 10 additional work placement opportunities for young people and adults with learning disabilities that were not engaged in work/volunteering and did not hold a Level 2 or equivalent qualification. Work placement opportunities took place in ReSource's community facing projects across Ruthin and Denbigh. Working from a person-centred perspective and being provided with individualised Key Worker support, participants were supported to gain skills, explore their interests, develop confidence and gain work-based qualifications. Project Aspire ran until November 2024 and aimed to accept referrals to the project from other public and voluntary sector organisations, care providers, individuals and their carers.

### *Results of delivery*

The project initially worked with participants to undertake vocational profiling to identify areas of interest among the individuals.

Key successes of the project included the excitement and enthusiasm of volunteers, effective publicity to raise interest about the project and the new partnerships/connections that were established.

Some challenges were experienced with delays in organisations responding to requests/opportunities, smaller than expected turnouts for the launch events/partnership breakfast.

Key delivery successes included:

- Participants' passion, dedication and desire to learn which involved them gaining qualifications, confidence, upskilling and discovering new passions.
- Engagement of new volunteers.
- Effective teamwork across Aspire/Dyheu together with the participants.

The project encountered some barriers including:

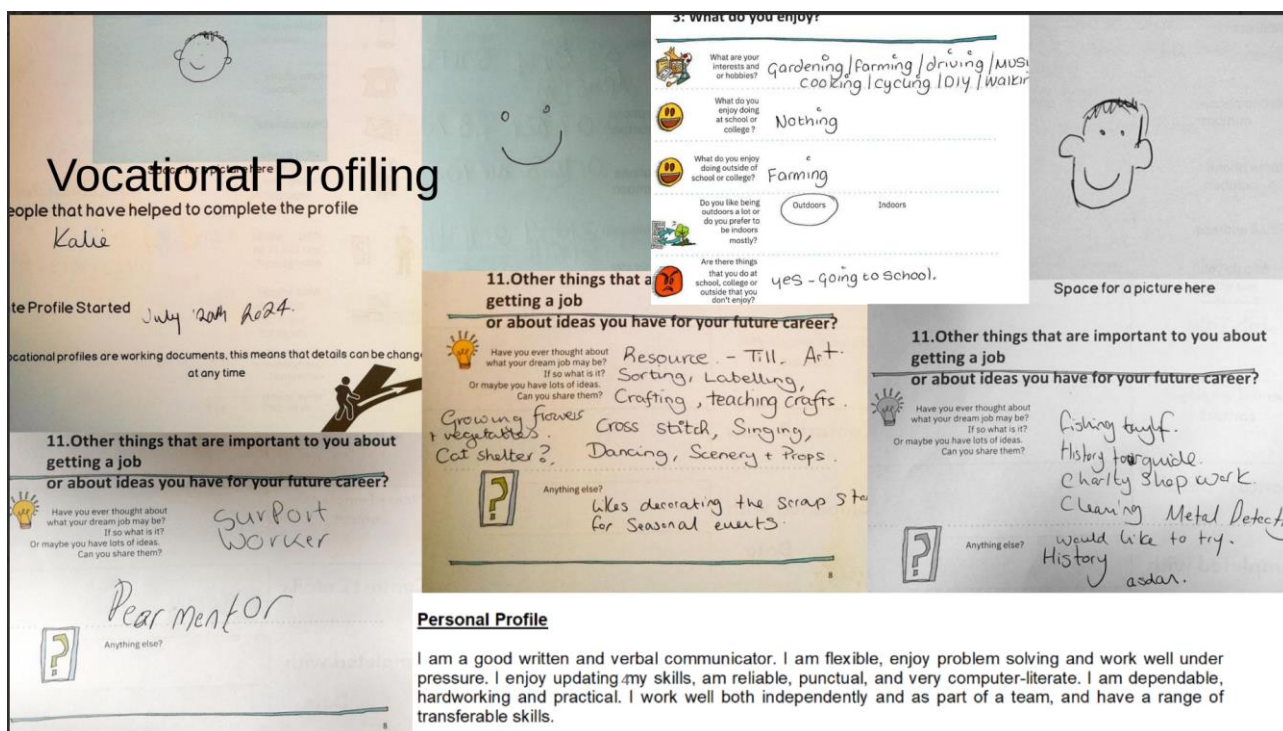
- The time it takes to arrange/negotiate placements for people with additional needs.
- An average 10-month wait time for Access to Work, which made it hard to create good working conditions for participants.
- Some inaccessible course prices, for example, customer service training courses only available at £95 each for a minimum of 8 people.

### *Outputs and outcomes*

The project surpassed its target of 10 achieving the engagement of 13 economically inactive people. All participants achieved all other targets except the ambition of 5 people moving into supported employment.

Individual outcomes included wellbeing, confidence, empowerment, plus others described below with their longer-term ambitions, that the project helped them move closer to achieving.

Ref	Outcome	Desired outcome in the future
A	ASDAN Expressive arts and Upcycling (Llandrillo)	Paid placement at shop ongoing
B	Food Hygiene, Café Volunteer Placement with Key Worker Debbie	Paid placement at Café ongoing
C	ASDAN History, Metal Detecting and Upcycling (Llandrillo)	Upskilling and more confidence, having fun, feeling valued.
D	Volunteer placement at Cae Dai Gardens and Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Placement at gardens ongoing
E	Volunteer placement at Cae Dai Gardens and Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Upskilling and more confidence and aiding recovery.
F	Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Upskilling
G	Woodland Skills and Health and Safety and Upcycling	Further placement with Woodland skills
H	Health and Safety 3 Day qualification	NEBOSH Occupational Health and Safety, moving towards employment at Gardens
I	Fundamentals of Professional Cleaning	Paid placement at Shop ongoing
J	ASDAN Gardening, Green Woodworking (Llandrillo)	Upskilling and more confidence, having fun
K	Eternal Media Filming Course	Following passions and possible role as media promoter at Resource
L	PEER MENTOR (support people) Workplace Wellbeing champions Mental Health first AID	



## Rhyl Sea Cadets

The Sea Cadets planned to deliver training to their volunteers but disengaged when it was identified that one beneficiary was employed and therefore not in the target group. Some learning might be that their bid could have included the funding of a project co-ordinator which might have helped them as a voluntary organisation to complete their delivery.

With this grant, the Rhyl Sea Cadets aimed to move forward with their training of volunteers, enabling them to expand their expertise and the services they can offer. By equipping volunteers with necessary skills and knowledge, they can ensure they are well-prepared to offer high-quality training in a variety of areas, from first aid to water sports. This training was planned to enhance the personal development of volunteers but also elevate the overall standard of the programs they provide. As volunteers become proficient in these critical areas, they will be able to deliver effective training to cadets, fostering a culture of excellence and safety. This investment intended to have a ripple effect, allowing the Cadets to extend their training programs to the local community and businesses in the surrounding areas. The enhanced capabilities of volunteers was intended to help create a dynamic and inclusive environment at Marine Lake, promoting community engagement and lifelong learning in plans to transform the boathouse at Marine Lake into a vibrant community hub. Ultimately, a well-trained volunteer force will be instrumental in establishing the boathouse as a hub of activity and a cornerstone of support for both our cadets and the broader community.

## Results of delivery

The project scope was significantly reduced in value from £2500 to £750 due to delivery challenges. Training was delivered to value £750 however no outputs or outcomes were reported against this project.

## Stepping Stones North Wales - Next Steps

The Next Steps to Wellbeing Project supported 54 economically inactive adults, across Denbighshire, with a range of activities to help with their mental health and wellbeing, to learn new skills, gain confidence and complement the counselling services Stepping Stones provides to help survivors move forward.

Stepping Stones North Wales, is a charity providing support across the six counties of North Wales, to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse an established charity of 40 years. Their services are free to access, and anyone can refer by calling their helpline number or accessing their webpage. The aims of the project were to reach out to clients in Denbighshire to offer 1-1 professional counselling, art therapy, access to education classes to include life skills, and alternative methods of learning. They planned to include family members as part of the support by trained staff and mentors. They hoped to see improved mental health and wellbeing, improved confidence and self-esteem, newly learnt skills, qualifications and supported learning opportunities, to enable all individuals to go forward, able to make more informed life choices, work and volunteering opportunities and build stronger families.

### *Results of delivery*

A key element of the support was being able to offer services to new clients right from initial referral in addition to counselling or whilst they wait for counselling to start. This has been an important addition to their delivery in a county with high referral numbers. A holistic approach to delivery is at the heart of this project. The range and variety of support has enabled them to appeal to all clients, with good volunteer support. Stepping Stones has also identified and developed working relationships with new partners that offer related support. For example, with Erddig National Trust Hall and Garden near Wrexham and Use Your Loaf community bakery in Rhyl.

The numbers were partly achieved through the existence of a waiting list of participants, which helped the start delivery and build up momentum and awareness.

The project team observed outcomes for clients including: confidence building, enthusiasm, new skills learnt. They have also had good feedback from those supported. New skills learnt, included social skills, digital skills, maths and English skills, pyrography<sup>4</sup>, macrame, wreath making and flower arranging, stone and slate etching, origami, block printing, bread and pizza making. Participants were support through the means of workshop delivery, art therapy and outdoor activities amongst others.

The challenges with delivering to this client group included the often vulnerable position they are in when they first start. Plus, many clients suffer poor mental health. Some who took up the offer of support, didn't always follow on to receive the planned support.

Feedback on how these skills will improve participants' lives included giving them choice, independence and confidence to go forward. A volunteer mentor will carry on supporting the group members, which helps to continue the support.

The delivery team reflected that they recruited fewer men than anticipated.

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<sup>4</sup> Pyrography is the free handed art of decorating wood or other materials with burn marks resulting from the controlled application of a heated object, such as a poker.

This project has helped create proof of concept and the delivery team plan to pitch the idea to other local authorities such as Flintshire.

### *Outputs and outcomes*

The project surpassed its target of 50 achieving the engagement of 54 economically inactive people. Some other targets were achieved including people supported to participate in education and number active or sustained to participate in community groups as a result of support. All other target were either partially met or not met at all, such as the number of people in supported employment. On reflection the team think they were overambitious about the range of outcomes they hoped to achieve over a short period of time.



## Woodland Skills Centre - Renewing Green

The project supported 15 participants to engage with outdoor learning and gain skills, confidence, new experiences and qualifications.

Warren Woods Ltd (Woodland Skills Centre) is a community owned, not for profit Social Enterprise operating from a 50-acre site in the heart of the Clwydian Range AONB with stunning views across the Wheeler Valley. The site is dedicated to environmental, social, educational and community benefit. It includes a wonderful green space with woodlands, substantial workshop and meeting room areas. A perfect environment for health and wellbeing programmes which enhance confidence and self-esteem by its very nature. A great space for learning new skills. They planned to run two 10 week cohorts (of young people aged 16-25 and an older group agreed over 25) to achieve the Agored Level 1 Qualification in Outdoor Learning with Coppice products. This will cover Safety in the Outdoors, Sustainable Use of Natural resources and Coppice Products), 2 First Aid at Work qualifications and 4 days of Volunteering and enrichment activities. All sessions were planned to take place in the woodland and workshops. The intention was that each participant would complete a chair, or a stool, made from a tree that they had coppiced from the woods.

### *Results of delivery*

The Renewing Green project was designed to engage participants in learning outdoors, covering coppice craft, fire lighting, shelter building. These enabled participants to achieve Agored qualifications. They also brought woodland skills indoors through stool making, woodcraft in workshop with link to traditional craft skills.

The team had good initial interest and felt that initially they planned the delivery well. Participants really enjoyed the activities and produced some amazing products. These were celebrated and showcased in pictures below.

However, a challenge was targeting participants, tailoring support to participants' needs and managing delivery against seasonality (summer is better for woodcraft skills). The delivery team reflected that they might have split the delivery into ability levels which might have helped staff and participants. The organisation also experienced some staffing issues which affected their delivery and meant they had to subcontract some elements.

### *Outputs and outcomes*

The project supported 15 economically inactive people against a 24 participants. Also 13 engaged in life skills support following interventions and gained qualifications, licences and skills. The project was not able to achieve the number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support or the number of people in education/training following support.



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The course makes me happy, its good, I've been sawing wood, making fire; making sure I'm safe. I like being outside in the fresh air.

*Renewing Green project Participant*



## Reflections on delivery

Overall, the delivery achieved most of the Fund-level targets. Mobilising project delivery over a short space of time was a credit to the team at Cadwyn Clwyd, the projects funded, partner organisations and volunteers.

A range of outcomes were achieved by project participants who increased confidence, skills levels and generally made positive steps forward in their lives, with some clearly moving closer to the labour market.

Project teams provided the following feedback on the management of the fund:

- The Cadwyn Clwyd team was complimented for their support and encouragement during the project set-up, delivery and closure stages.
- The simple change request process was described as being helpful.

Some of the challenges faced by many projects included:

- Timescale challenges – projects had a limited delivery window once their funding was approved.
- The online claim portal system was reported to have some glitches.
- Projects found it challenging to obtain participant declarations to evidence outcomes and outputs. Some smaller organisations with less experience of funding systems like SPF were learning about the need to make plans for collection of destination information, as participants moved on following support.

Other general challenges included that some projects were concerned about over-programming or allocating beyond their budget (including risks of a surge in demand and subsequent participant disappointment) and so found it hard to hit a specific target. This was harder for projects that had higher variable costs.

For example, with training courses where fixed costs enable increased numbers to be spread with limited increase in marginal costs (such as the NWT project) then it was possible to over-recruit. However, the RCS project involved higher marginal costs (professional counselling fees) for every additional participant, which limited potential over-recruitment. In this instance they were also concern about the effects on clients and their reputation of they recruit too many and had to let vulnerable people down. There may be need for a triage stage that makes room for decision-making on a given project with an alternative course of action if numbers are achieved.

The full project budget was allocated. A small underspend was also allocated at late notice to one project to maximise delivery. Overall, spending was £377,614.73, a slight underspend of £356.49.

Lessons learnt around fund management for Cadwyn Clwyd included potentially counselling projects about over-estimating the range of outputs and outcomes that they are be able to achieve. Although timescales in this instance would not allow this, a discussion around project logic and key focus might have highlighted this to help them revise and focus on their critical outcomes.