



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Evaluation of the Community Renewal Fund 2021/22

Appendix A: Case Studies

October 2023

- A.1 As part of the evaluation, a series of 20 project case studies have been produced where there is more robust and more detailed information on the effectiveness and impact of interventions drawn from project-level evaluations.
- A.2 The case studies have been produced in such a way as to make them very succinct and accessible summaries of evaluation findings, which practitioners can use to quickly assess the relevance of the project to the challenges faced and the delivery context of their area, as well as drawing out key lessons arising from the projects which they might want to apply to their own project design. Full evaluation reports can be provided on request to the DLUHC.
- A.3 The case studies particularly draw out:
- What the project was seeking to achieve and how (through a theory of change or logic model).
 - The context within which the scheme was delivered as well as the specific nature of the challenges that it was seeking to address (which will be important in considering the relevance of findings in other contexts).
 - The outcomes and impacts achieved, with insights into the methodologies used to capture these.
 - Key success factors and lessons learned regarding the effectiveness and impacts of the project.
- A.4 Case studies were selected to ensure at least one project from each intervention type covered within the evaluation. The case studies included in this appendix are summarised in the table below.

#	Intervention Type	Project	Area
Investment Priority: Investment for local business			
1	Business support for start-ups and growth	Supporting Business in North Somerset	North Somerset Council
2	Business support for start-ups and growth	Enterprise Powys	Powys County Council
3	Development and promotion of visitor economy	Coventry Creative Growth and Cultural Tourism Recovery Programme	West Midlands Combined Authority
4	Investment in business hubs (incubators and accelerators)	Derbyshire Accelerator	Derbyshire County Council
5	Supporting decarbonisation measures	Smarter Energy North East Lincolnshire	North East Lincolnshire Council
Investment Priority: Supporting people into employment			
6	Employment – Removing barriers to employment	SWITCH	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
7	Employment – Removing barriers to employment	Women's Skills, Training & Employment Programme	Women's Resource & Development Agency (Northern Ireland)
8	Employment – Removing	Community Jobs	Highland Council

#	Intervention Type	Project	Area
	barriers to employment	Scotland Intergenerational Pilot	
9	Employment – Support for employers	Breaking Barriers – Inclusive Employability	Kent County Council
10	Employment support for young people NEET	Hidden Talent	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Investment Priority: Investment in communities and place			
11	Place – Actions to support decarbonisation and net zero	North Northamptonshire to Net Zero (NN2NZ)	North Northamptonshire Unitary Council
12	Place – Developing the local arts, culture and heritage offer	Street Life: Using York's Historic High Streets as Heritage Catalysts for Community Renewal	City of York Council
13	Place – Investment in community engagement schemes (e.g. volunteering, community groups, supporting civil society)	A Better Future Post Covid: Empowering Communities in the Wakefield District	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
14	Place – Investment in community engagement schemes (e.g. volunteering, community groups, supporting civil society)	Resourceful Communities: Towards a Wellbeing Economy	Pembrokeshire County Council
15	Place – Supporting the development of new or existing infrastructure or green space	iConnect	Monmouthshire County Council
Investment Priority: Investment in skills			
16	Skills – Investment in digital skills	Breaking Digital Barriers: A Pathway to Digital Employability for Greater Manchester	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
17	Skills – Investment in skills to improve employability	Staffordshire Means Back to Business	Staffordshire County Council
18	Skills – Investment in skills to improve employability	Pathways to Diagnostics Trailblazer	Essex County Council
19	Skills – Investment in skills to improve employability	ESP – Enterprise & Skills Pembrokeshire	Pembrokeshire County Council
20	Skills – Investment in skills to support decarbonisation	Decarbonising Rossendale	Lancashire County Council

Case Study 1

Intervention Type:	Business support for start-ups and growth
Project Name:	Supporting Business in North Somerset
Local Authority Area:	North Somerset Council

Summary of Project

The project delivered a range of best practice support bespoke to business and individual needs. Support activities included:

- A small business voucher scheme
- One-to-one mentoring sessions with female-owned and/or rural businesses
- Intensive coaching workshops for 18–35-year-olds
- Practical-themed workshops and peer networks and a technical support programme
- A dedicated physical space to enable businesses to access the support needed to grow
- Industry experts delivering 56 themed skills sessions and two conference-style events.

The project had the aims to support inclusive growth in North Somerset and help create thriving towns, villages, and coastal communities, addressing local deprivation and inequality challenges. It hoped to boost innovation, productivity and growth in the region by developing business resilience and business ownership, increasing business survival rates, and creating jobs and training opportunities. Moreover, it aimed to build the capacity and network of delivery partners able to help harder-to-reach groups.

Evaluation Methods:

- Desk-based research
- Analysis of project performance data
- Stakeholder consultation – 10 in-depth stakeholder consultations with the delivery team and strategic partners
- Beneficiary consultation and case studies – online survey issued to 302 businesses, with 77 responses (25 per cent) complemented by five case study consultations
- Value-for-money assessment – quantitative impact modelling to estimate the impact of the project as a whole in terms of jobs and gross value added (GVA) created based on beneficiary self-reported changes

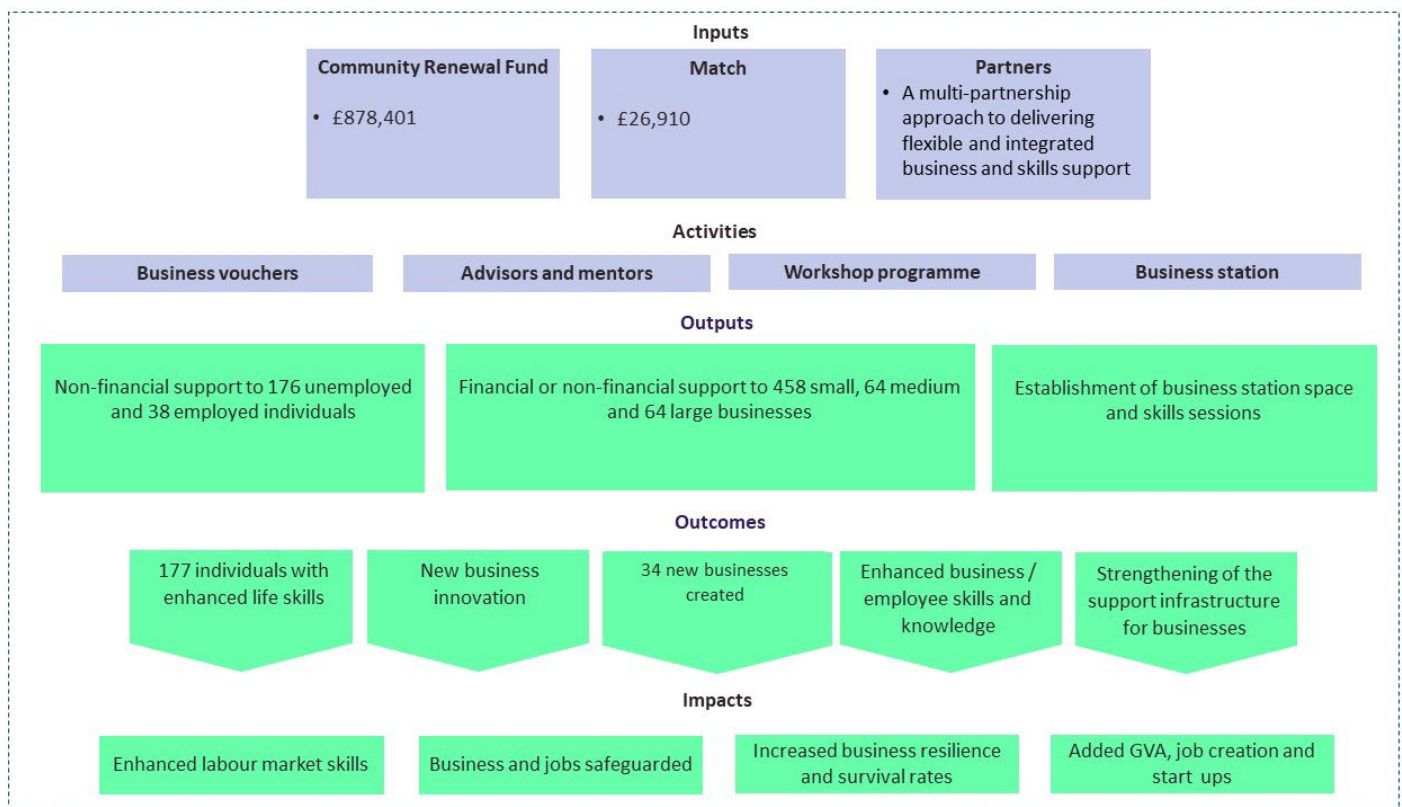
Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- There was delivery across a largely rural and coastal area, with some small towns.
- These areas have greater employment in sectors that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and the UK leaving the EU, such as hospitality and

farming, where elements of the project were focused.

- The number of start-ups in North Somerset is slightly (0.8 percentage points) below the UK average, while survival is higher than the UK average.
- The project targeted harder-to-reach individuals for entrepreneurial support, such as young people and women, reflecting some of the pockets of deprivation as well as limited opportunities in rural areas present in North Somerset.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Support was targeted and met gaps in historical support

The project offered the flexibility and opportunity for North Somerset Council to deliver against identified needs and gaps in existing provision.

Targeting unemployed individuals for entrepreneurship duplicated existing support available

After delivery commenced, it was discovered that the target audience for the entrepreneurship skills training was similar to that of other provision available in the region, including Seetec, Pluss, and the Workforce for the Future programme.

Effective engagement through partner networks

The evaluation highlights that the reputations of the networks of delivery partners (North Somerset Council, North Somerset Enterprise Agency, Food and Drink Forum, and University College Weston) as well as intelligence within the North Somerset community were important in raising awareness and demystifying the business support landscape, particularly for businesses that had previously not engaged. Both consultees and the beneficiary survey established the success of

direct tailored contact from delivery leads, referrals from partners, and word of mouth.

Management could have been simpler

Whilst the project invested in boosting management capacity to counter risks associated with delivery in a short timeframe, the evaluation reflected that the management structure could have benefitted from simplification, with greater delineation and clarity as to roles, responsibilities, and delivery and reporting expectations.

Case Study 2

Intervention Type:	Business support for start-ups and growth
Project Name:	Enterprise Powys
Local Authority Area:	Powys

Summary of Project

The Business in Focus (BiF) programme had the objectives to provide pre-employment support to economically inactive, unemployed, and furloughed or young individuals (16–24-year-olds) as well as post-COVID-19 business support to newly established or existing businesses. The project aimed to achieve inclusive growth and boost productivity, jobs, and living standards (regardless of background) in line with the UK Government's levelling-up agenda.

BiF delivered support to provide individuals with enhanced entrepreneurial, individual (i.e. ICT and financial literacy) and life skills in addition to supporting businesses to develop enhanced business skills, knowledge and networks.

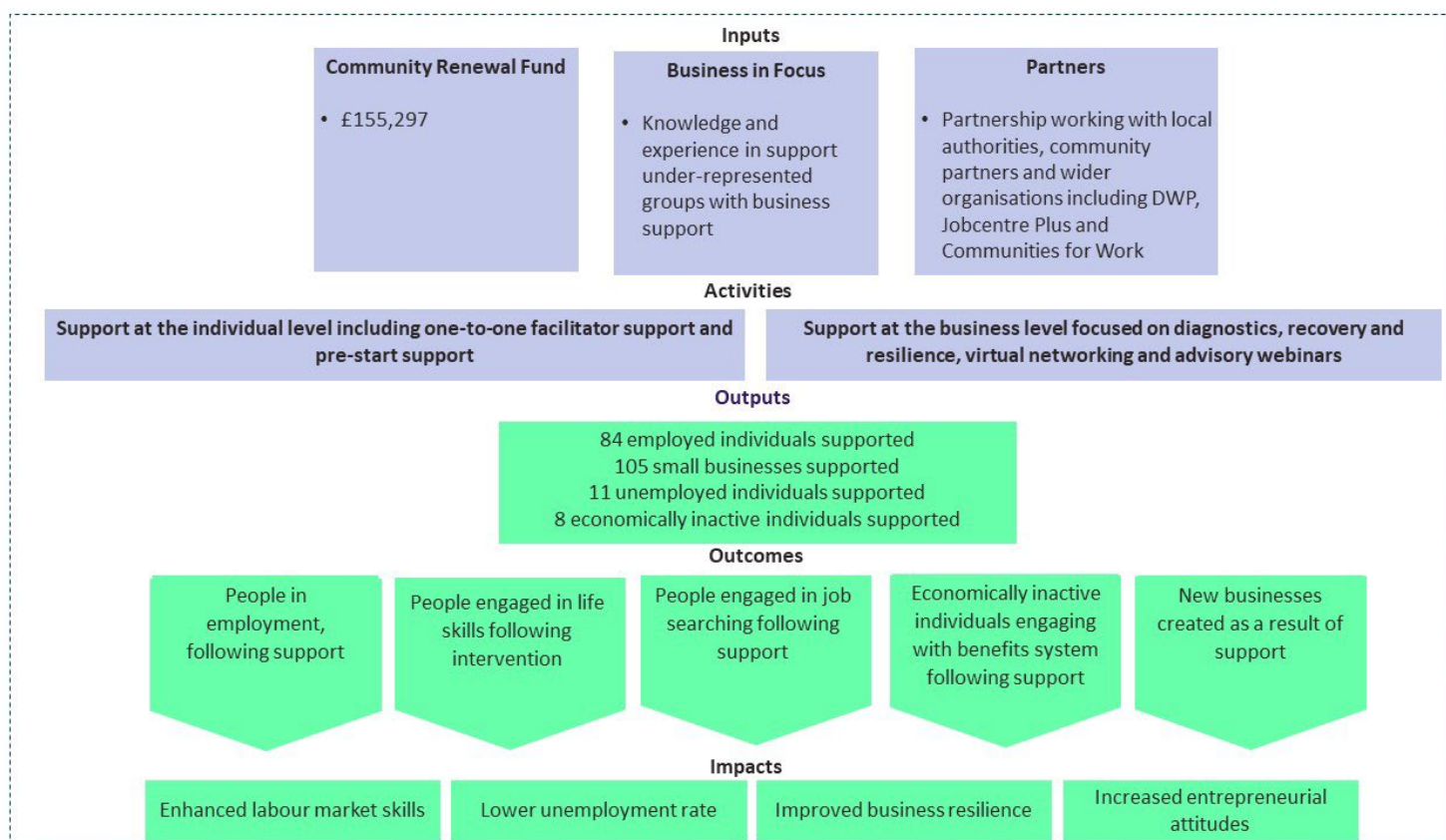
Evaluation Methods:

- Data and qualitative insights
- Desk-based research leading to the development of a project logic model
- Data analysis – programme performance data against contracted output, outcome and financial commitments
- Stakeholder consultation – 27 in-depth consultations with the delivery team and strategic partners
- Business survey issued online to all businesses claimed as a CRF output, completed by 173 respondents (13 per cent)
- Online survey of individuals claimed as CRF outputs, completed by 153 respondents (eight per cent)
- Economic impact assessment – business support
- Economic impact assessment – individual support

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- It was delivered across 13 local authorities following multiple bid successes, requiring careful consideration of coordination to maximise economies of scale.
- Sustained issues relating to the EU exit and COVID-19 drove the rationale behind a project to stimulate local entrepreneurs, start-ups, and microbusinesses.
- The focus was on a range of geographies which had a range of social and economic inequality challenges which the generation of better jobs locally could help to alleviate.
- High barriers faced by those from disadvantaged groups to start businesses, including a lack of financial stability, confidence, a lack of role models, and limited skills, provided some of the rationale behind the project.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Successful coordination of support to avoid duplication or overlap of services

Effective partnerships with stakeholders such as Jobcentre Plus, the DWP, Business Wales, Careers Wales, and Age Connects were built and these were able to overcome any perceptions that BiF was a competitor and could instead strengthen their delivery and provide wraparound support. Project delivery was designed to add value to beneficiaries by avoiding overlaps in existing services, and also effectively communicated the various support services available across Wales to the target audiences.

Lack of clarity on targets and definitions led to some underperformance

The programme has failed to meet five of its six targets linked to supporting individuals (e.g. engaging with job searching, engaging with life skills support, and engaging with the benefit system) due in part to the lack of clarity as to indicator definitions, delays in agreeing targets, and being overly ambitious (given the project duration).

Strong central management across all 13 projects

As Business in Focus was successful in 13 bids to deliver business and pre- and in-employment support across Wales, a more centralised management model used three geographical teams covering Central, East and West Wales with their

own business advisors and community engagement coordinators to exploit the economies of scale available.

Marketing could have been improved by a better project brand

It would have been better to brand the project more effectively, as 'Business in Focus' could be easily misinterpreted as exclusively supporting business (when the support was more widespread in supporting entrepreneurship). Given the timescales of the project, this was not possible.

Bottom-up promotion in harder-to-reach areas strengthened engagement

Using community engagement coordinators to promote services to harder-to-reach individuals and groups, including the longer-term economically inactive, helped to drive uptake. This was especially useful because the top-down social media and leafleting campaign proved to be ineffective.

Case Study 3

Intervention Type:	Development and promotion of visitor economy
Project Name:	Coventry Creative Growth and Cultural Tourism Recovery Programme
Local Authority Area:	West Midlands Combined Authority

Summary of Project

Led by Coventry City Council, the Coventry CRF Programme incorporated 10 sub-strands of activity across the CRF themes, with delivery provided by several internal and external partners. The business strand included four projects with an aim to provide support to facilitate growth, transformation, and long-term competitiveness of SMEs/freelancers in target sectors:

- **Creative sector support** – specialist support for creative SMEs/freelancers to build capacity for diversification, innovation and growth of work portfolios
- **Hospitality, tourism and events sector support** – support for 25 businesses to transform and grow
- **Find It CW Procurement Portal** – enhancements to the portal to increase the awareness of supply chain opportunities
- **Specialist grants** – £175,000 to support a minimum of 35 businesses with specialist support or small-scale equipment

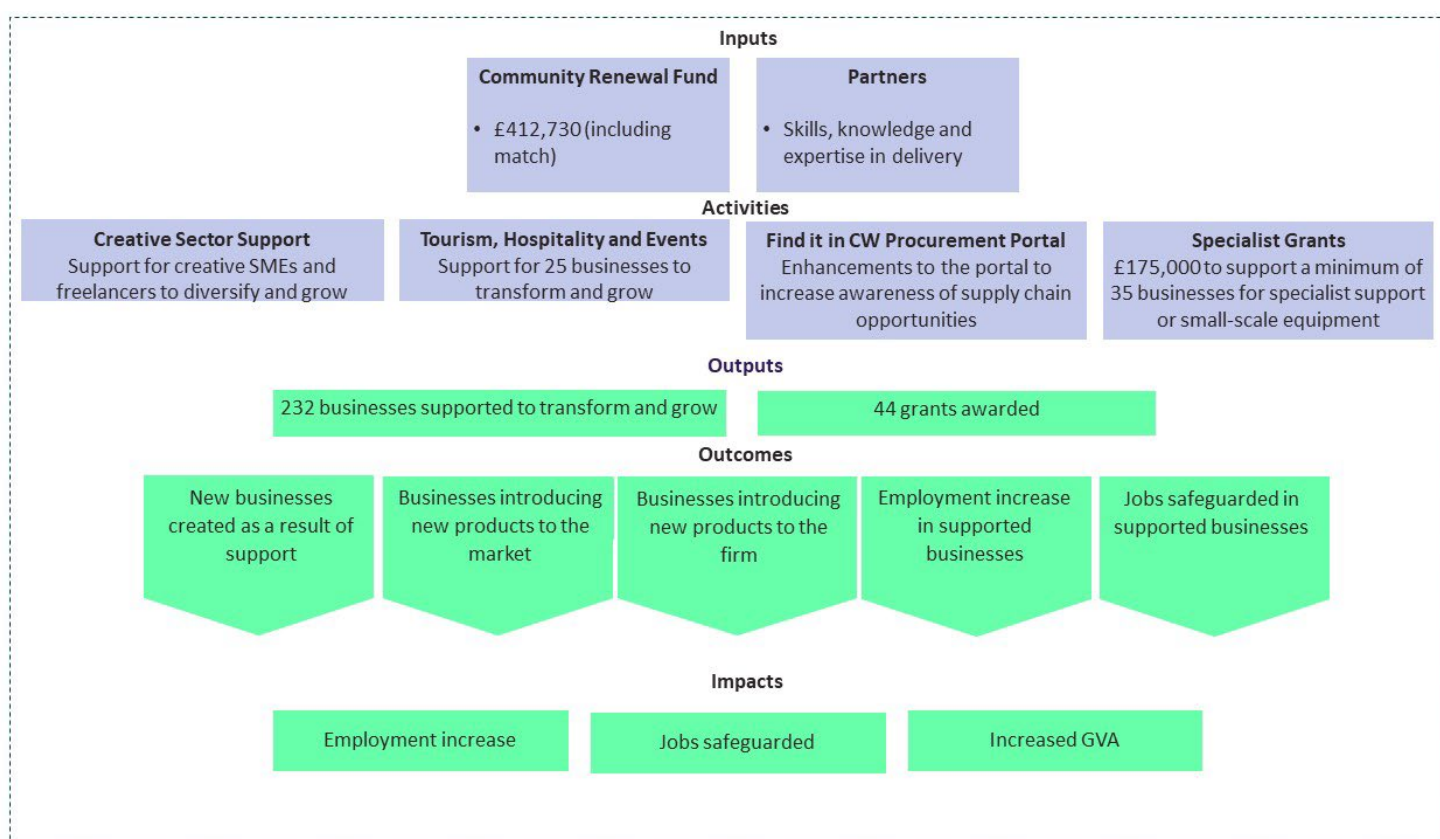
Evaluation Methods:

- Document review
- Stakeholder consultation
- Data analysis
- Beneficiary consultation (mixed methods)
- Value-for-money review
- Partner case studies

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The business strand of the project focused on Coventry-based businesses operating in culture-related sectors, specifically those in need of support to accelerate their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The sector meant that the organisations were usually micro-sized or self-employed freelancers.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Sector-specific approach brought added value

Targeting support at specific elements of the creative sector enabled the Chamber of Commerce to utilise business advisors with direct expertise, skills and knowledge (rather than more generic advisory support). Furthermore, there was a clear demand for the support available, as evidenced by the high uptake when operational.

Additional funding boosted performance

In autumn 2022 the hospitality, tourism and events sector support strand of the project was allocated additional funding from underspend in the wider Coventry CRF programme.

Small revenue or capital grants provided wider benefits

Whilst job creation was not anticipated to be an outcome of the £5,000 grants, businesses reported being able to diversify as a result of purchasing a new product or service. This provided useful learning for Coventry City Council and other culture-focused projects.

Mixed-methods approach to engagement was successful

The mixed-methods approach to engagement through direct contact, existing networks, and referrals from previous or complementary interventions (alongside wider generic promotion) helped to develop a strong pipeline of potential organisations to support. The 'hook' provided by the grant funding to these small

businesses in particular was helpful in getting them to engage in the wider support available (which was necessary for many following the pandemic).

Relative ineffectiveness of online activities

The two sub-strands focused on delivering improvements to online portals failed to translate the popularity of large 'meet the buyer' and 'meet the employer' events into registrations on the portals. Whilst targets may have been overoptimistic, stakeholders reflected that indirect engagement was not favourable to receiving one-to-one advice or grants.

Complexity of the project restricted effectiveness

The relative complexity of the larger interlinked Coventry CRF programme containing a mix of support packages provided created additional challenges with regard to management requirements. It had intended to support cross-strand integration, but in reality this did not happen.

Greater administrative and programme management resource was required

There was insufficient management and coordination resource function available at the start, and an additional role was brought in to support the delivery of such a complex programme. This was needed to expedite the development and dissemination of guidance and systems with partners and help mitigate delays.

Case Study 4

Intervention Type:	Investment in business hubs (incubators and accelerators)
Project Name:	Derbyshire Accelerator
Local Authority Area:	Derbyshire County Council

Summary of Project

The Derbyshire Accelerator programme was led by East Midlands Chamber and delivered in partnership with Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire, the University of Derby, and the Food and Drink Forum. It had the objectives to test new modes of delivery to support the area's business support ecosystem through building partnerships with sub-regional universities and business support providers.

Delivery comprised the development of five 'accelerators' to be assessed in terms of their effectiveness in either enhancing or filling gaps within current business support provision and/or creating new delivery mechanisms. The five accelerators targeted both employed and unemployed people as well as businesses through one-to-one and one-to-many consultancy and advisory sessions, and workshops and training courses. Eighty per cent business growth grants, wage subsidies, and vouchers for one-to-one consultancy were also provided.

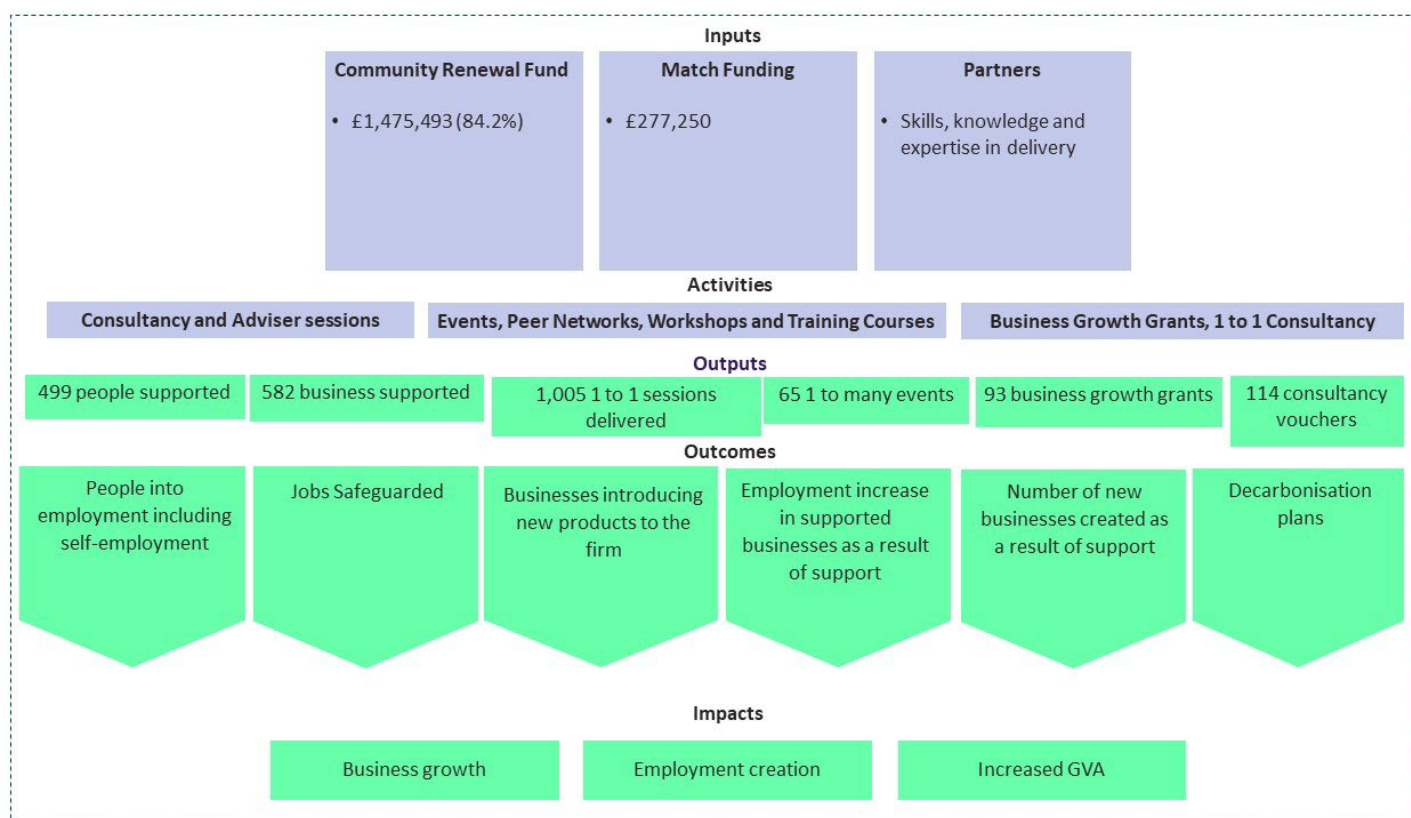
Evaluation Methods:

- Evaluation process underpinned by the development of a logic model based on the theory of change, which encourages partners to consider project design, delivery and implementation as well as how activity and impacts can be measured
- Desk-based research
- Stakeholder consultation
- Data analysis – management and monitoring information
- Business survey – 83 responses
- Business case studies

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The project was focused on two small geographies in Derbyshire — High Peak District and Derbyshire Dales — which are both very rural areas of the county.
- The aim of the accelerators was to enhance progress in existing initiatives in eligible areas with a particular focus on the visitor economy sector and its supply chains, the wholesale and retail sector, manufacturing, culture and heritage, and BAME businesses.
- Other initiatives were undertaken by Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire alongside the project, including the development of a visitor app as well as reconfiguration of the current visitor portal.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Coordinated and flexible support was key to the programme's success

The programme was able to provide a coordinated package of support (including direct support and investment) to businesses to generate skills and employability outcomes. The flexibility of the accelerator offer enabled businesses to access support across multiple themes as required.

Working with supply chains as well as the visitor economy broadened the impact

The ability of the programme to target a wide group of sectors as well as different-sized businesses allowed partners to build relationships between businesses and across supply chains.

Community-based engagement encouraged participation from rural businesses

Over half of the beneficiaries engaged in the project had not previously accessed publicly funded business support. Rural-community-based engagement and local-sector-based delivery were key to this, while the delivery recognised the value of using resources in rural areas to encourage and help businesses to engage where there may traditionally have been barriers to participation.

Grant funding overcame barriers to investment in the current financial environment

Flexible grant offers were crucial to securing the participation of many businesses

which may have been more reluctant to invest in areas such as digitalisation or carbon reduction when considering the current financial pressures facing the UK. They were able to utilise this funding and maximise the benefits of the accelerator support.

Timescales restricted the ability of partnerships to be developed and add value

Given the limited duration of the project, there were limited opportunities for partnerships between the businesses and the University of Derby, the Food and Drink Forum, or East Midlands Chamber. However, future relationships are expected.

Case Study 5

Intervention Type:	Supporting decarbonisation measures
Project Name:	Smarter Energy North East Lincolnshire
Local Authority Area:	North East Lincolnshire Council

Summary of Project

Smarter Energy North East Lincolnshire (SENEL) had the aims to develop and test the feasibility and effectiveness of innovative approaches to the engagement of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) as well as community organisations in energy reduction actions. With a dominance of heavy industry locally, large investments historically tended to be focused on assisting larger and multinational companies in decarbonising, leaving a gap in support for SMEs.

The project delivered workshops and one-to-one advice for businesses to better understand how they could decarbonise their operations, as well as conducting audits of business premises and procedures. Grants were then issued to successful applicants to support carbon reduction within the companies. As a pilot project, the success of the approach was the key focus which showed that existing market failures could be resolved through such a project, which would inform future support going into the Shared Prosperity Fund.

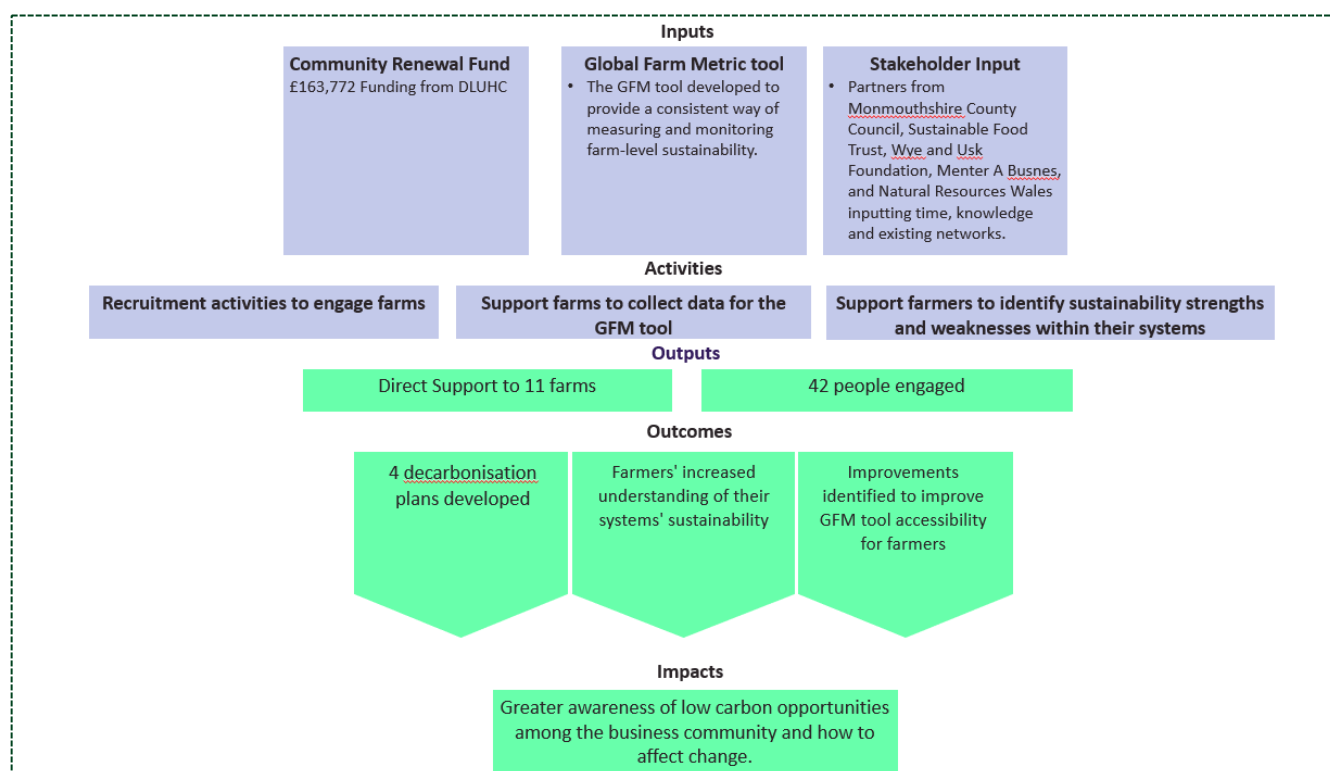
Evaluation Methods:

- Stakeholder interviews (i.e. North East Lincolnshire Council, delivery partners, etc.)
- Regular feedback at project events including the launch, the Summit event, and workshops
- Beneficiary surveys
- Review of the energy audits conducted as part of the project
- Analysis of beneficiary progress tracker data

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The NELC area has a number of large chemical plants and petroleum companies contributing significant carbon emissions, and the council are heavily committed to the net zero agenda as well as energy-efficient branding of the area.
- The delivery period coincided with rising energy prices and high inflation, affecting business performance and, therefore, increasing the incentive for SMEs to engage.
- The project was designed ahead of the government's Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, which was published in October 2021 and set out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet its net zero target by 2050.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Project successes built on experience and knowledge foundations from an earlier project

SENEL was able to learn from reflections on and experiences of the earlier ERDF project. These were used to inform the design of a smaller project delivery model based on examples of proven services and innovations without the delivery and funding constraints often associated with the ERDF. This enabled partners to expedite project development in line with the skills and knowledge of experienced partners and with access to tried and tested processes and documentation, for example. Former beneficiaries and case studies from the earlier ERDF project were also used successfully to promote the project.

A partnership approach to delivery provides a good mix of specialisms and perspectives

Sharing project delivery across an experienced and specialist partnership is judged to have achieved an integrated approach to local support. Partners with existing credibility and trust amongst SMEs (GCE and E Factor – local specialists) and with insights into community-oriented working (including particular success in offering grant support during the COVID-19 pandemic) had particular success in engaging with SME managers who were open to discussing their decarbonisation challenges and plans.

Grant support expedited engagement and stimulated sustainable outcomes

In addition to free energy audits, the distribution of grants is judged to have been effective in prompting earlier action, encouraging greater investment levels,

achieving higher-quality solutions, and affecting the timely release of working capital by SMEs to specifically meet decarbonisation targets.

Hands-on project business advisors were an effective means of delivery

The project business advisors supported SMEs and organisations to understand the range of complex issues and terminology associated with decarbonisation. Activities included speaking with SME owners, managers and employees at multiple points on their journey in response to emerging needs, with patterns reflected in workshop content. Moreover, the advisors were able to manage SME expectations and reiterate project requirements to potential beneficiaries and to collect required data (e.g. evidence of energy expenditure) from businesses to expedite project processes.

Beneficiary-tracking tool allowed for effective project management and administration

A project progress tracker has been used by delivery partners to capture details of beneficiaries' progress, incorporating data from initial expressions of interest and grant applications as well as details of the support requested.

More targeted marketing could have achieved greater savings within more carbon-generating sectors

Whilst the project design targeted community organisations, it was acknowledged by the delivery team that a greater focus on manufacturing businesses would have generated more value (given the greater potential to deliver carbon savings).

Case Study 6

Intervention Type:	Removing barriers to employment
Project Name:	SWITCH
Local Authority Area:	Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Summary of Project

The SWITCH programme supported people to move forward from what could be lengthy periods of inactivity, often exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19, loneliness, and mental health issues.

The purpose of the programme was to increase people's confidence, raise their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, and increase the self-belief and motivation needed to take steps towards employment and/or greater independence. It did so by providing cognitive remediation training (CRT).

The programme focused on economically inactive people, jobseekers, ex-offenders, and those with mental health and well-being issues. It encouraged participants to define the specific goals towards which they wanted to work, which included getting into the benefit system, taking part in training, gaining employment, starting self-employment, or at least making progress towards any of these.

SWITCH worked with young adults aged 19–24, providing them with a total of 9.5 hours per week (over four weeks of one-to-one mentoring and group sessions) using the Microsoft Teams platform. This also included the use of Happy Neuron, an online cognitive training program based on applied neuroscience designed to increase customers' mental stamina and thinking skills.

Evaluation Methods:

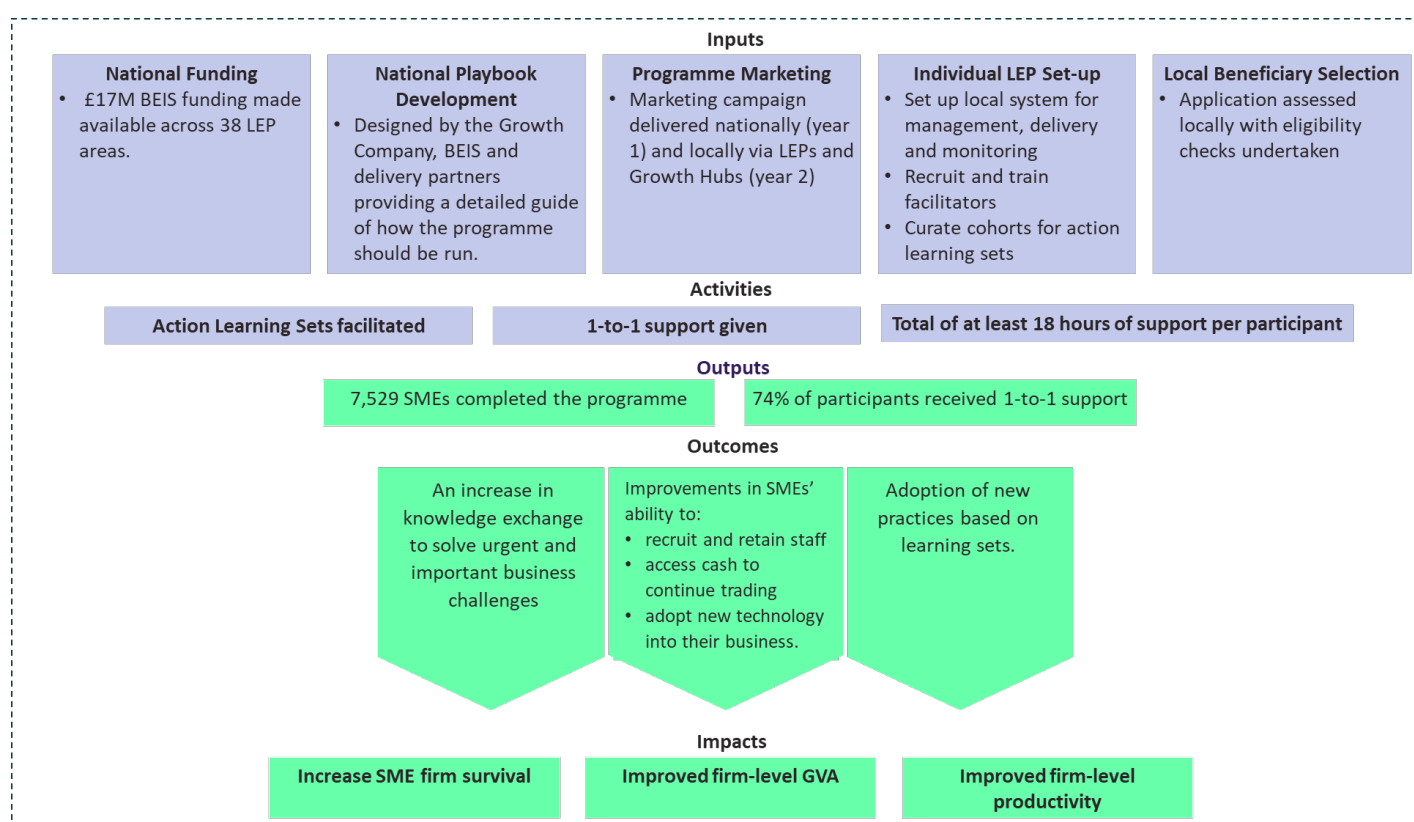
- Detailed analysis of the SWITCH programme management information system (MIS), reviewing data on referrals, customer participation rates, completion rates, progression, and outcomes
- Online one-to-one interviews with customers, mentors, members of the engagement team, the engagement coach, and WISE Ability managers
- An online survey of 23 customers who each provided their individual responses

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- Delivery was based in a large city environment in Stoke-on-Trent in the Midlands, but the online focus of delivery would allow the programme to operate in other contexts.
- The programme was delivered in a city which had become one of the fastest-growing in the country, creating many employment opportunities in the local economy. The focus was therefore on helping those most disadvantaged to overcome personal barriers to accessing these opportunities.

- Beneficiaries tended to make slightly more progress if they were in long-term unemployment, rather than being short- or medium-term unemployed, suggesting that the programme is particularly well suited to those facing larger challenges in engaging with employment.
- It targeted 19–24-year-olds, including those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (40 per cent SWITCH beneficiaries), ex-offenders (25 per cent SWITCH beneficiaries), and communities that are furthest from the market and outside of Jobcentre Plus support. Stoke has a disproportionately high number of young people who are economically inactive — young people account for 29 per cent of all economic inactivity in comparison to 21.5 per cent nationally.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Marketing and referral mechanisms need to provide clear explanations of the programme's purpose

Background information on referrals was often poor and some participants were unaware that they had been referred to SWITCH. Delays in contacting customers once referrals had been made also exacerbated this issue. Improving this practice will ensure that referral approaches are more efficient and that participants can more quickly gain access to the support.

Using a combination of in-person mentorship and online support is effective, but takes time to ensure that beneficiaries have the confidence to use online tools

Participants appreciated the time that staff took to explain how to work the technology and how the course would be delivered. They agreed on the benefits of an online course from home, citing that there was no need to find a venue, spend on travel, etc. It was particularly useful for those who lacked the confidence to leave home and, thus, would not have taken part if this were required.

Staff were better able to support participants because they had completed the programme themselves

Every member of the SWITCH team had completed the programme themselves. This meant that they all knew how it worked and what it could do for participants, and consequently were confident about its application. The team engaged well with local jobcentres, the city council, employers, and training providers and were able to provide good insight into how the programme worked and how it could support potential participants.

More focused support programmes offering shorter but more intensive interventions are worth considering in supporting those with wide-ranging and more complex needs

The length of the SWITCH programme is unusual, involving 9.5 hours per week for four weeks, since it is condensed into a highly structured four-week programme. Giving the customers a weekly hour-long private session with a trained mentor is unusual in employability support provision. Participants saw real benefits from this, citing how they were more confident, could think more clearly, and had improved their memory skills. Almost all participants said that they would not have made the progress in improving their confidence and memory skills without SWITCH.

The use of cognitive skill development activities, like cognitive remediation training (CRT), has brought real benefits to the participants in this programme

It bridged the gap between pre-employment and employment and/or training for the adults whom it supported, and led some employers to applicants whom they may not have previously considered and/or who may not have considered applying for specific types of jobs. Positive outcomes included moves into employment, engaging in job-searching activities, engaging in education or training, or engaging in life skills support or the benefit system.

Staff training in data gathering and impact assessment can help to improve wider programme-monitoring practice

The project evaluation noted that future iterations of the scheme would benefit from additional data capture and analysis that could provide insight into the project's effectiveness as well as improvements that could be made. Specifically, training staff on how to gather data in areas such as what beneficiaries do after the programme, the outcomes that they achieve, or why they have withdrawn would provide further insights into how the project can better ensure project outputs are translated into outcomes.

Case Study 7

Intervention Type:	Investment in digital skills
Project Name:	Women's Skills, Training and Employment Programme – Women Breaking Barriers Project
Local Authority Area:	Northern Ireland – all areas

Summary of Project

This pilot programme, run by Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), sought to equip women across Northern Ireland with the skills necessary to overcome their personal barriers to employment and education and secure improved progression in their future careers. Targeted at the most marginalised women, it provided a programme of wraparound support including childcare and travel expenses through community-based settings. The support provided by the project included:

- Motivational support workshops provided by the GOALS programme
- Dedicated outreach staff resource
- Individual action planning
- Specific training courses
- Basic skills workshops
- One-to-one support
- Talks from employers
- Talks from employed women
- Peer mentoring
- Work placements.

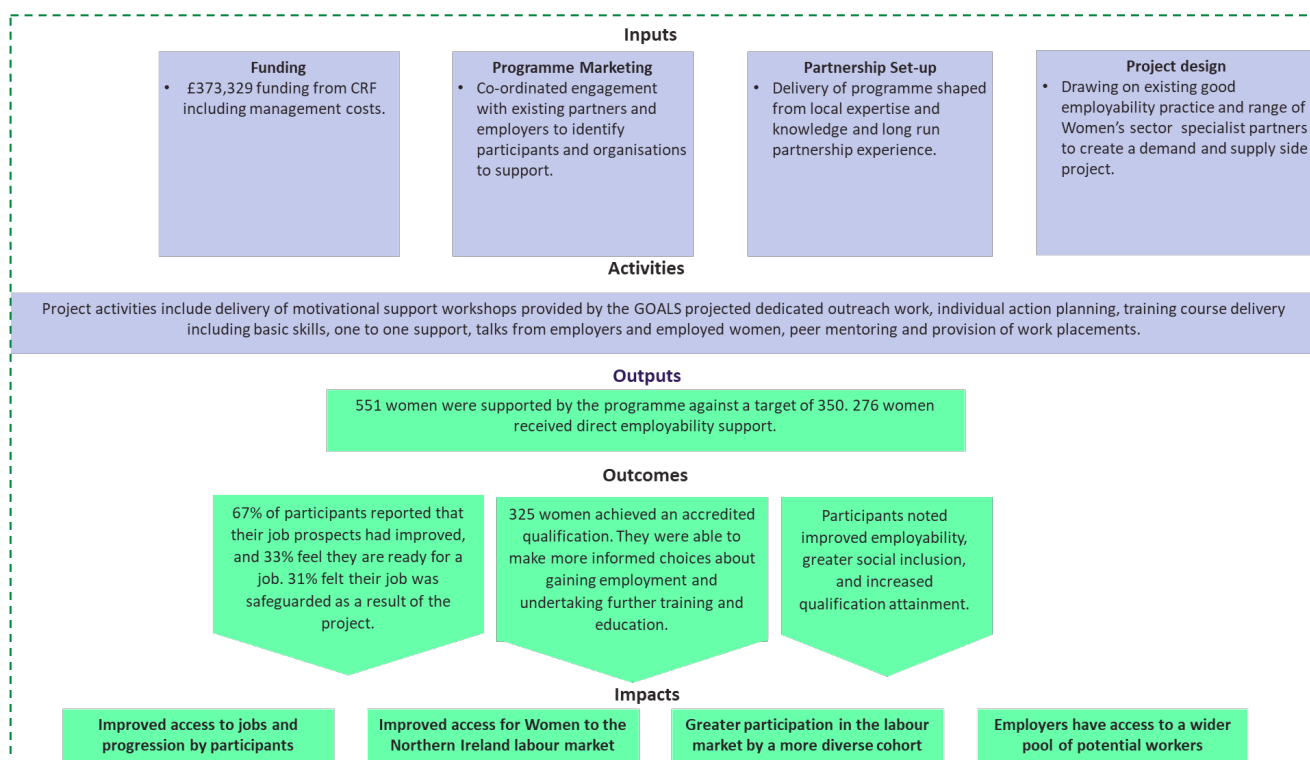
Evaluation Methods:

- Review of monitoring data including skills needs assessments completed by participants, as well as training and event feedback data
- Qualitative interviews with Train the Trainer participants, wider programme participants, and case study and story collection
- Value-for-money assessment

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- Delivery covered all kinds of geographies and included explicit support for travel and childcare challenges faced by the participants to facilitate participation. Seventy per cent of participants had a specific childcare responsibility.
- The programme made a conscious decision to focus outreach towards rural and isolated areas in which there was little to no existing support specifically for women in their communities. Rural areas benefitted greatly and the project was successful in the aim to 'level up' delivery across NI. Overall, delivery saw 52 per cent in urban areas and 48 per cent in rural areas.
- The relationships between the existing women's centres and the sector in general and between the project partners were strong, which resulted in delivery in those centres.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The programme addressed urban–rural disparities in employability support for women in Northern Ireland

CRF funding addressed gaps for employability support delivered through the specialist women's sector in Northern Ireland following many years of squeezed funding. Moreover, it brought a more strategic approach to addressing these gaps through working across all local authority areas in Northern Ireland and targeting those areas in which limited delivery had taken place previously, especially in rural areas. The project evaluation noted that many rural areas had suffered from limited to no investment in this type of support for years and that access to accredited training programmes in rural areas was extremely limited. The success of reaching these rural areas is largely due to the project partners' decision to allocate resources to these areas instead of urban areas which already offered similar support.

Investing in an external communications team was instrumental in the project's successful beneficiary recruitment

The external communications team was engaged with the project from the outset and led to exponential growth in website and social media engagement. They helped with brand development, recognition and saturation, which supported the large numbers of women who participated in the programme. Furthermore, they established a YouTube channel that included videos on myth busting with regard to the benefit system, and managed an in-person event. This external support for professional marketing and communications is cited as central to the success of the programme.

Non-accredited training programmes can be the entry point for many women into similar support programmes

Although a major target output of this project was focused on the number of women who completed accredited training programmes to increase their skillset and improve their employability, the project found that some women were interested in engaging but not yet prepared to commit to an accredited training course. They found success in enrolling in non-accredited courses such as Speech Confidence or Get Creative with your Finances, which served as a way for providers to get women engaged with the programme to begin with.

Wide-ranging support for women makes an active difference in their attitudes and approaches to their own employability

Support that proved to be most useful for the women with whom the programme worked included attaining accredited qualifications but offering non-accredited ones for those not ready to take up these opportunities. In addition, support for job-searching, CV, and interview skills as well as support to understand the benefit system were particularly helpful in supporting participants to make more informed choices with regard to gaining employment and undertaking further training and education.

Case Study 8

Intervention Type:	Removing barriers to employment
Project Name:	Community Jobs Scotland Intergenerational Pilot
Local Authority Area:	Highland Council, Scotland

Summary of Project

Run by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), the Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) Intergenerational Pilot programme targeted young (aged 16–29), unemployed people furthest from the labour market and/or hardest hit by the pandemic. In addition, the project had planned to include those aged 50 or above; however, they were unsuccessful in attracting beneficiaries from this segment.

The key objectives of the programme were to support:

- Unemployed people towards sustainable employment through continuous employability support and development
- The development of third sector organisations.

It funded 31 six-month paid work placements within Highland's third sector organisations. The programme focused on improving the employability as well as access to the labour market of the following segments:

- People with disabilities or health issues
- Carers
- Care leavers/care-experienced
- People with convictions
- Military early service leavers
- Young people from the BAME community
- Lone parents
- People affected by substance misuse or homelessness
- People living in a rural area
- People who are refugees or granted leave to stay in the country.

Evaluation Methods:

- Desk-based review of project management information, activity, and outcome reporting
- Consultations with the SCVO, Highland Council, DWP staff, participating employers (eight of 10 employers worked with), and nine individuals who undertook work placements in six employers

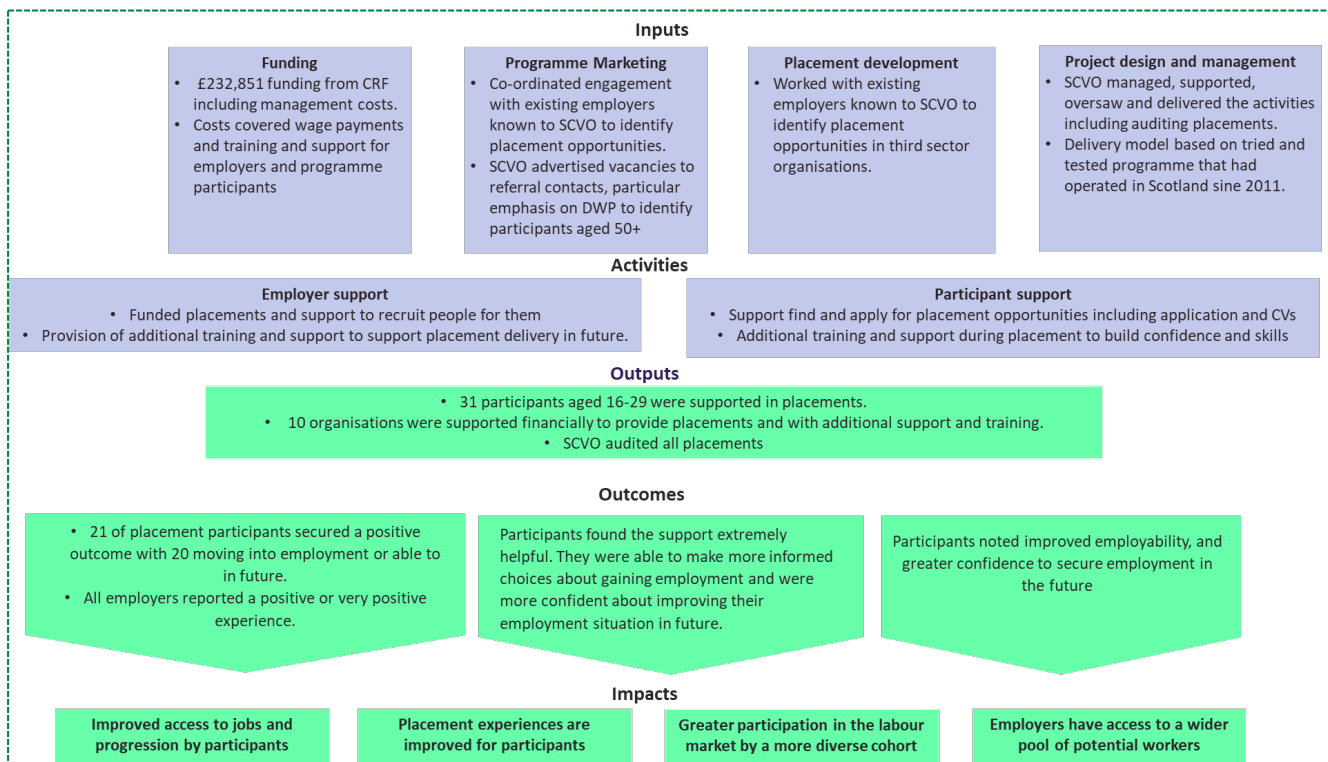
Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The programme targeted groups furthest from the labour market and/or hardest hit by COVID-19.
- All placements were provided within businesses that had a previous

relationship with the SCVO to help ensure that the programme was able to begin providing placements quickly and easily. This trusting relationship was an important foundation in delivering this programme.

- The programme was relevant to rural areas in which economic activity is concentrated in specific centres, with most of the placements (87 per cent) being hosted in Inverness and its surrounding areas.
- Placements were commonly in assistant-style jobs in retail, hospitality, and administrative roles; therefore, they may be more suitable for areas in which there are large numbers of jobs in these sector/occupation types.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The programme model is both appealing to the young unemployed and successful in delivering outcomes among that beneficiary segment

Twenty of the 31 participants moved into employment after completing the programme. Half moved into jobs in which they undertook their programme placements, and half found jobs outside of the organisations involved in the programme.

Participants noted that the support led to improved confidence and mental health and made them feel more employable. The work experience allowed them to improve their people skills, and helped them to feel more 'job-ready'. Moreover, they valued the support received on job searching and developing their CV. Some employers would have valued more guidance on how they could also support participant employability so that they could provide more on-the-job support.

Beneficiary recruitment strategies must be tailored to the different age groups that the programme wishes to attract

Decreasing numbers of those aged 50+ years in the labour market, the short timescale for delivery, and a limited focus on recruiting via the DWP were the main factors that led to this beneficiary group not accessing the support. When targeting specific support groups, projects should seek wider and community-based routes into those communities to market project availability and foster referrals to it. In addition, there was acknowledgement that better coordination between the programme, the DWP, and their work coaches may have allowed the programme to be promoted from the start, thereby increasing the number of referrals.

Quality relationships with organisations lead to good-quality placements

The SCVO utilised its existing links with local organisations to promptly secure sign-up to supply placements. This made the setup process simpler and smoother and meant that resources were focused on developing the right support for participants. For participants, this led to quality work experiences that enabled them to be deemed 'job-ready' by the end of the placement.

Smaller businesses require more time and support to attract to the programme

By relying heavily on their existing business network, the target of engaging with 24 businesses was not met (10 were engaged), nor was the target of working with 22 small businesses (only five classified as small). The evaluation recognised that smaller businesses needed more time to be engaged and also required more support once brought into the programme. Future programmes should consider what specific barriers may prevent small businesses from participating and how these could be addressed in the project design.

Limited monitoring data led to missed opportunities to learn about what worked in programme delivery

There is a need to ensure that processes and systems are in place to capture data on all accredited and unaccredited training provided by the programme. This should aid the monitoring of training delivery to ensure that all programme funding is utilised and to identify where future programmes and support could offer more locally relevant training opportunities to aid recruitment to the programme.

Case Study 9

Intervention Type:	Support for employers
Project Name:	Breaking Barriers – Inclusive Employability
Local Authority Area:	Kent County Council

Summary of Project

Breaking Barriers (BB) was delivered by Social Enterprise Kent between November 2021 and December 2022. It addressed demand- and supply-side issues in the Kent labour market, seeking to tackle the systematic underrepresentation in and exclusion from local employment opportunities for:

- people with disabilities
- people from BAME communities
- young people not in education, employment or training
- older people (50+ years).

The project also worked with a cohort of Afghan refugees at the request of stakeholders, given the support needs of this group.

BB supported individuals to move closer to and enter the labour market through the provision of advice, guidance, and practical support whilst also providing assessment, training, guidance services, and grant funding to local businesses and organisations to improve their 'equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging' (EDIB) processes and performance.

Evaluation Methods:

- Project monitoring data and the use of external benchmarking data to review project performance
- Interviews and group discussions with key stakeholders including partners, referral bodies, specialist providers, staff, and participants
- Review of content produced for project stakeholder promotional events
- Review of project documentation and reporting and the observation of delivery activities by the evaluation team

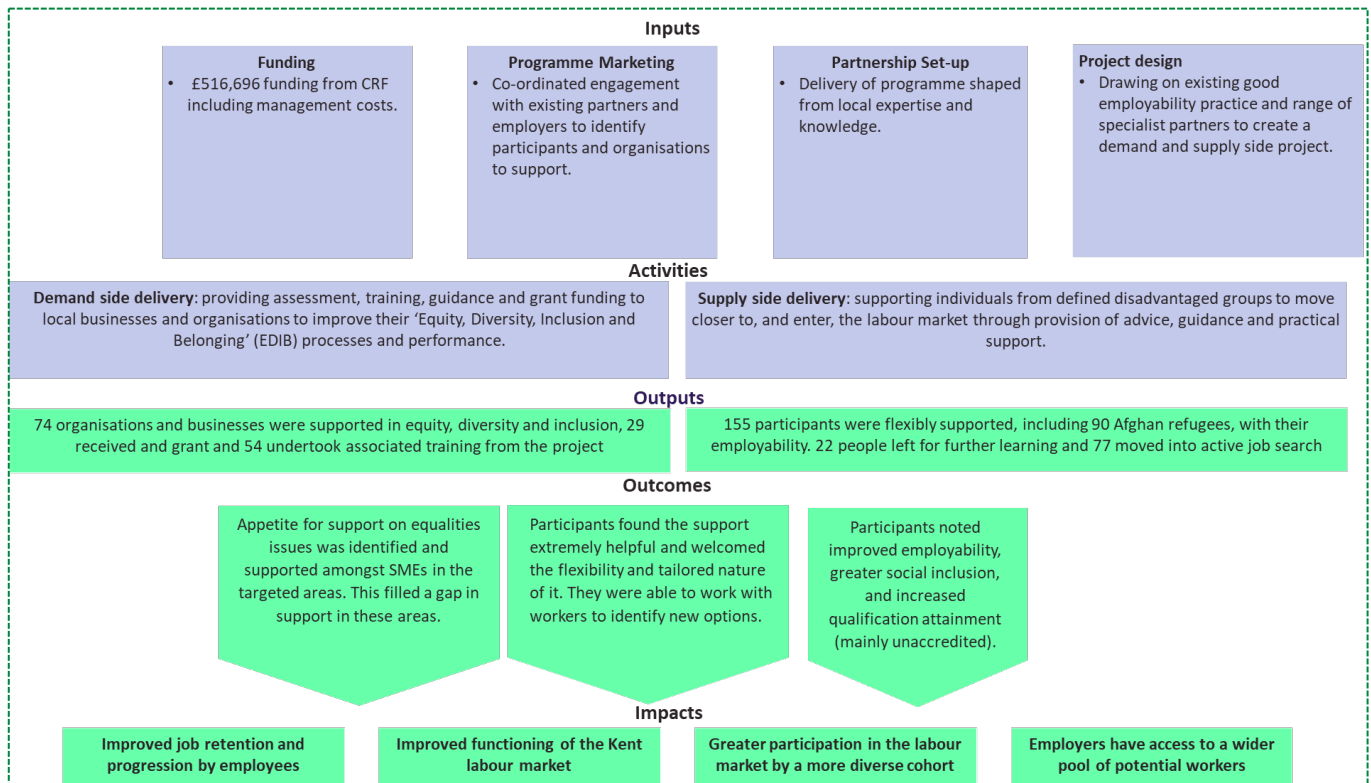
Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The project undertook delivery in Kent across a range of smaller towns and coastal areas.
- Contrary to initial expectations regarding how the labour market would respond following the lockdown periods, there was actually an abundance of employment opportunities across sectors due to a substantial increase in the number of people who became economically inactive during the pandemic and remained so. As a result, there was a greater demand for support from the economically inactive than from the unemployed.
- Experience from working with Afghan refugees offers useful insight into how an

employability project of this type can help very targeted demographic groups.

- Over half of all participants had a disability, and 65 per cent came from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background, with 90 participants (of 155) of Afghan origin being referred to the programme from the UK Government's Resettlement Scheme.
- All support was provided face-to-face.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The project model incorporated a bespoke approach targeted at supporting Afghan refugees as a particular cohort of beneficiaries

Following the resettlement of Afghan refugees to the area by the UK Government's Resettlement Scheme, the project was able to develop a new strand of support to address the specific needs of this group. By using Afghan translators to deliver the training in a group setting, bespoke support was able to be delivered in a way that aligned with the cultural norms of the beneficiaries.

The combination of demand- and supply-side approaches played a key role in project achievements

The flexibility and freedom surrounding the support that could be provided meant that the support for each individual was targeted at whatever would be most likely to achieve forward momentum and maintain participant motivation, with relatively few constraints on what needed to be provided. In contrast to other programmes, there was no fixed set of interventions needed.

The support targeted at individuals revealed that there was a significant demand from people recently diagnosed with disabilities

There were a high proportion of disabled people either who were referred or who self-referred to the programme, which was aimed at people who had not yet engaged with any existing provision of employability support. This indicates that conventional routes are not currently serving these individuals well. This programme was effective for this beneficiary segment because it focused support towards the barrier of initial 'shock' for people newly diagnosed who are grappling with changes in the type of job that they would be eligible to perform.

Demand-side support on equity and diversity practice was helpful because it tackled skills shortages, but smaller firms were most receptive when they already had staff members receptive and open to making such changes

The programme helped organisations to audit equity and diversity and then helped them to address any weaknesses identified through small grants (up to £1,000) for targeted training, as well as networking with other SMEs in a similar position. Nevertheless, it was found that while smaller businesses were most receptive to this training, since they tended not to have existing HR policies on diversity and equality, they needed to have a member of staff motivated to implement the changes suggested by the training. Without an internal 'champion', many smaller firms did not have the motivation to change.

The short project timescales prevented full alignment of the demand- and supply-side elements of the project

The demand and supply elements of the project ran as separate, parallel elements, with none of the project participants taking up a role in an organisation supported by the equity and diversity work. The planned cross-referral never took place. This was primarily due to the short timescale available to the project which prevented participants from being linked to organisations supported by the equity and diversity work. A longer timescale could have facilitated this linkage, allowing newly inclusive employers to link more easily to participants supported by the project.

Experienced and local knowledge of partners was a key success factor for the project

Success in work with the participants can be attributed to a large extent to the depth of experience and local knowledge of partners. Those with complex needs whom BB supported are distant from the labour market and need nuanced provision that takes account of and draws on the local context and the specific needs of smaller employers. Coupled with flexibility in the delivery approach, this brings the best chance of success for those furthest from the labour market amongst those with whom BB worked. In selecting future providers for these kinds of target groups, selection should be based on these areas of expertise and knowledge.

Case Study 10

Intervention Type:	Support for young people NEET
Project Name:	Hidden Talent
Local Authority Area:	Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)

Summary of Project

Hidden Talent (HT) was a youth employment project which provided support to young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) to progress towards an education, employment or training outcome. Led by the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO), the project delivered individualised one-to-one support for young people via talent coaches. The talent coaches delivered a support programme co-produced by young people and an employer advisory group. The supported had an embedded mental health support dimension.

HT specifically sought to work with young people who were 'hidden' from wider access to support services because they were not claiming benefits to which they were entitled (despite not being in education, employment or training). Delivery prioritised support provision in Manchester, Bolton, Rochdale, and Oldham and worked through strong links with public sector bodies in Bury, Salford, and Stockport. The project successfully worked with 142 young people aged 16–24, against an original target of 124.

Evaluation Methods:

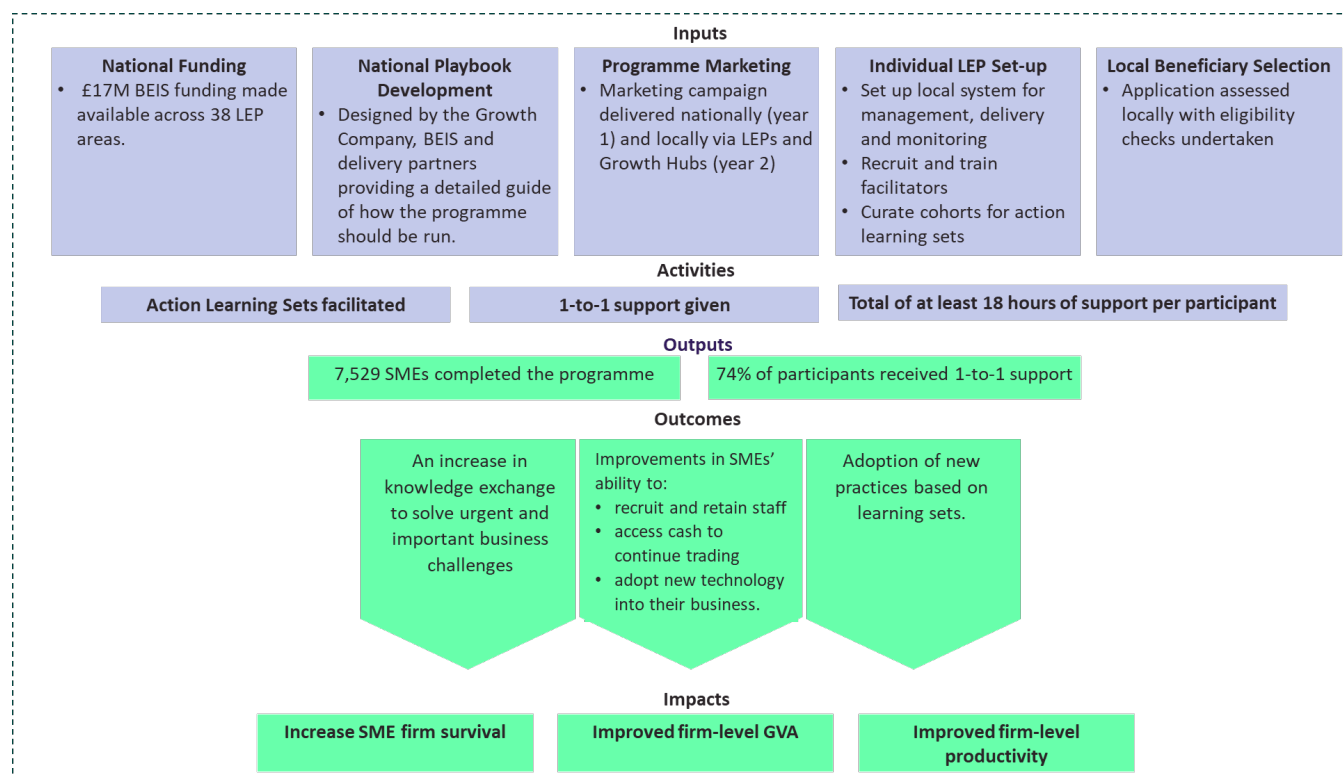
- Monitoring data review assessing participation and outcomes as well as 'proximity to labour market' measures to support impact measurement, which aimed to act as an additional way of assessing the progression by supported young people who may not fit standard outcome targets
- Qualitative in-depth stakeholder interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries which assessed project effectiveness, involving young people (x15), project managers (x4), talent coaches (x6), delivery partners (x3), advisory group members (x3), and youth panel participants (x6)
- Evaluation team also attended a range of HT meetings to understand the local context and the operational circumstances of the programme

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- Existing strong relationships in the VCSE sector and the project management team's ability to build effectively on learning from previous Talent Match and Hidden Talent projects were key to enabling the rapid establishment of the 2022 Hidden Talent project.
- The programme was designed for delivery in a large city location — delivered across seven local authority areas and reaching some of the most marginalised young people through an extensive programme of outreach and widespread promotion of the programme.
- Target demographics reflected local needs (but might affect the relevance for

other areas) — participants were predominantly male (61 per cent), with a quarter of all participants from a black, Asian or other minority ethnic group. Sixteen per cent had a mental health condition and 10 per cent a social/communication impairment. Twenty-seven per cent of participants indicated through a needs assessment that they had a long-term mental health condition.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

HT has been highly effective in reaching some of the most marginalised young people in a very short timescale

Of the 142 young people who participated, 51 per cent were economically inactive (including hidden), while 49 per cent were registered as unemployed and receiving benefits. Forty-five per cent of the total were hidden, reflecting a proportion of the economically inactive 51 per cent, with the other six per cent being those in receipt of benefits but unable to work due to health or disability. Twenty-seven per cent had a long-term mental health issue, and 30 per cent had some form of neurodiversity. Engagement with talent coaches contributed to cognitive, emotional and behavioural development and was a notable positive outcome of the project. Support from the project meant that those previously hidden achieved better employment outcomes than did unemployed peers but were less successful in education and training.

Existing VCSE sector links actively supported the quick establishment of the project

By using previous learning from Talent Match and a previous version of the Hidden Talent programme and building on existing links with VCSE partners, the

project was able to build a model of diverse tailored support informed by best practice for young people. This ensured that the project was able to draw on a wide range of community-based support (such as seeking out appropriate mental health provision or support to deal with homelessness) to supplement and tailor the support provision provided one-to-one by the projects' talent coaches. This supported the development of strong trusting relationships between the coaches and the young people, contributing to cognitive, emotional and behavioural development of the supported young people.

The support model had some specific innovative elements including a designated fund for the provision of additional mental health support as well as a co-production model driven by an existing regional youth panel

An additional £14,700 budget was ring-fenced to provide a range of specialist mental health support including counselling support for young people facing ongoing delays in receipt of NHS mental health services (which continued beyond the end of the project). Even so, the talent coaches had to manage referrals to these services sensitively because of the stigma associated with these services. The youth panel also actively supported this development whilst also providing key young-person-led intelligence on local employment and skills ecosystem challenges, inputting into youth hub design and evaluation approaches and the interpretation of findings.

'Hidden' young people continue to have strong negative perceptions of benefit claims

With rising poverty this is a serious challenge because, despite work by DWP staff, young people supported by the project continue to have negative associations with benefit claims. Thirty-nine per cent of HT participants had never previously made a benefit claim. These concerns include the social stigma associated with being a claimant, the inaccessibility of making and sustaining claims (including the bureaucracy), and real fears as to the repercussions of making a benefit claim. This impact on the project's ability to get more young people to engage with the benefit system (16 in comparison to a target of 32) indicates that further work is needed to address these barriers.

The success of the HT approach means that it offers an important option for a more permanent support service for young people

The high demand for the HT programme suggests that there is a need for a more permanent service for young people. It highlights the need to retain all elements of the project design because this provides the right tailored support that hidden young people need (given their distance from the labour market). To refine the approach further there is a need to ensure that a longer timescale is available for support delivery than HT had under the current CRF arrangement, as this would ensure that impacts for the young people become more embedded, giving them a greater likelihood of securing employment.

Case Study 11

Intervention Type:	Actions to support decarbonisation and net zero
Project Name:	North Northamptonshire to Net Zero
Local Authority Area:	North Northamptonshire Unitary Council

Summary of Project

The 'North Northamptonshire to Net Zero' (NN2NZ) project aimed to devise a holistic strategy to introduce localised green energy, housing, and transport initiatives and programmes to achieve net zero status for North Northamptonshire ahead of 2050 targets. The project was designed, delivered and managed by Electric Corby, a company which supports businesses and governmental bodies in Corby to achieve net zero. It consisted of activities geared towards the identification of barriers to decarbonisation as well as solutions, the creation of a framework to assess progress beyond the project, and feasibility studies for potential initiatives.

The project's evaluation found that it has positively contributed towards the development of a route map for North Northamptonshire's net zero strategy, which is likely to be implemented due to its joining-up with pre-existing green and decarbonisation strategies. Whilst support amongst residents and businesses for the project was high, the report suggested that communities' willingness to be involved was not as forthcoming.

Evaluation Methods:

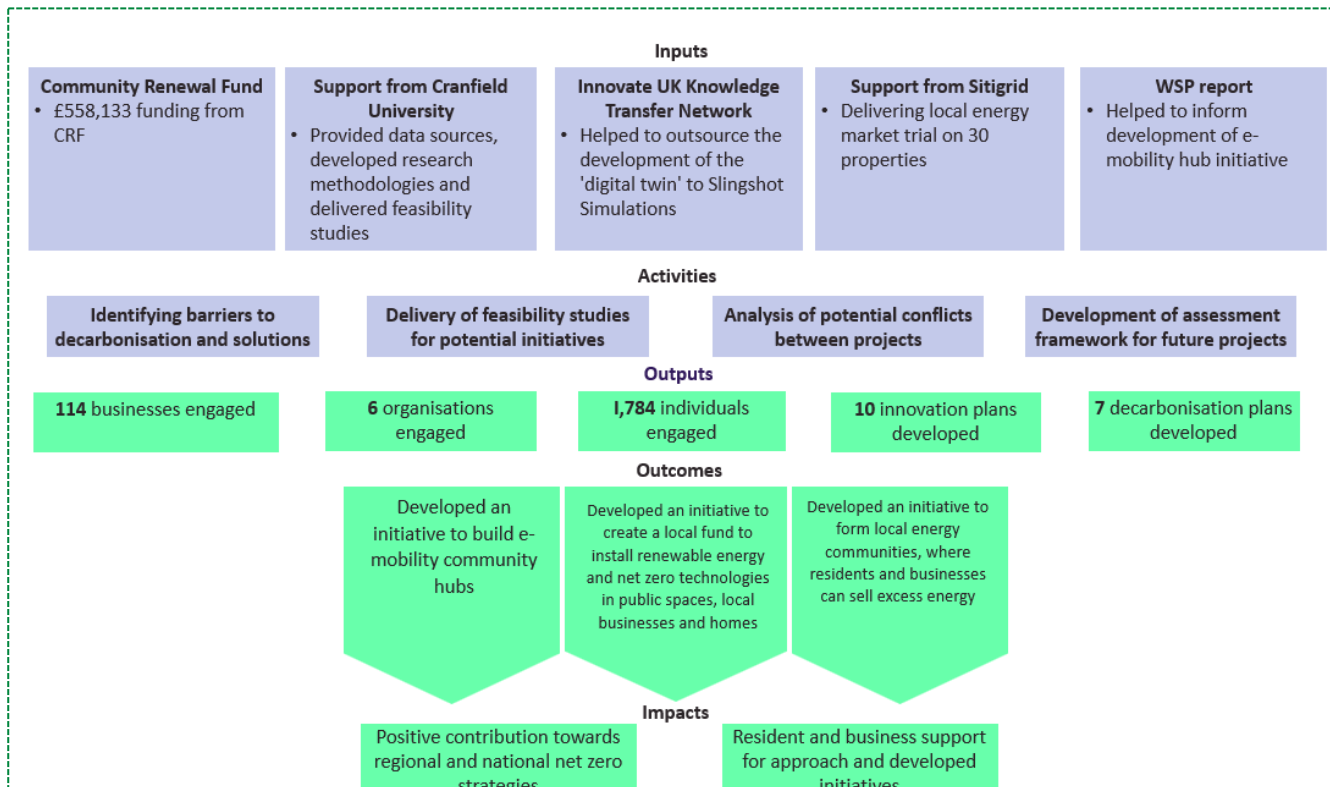
- Desk review of the strategic and environmental context
- Review of documentary evidence provided by Electric Corby
- Surveys carried out with local businesses and residents to gauge views towards the project
- Consultations carried out with the project team and partners to assess views towards the project

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The rationale behind the project identified the slow rate of decline in domestic and transport-related emissions within the area as the primary barrier to decarbonisation, rather than that of industrial emissions. As a result, project objectives and activities were primarily geared towards the reduction of domestic and transport emissions specific to the project area.
- The project was developed, delivered and managed by Electric Corby CIC. This company runs on a partnership basis with the support of both Corby Borough Council as well as representatives from the private sector. This type of organisation, as well as the degree of strategic cohesion between the public and private sectors that Electric Corby have, may not be as present within other areas.
- The project was delivered with support from Cranfield University, a specialist

university retaining strong industry partnerships with organisations and businesses within the science and technology sectors. In consultation with the project team, the university helped to develop methodologies for assessing progress, and carried out research/feasibility studies. Similar partnerships with specialist universities may not be as accessible or plausible for all bodies.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The project could have benefitted from a clearer engagement strategy and an initiative to reach beyond pre-established networks in order to better engage local communities

The project largely engaged with businesses with which Electric Corby and its partners had existing relationships and through established forums and networks, and relied on support from parish councils to engage those in rural areas. This strategy meant that engaging with the wider community was difficult and may have limited the extent to which initiatives were informed by community input and needs. A clearly defined engagement strategy at the outset may have helped to identify and remedy gaps in Electric Corby's pre-existing network.

Strong support from the public sector and other partners ensured that delivery was smooth and methodologies robust

Electric Corby retained the support of the local council and other public bodies, maintaining a clear line of communication with them before the project's inception. Ties with private partners were similarly strong, with local universities (such as Cranfield) and research bodies informing and aiding data collection. These

connections paved the foundations for community engagement and ensured that the data collected from engagement were significant and methodologically sound.

Opportunities to join up with similar local initiatives were underexploited, leading to missed opportunities for information sharing and collaboration

The GRIP (Green Recovery and Innovation Programme) grant scheme is another CRF-funded decarbonisation initiative being delivered in the area covered by the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership. The evaluation report retrospectively identified potential opportunities for collaboration between the two projects which were not taken up during delivery. For example, since the GRIP had been engaging local businesses during NN2NZ's inception, a collaboration could have resulted in more businesses being identified for the latter's project team to engage.

The project could have benefitted from further funding to kickstart the implementation of the devised initiatives

The evaluation reported that the project had been largely successful in identifying initiatives likely to contribute towards national and regional net zero strategies. With additional funding to implement particular projects, NN2NZ could have further evidenced that the devised projects could both contribute towards decarbonisation and meet the community need for green hubs and innovation.

Case Study 12

Intervention Type:	Developing the local arts, culture and heritage offer
Project Name:	Street Life: Using York's Historic High Streets as Heritage Catalysts for Community Renewal
Local Authority Area:	City of York

Summary of Project

Led by the University of York and in partnership with City of York Council, York Civic Trust, and the York Music Venue Network, Street Life sought to create innovative and immersive heritage, music and print experiences to revitalise the historic Coney Street in the City of York. The project sought to overcome the challenges associated with the decline of the high street and incentivise activity to engage people, businesses and organisations creatively with York's heritage.

The programme delivered four work packages: mapping and developing a digital portal, creating music and heritage experiences, developing and delivering heritage workshops, and conducting heritage research. The project generated both social and economic impacts through upskilling beneficiaries, developing new products and services, and preserving heritage.

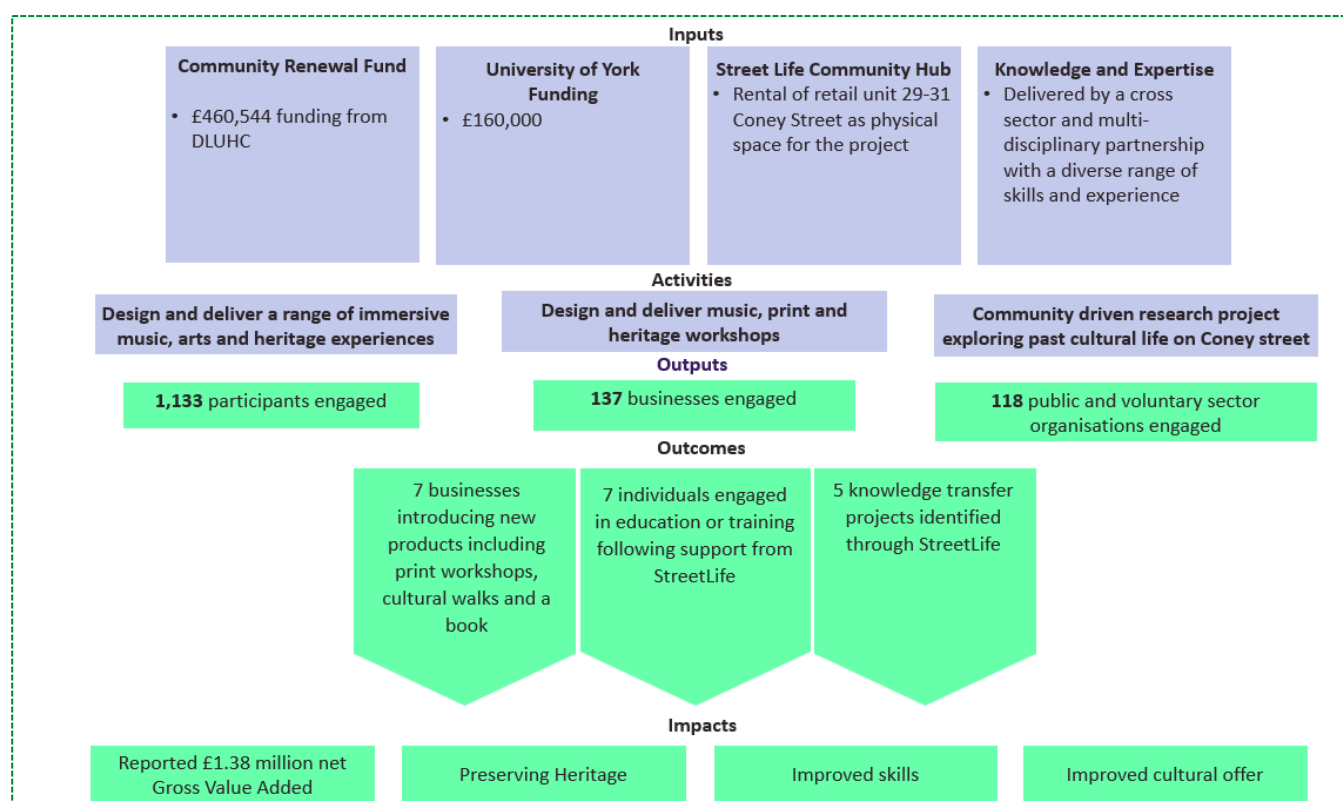
Evaluation Methods:

- Desk review of evidence (including programme documentation) to explore the strategic context of the Street Life project
- Event attendance and site visits
- Assessment of project performance data
- Assessment of beneficiary feedback data provided by the University of York via an 'Indicator and Feedback' form (n=1,133)
- Semi-structured interviews with project stakeholders (n=15)
- Economic modelling to assess the economic benefit of preserving heritage as well as the associated skills uplift

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The unique heritage in York and Coney Street (where the project is focused).
- The project had a physical presence on Coney Street, the Street Life hub, which was used to deliver activities and workshops.
- York's heritage and historic past to stimulate interest in the high street as well as economic growth were central to the local post-COVID-19 economic recovery strategy.
- York's creative sector (which has been integral to project delivery through collaborations, knowledge transfer, and the development of new products).

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The project successfully demonstrated that there was an appetite for immersive creative and heritage activities on the high street

The project benefitted from having a physical presence on Coney Street from which to anchor and to provide a space for independents and creative arts and heritage immersion. It benefitted from good footfall, which enabled members of the public to engage with the project opportunistically, as well as adding to the overall city centre offer, which is otherwise dominated by retail. Stakeholders remarked on the value of having an experiential physical presence on the high street for the project.

Whilst the hub was an important aspect of the delivery of the projects, there were challenges associated with hosting a physical space on the high street

The most pertinent challenge was that of costs associated with letting units on the high street (which were higher than originally anticipated). This led to reprofiling spend to cover letting costs. Furthermore, there were constraints with regard to the accessibility of the space and, given that it was rented on a short-term basis, it was not possible to make the space fully accessible.

Partnership working as part of the project was a strength

The multi-sector and multidisciplinary partnership (researchers, academics, economic development teams, creative sector) worked well in trialling new approaches to activating the high street. Street Life has enabled the university to explore its civic agenda in a practical and collaborative way, demonstrating the

important role that the university can play in the (re)development of the city. Street Life has conveyed academic areas of interest to a more general audience in an accessible and interesting way. There is an appetite for these strategic partnerships to continue and a number of follow-on projects were planned.

The scale of the increase in footfall as a result of the project was difficult to ascertain

Given the small-scale nature of the project as well as the substantial pedestrian numbers in this part of the city centre, the impact of the project on overall footfall levels is unclear. The project led to activation of the high street at different times of the day through evening events and it was reported that the project was successful in bringing people to the city centre during quieter times. However, more could have been done at the design stage to plan for capturing this outcome.

Case Study 13

Intervention Type:	Investment in community engagement schemes
Project Name:	A Better Future Post Covid: Empowering Communities in the Wakefield District
Local Authority Area:	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Summary of Project

'A Better Future Post Covid: Empowering Communities in the Wakefield District' aimed to support the third sector in its recovery from the impacts of the pandemic and build confidence and resilience in order to continue service delivery. The programme was jointly designed and delivered by the University of Huddersfield, Wakefield Council, and Spectrum People (a community interest company that specialise in supporting vulnerable adults and young people). It consisted of three elements: a Consultant Project Assistant (CPA), a £400,000 Local Grant Scheme, and five workshops for community group staff and their users that were designed to raise aspirations and support capacity building.

The evaluation found that the Local Grant Scheme element was the most impactful element. The CPA element faced some challenges, particularly with regard to the recruitment of organisations and the support on offer. The workshops were found to be effective in providing knowledge exchange activities for the sector.

Evaluation Methods:

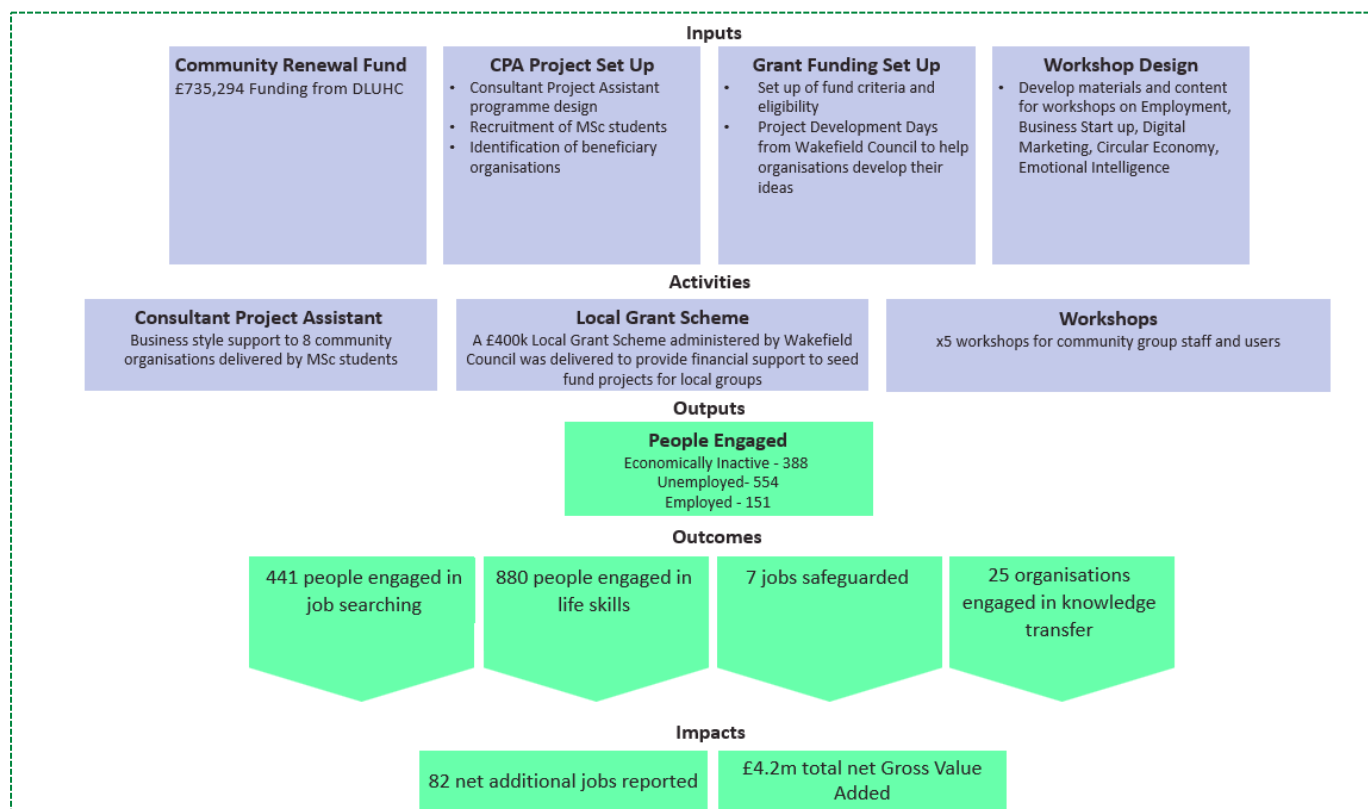
- Desk review of market failures and the strategic context
- Review of contracted outputs
- Interviews and surveys with Consultant Project Assistants, organisations that received CPA support, and organisations that received grant support
- Interviews with the delivery and management teams
- Economic impact assessment:
 - Direct employment: employment impacts and resultant GVA from jobs created and safeguarded (to date and projected)
 - Indirect employment effect: the effect on suppliers and the resultant productivity/GVA from jobs created and safeguarded as well as projected

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The CPA and workshop elements of the project were delivered by Huddersfield University Business School students. The CPA element is part of an established 'Pathway to Consultancy Programme' delivered by the business school and may not be available in other areas.
- The CPA element also benefitted from partnering with the Residents Recovery Board (a multi-agency vehicle for ensuring post-COVID-19 recovery and levelling-up), which may not be available in other areas.
- Developing the VCSE sector is a strategic priority for the WYCA, which outlined

the need for a bigger and more varied sector. Currently, large organisations absorb 70 per cent of sectoral income, whereas small organisations (2,200 organisations) receive only 0.4 per cent of sectoral income.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Applying an established business support student placement to the VCSE proved to be a promising model

Building on an established student placement programme that had previously been used to support private sector businesses, the CPA element supported community organisations in a similar style. It was reported that the community organisations benefitted from having an objective viewpoint on their operation, as well as supporting developing volunteer pipelines, financial business plans, and the delivery of services. MSc students received valuable experience of applying academic concepts to the third sector.

The project demonstrates a positive role that higher education institutions (HEI) can play in offering support to the VCSE sector

The project illustrates the potential for HEIs to offer valuable support to the VCSE sector through knowledge exchange programmes and placements. In Wakefield, there was a demand for each type of support and, as a result of the project, there was an appetite for a longer-term strategic relationship between Wakefield Council, Spectrum People, and the University of Huddersfield.

The placement element could have been even more effective with a more coherent induction process as well as better ongoing support from the

university

Future activities of this nature should pay close attention to the levels of prior skill and knowledge of CPAs and the levels of support that CPAs would likely need. The placement element would have benefitted from a more comprehensive induction process at the outset as well as better ongoing support (which suffered from changes in personnel responsible for supporting CPAs).

The application process for the grant scheme was supportive and encouraged collaboration between grantees (which resulted in better-quality applications)

In an attempt to ensure that the grant fund reached community organisations throughout Wakefield and to offer support to organisations through the application process, a 'Development Day' was delivered by Wakefield Council, which encouraged organisations to share their ideas and collaboratively develop bids. This was seen to be a positive aspect of the grant programme in the way in which it eased the process for organisations to access needed funding.

Some community organisation beneficiaries of the grant programme found the UKCRF monitoring and reporting requirements to be challenging

The level of administration linked to the funding was perceived by some community organisations to be high, which was perceived to have slowed down project delivery, created capacity challenges, and diverted focus from working with communities. The evaluation report noted that there was some resistance to the monitoring of funds. It was suggested that there could be benefits in streamlining monitoring and reporting requirements for community organisations that may have more limited administrative capacity.

Case Study 14

Intervention Type:	Investment in community engagement schemes (e.g. volunteering, community groups, supporting civil society)
Project Name:	Resourceful Communities: Towards a Wellbeing Economy
Local Authority Area:	Pembrokeshire County Council

Summary of Project

The Resourceful Communities: Towards a Wellbeing Economy programme was led by the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) and was a collaboration between statutory, third sector, and community partners. It aimed to explore a third-sector-led approach to promoting a community-led well-being economy in Pembrokeshire.

The programme delivered a range of activities that sought to address the holistic determinants of well-being across thematic areas including local heritage, community cohesion, community-focused research, the local economy and shortening supply chains, developing microenterprises, sustainable development, and digital inclusion. Activities included the setting-up of a small grant programme, conducting narrative research into people's experience of financial hardship, entrepreneurial support for microenterprises, delivering care, support and well-being services, and linking local food growers with supply chain opportunities.

Programme activities demonstrated the skills, knowledge and capacity that are available in the Pembrokeshire area and how these can be used to ensure that communities can be active, connected, resourceful and sustainable.

Evaluation Methods:

- Development of a theory of change
- Review of programme data
- Project-level pro forma (collecting data on activities, outcomes, enablers and barriers)
- Focus group with partners
- Grantee questionnaire
- Thematic analysis

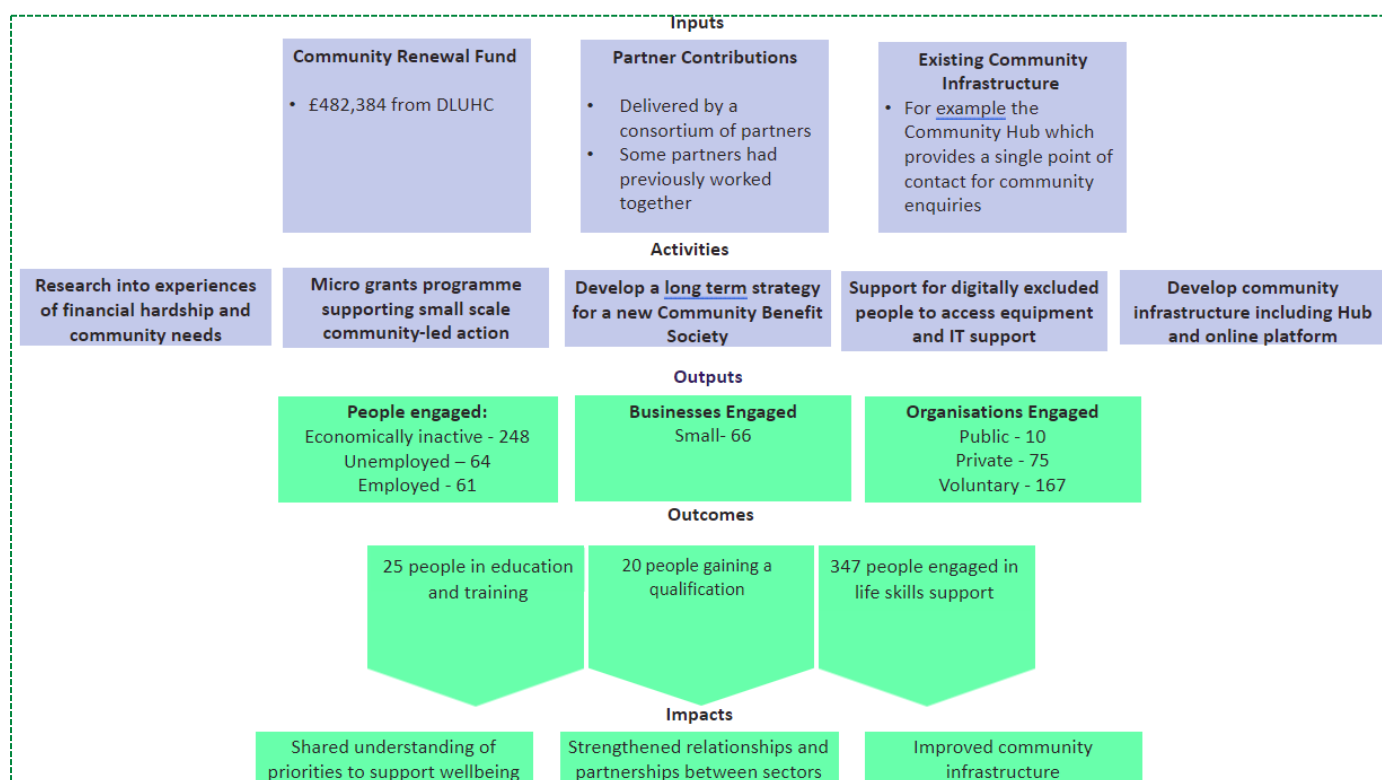
Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- Pembrokeshire is a rural county with the fourth least densely populated area out of all 22 local authorities across Wales. The focus of activities on issues such as social care and digital connection reflects this rural context.
- The strategic context in Wales and Pembrokeshire may affect the relevance for other areas. For example, Wales' Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) provides the ambition, permission, and legal obligation to improve the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Wales.
- The existing connections between organisations within the consortium were

seen to be an enabler of working cooperatively. The evaluation noted that partners were already known to one another and had experience of working in tandem to deliver shared goals.

- Some activities capitalised on Pembrokeshire's natural assets including the community growing and nature-based therapies, which may be more challenging in urban areas.
- Pembrokeshire (along with Denbighshire) has the highest rate of volunteering across Wales¹. This is significant because the programme was a community-led initiative with community-based delivery partners which rely on volunteers and, therefore, may not be as easily replicated in areas in which civic engagement and participation are not as high.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The multi-sector partnership, combining a broad range of expertise, was a key enabler of improving the broad range of factors that contribute to well-being

There were a range of partners engaged across the community and statutory sector, which enabled initiatives to be delivered across many thematic areas and under the shared vision of improving well-being. The consortium was built including partners with the ability to deliver on the ground and influence strategically. The range of partners' skills, knowledge and experience was also critical to the success of delivery — including the experience of working in and with

¹ Welsh Government, 'Volunteering (National Survey for Wales): April 2019 to March 2020'.

the communities targeted by the programme, the experience of community-led development, and the experience of supporting supply chain resilience. The UKCRF project was expected to be the start of a longer-term ambition to work more collaboratively.

The tight overall delivery timescales for the CRF affected the effectiveness of delivery and the overall impacts of the project

Partners reported that the challenging UKCRF timescales impacted on the quality of outcomes that were delivered by the programme. Specifically, they felt that the timescales affected partners' ability to co-produce elements of delivery, work in collaboration with wider partners, promote the activities broadly, engage with underrepresented groups (including young people), and design and deliver a grant fund programme.

The management and governance structures were not fully established as originally intended, which meant that the programme was not as integrated as it could have been

As an alternative to setting up a project management group, it was decided to use existing mechanisms and working groups to oversee elements of delivery, which limited the potential for closer working to knit the different elements of the project together, share learning, and work as collaboratively as had been originally envisaged.

Case Study 15

Intervention Type:	Supporting the development of new or existing infrastructure or green space
Project Name:	iConnect
Local Authority Area:	Monmouthshire

Summary of Project

The iConnect project was a partnership between Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA) and Melin Homes. It was conceived to explore solutions to digital inequality in Monmouthshire at three different levels:

- County/sub-county
- Micro-community
- Individual residents.

Activities included procuring, piloting and evaluating free community mesh Wi-Fi in two micro-communities, commissioning a feasibility study to understand the potential options to bring affordable Wi-Fi to those living in digital or financial poverty, a digital and financial inclusion pilot, and a digital skills confidence intervention.

The main outcomes related to the learning and insight generated, particularly regarding the effectiveness of a community mesh in the micro-community as an alternative to major capital-intensive solutions. Additionally, the project led to positive social outcomes in relation to the development of digital confidence and skills, namely reducing isolation, improving quality of life, and addressing financial challenges.

Evaluation Methods:

- Review of project data and monitoring information
- Observational visits to activities
- Focus groups with project beneficiaries
- Semi-structured interviews with project delivery and management teams

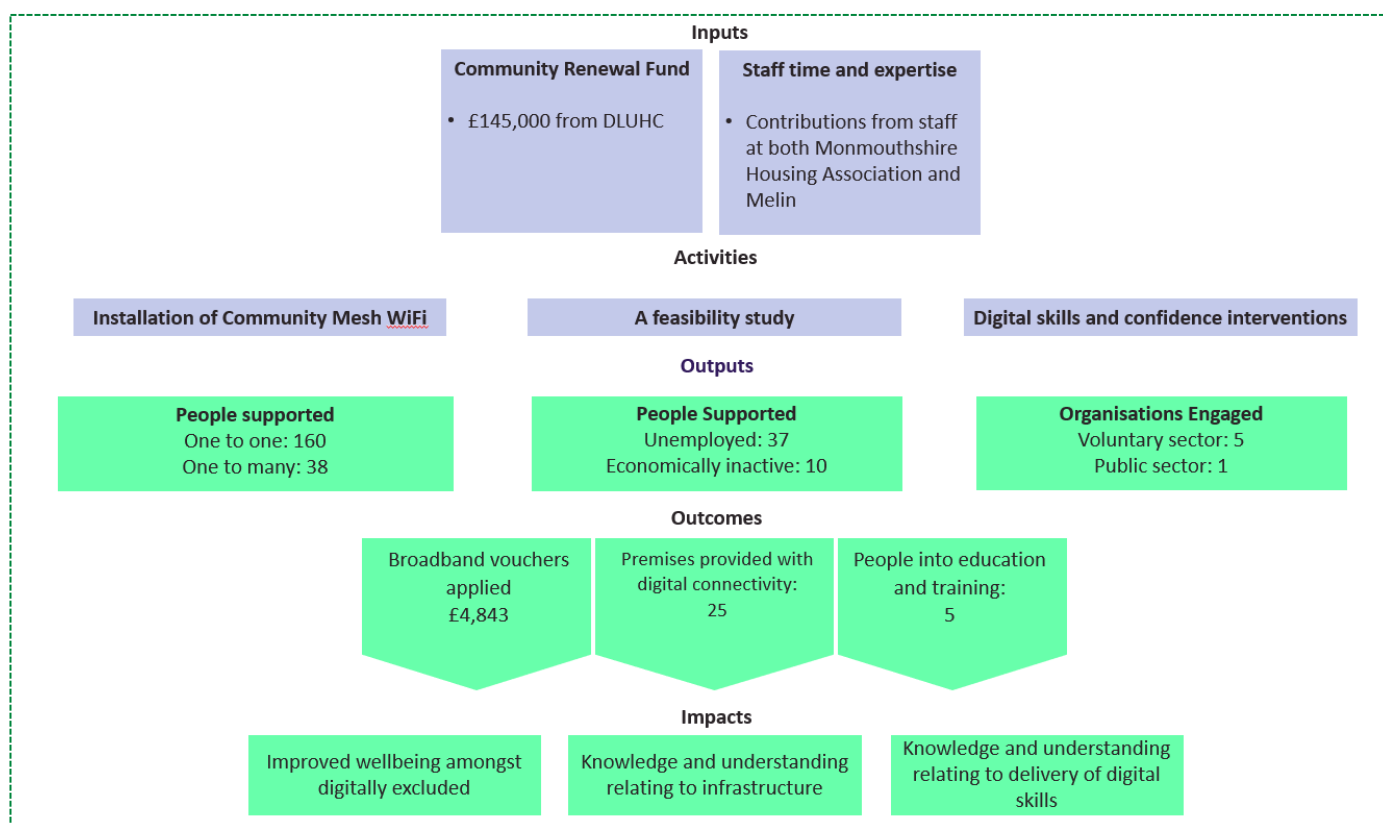
Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- Monmouthshire has an ageing population and the joint-second-highest average age in Wales. The percentage of people who are economically inactive due to being retired is over twice that of the Wales and Britain figure². This group is more likely to experience digital exclusion; therefore, the need for digital inclusion projects in Monmouthshire may be greater than in other areas.
- The project formed an integral part of MHA's Digital Strategy, which highlighted the need to improve connectivity for residents. Digital inclusion may not be such

² ONS Annual Population Survey.

a priority for other areas or other housing associations looking to carry out similar projects.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The project highlighted the importance of considering both structural issues and the skills/confidence gap when seeking to address digital inclusion

The findings from the project show the importance of both structural and skills aspects of digital exclusion and highlight the importance of addressing both challenges in an interrelated way.

The project generated useful learning in relation to engaging with potential beneficiaries of digital support, with visibility in communities being important

A range of client engagement methods for the digital skills strands were employed. These included 'digital drive-by' awareness-raising events in which a minibus visited multiple communities to promote workshop and drop-in interventions. The most effective method was seen to be an officer working in communal housing association rooms (instead of from home), as this enabled the officer to build relationships with residents and provided a route to beneficiaries.

A flexible approach to the delivery of digital confidence and skills training resulted in a range of benefits for beneficiaries

The project found that it was important not to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to delivering digital skills and confidence training. The drop-in sessions, workshops,

and one-to-one support provided beneficiaries with a range of opportunities to engage. Some interventions lasted 5–10 minutes, which was sufficient to yield demonstrable benefits. Beneficiaries reported a range of benefits related to quality of life, addressing loneliness, financial support, and online safety for vulnerable people.

The tight CRF timescales caused challenges to the project delivery in relation to both the installation of mesh Wi-Fi and the delivery of digital skills and confidence training

The initial timescale for delivery was tight, particularly to deliver key capital elements of the project, although the project extension helped to resolve this. The timing of the announcement of the extension, however, meant that some key staff left the project, creating discontinuity in provision, which affected communication to residents during and after the installation of community mesh infrastructure at one site and a loss of momentum in the delivery of digital skills and confidence building to participants.

There is a need for housing associations to fully establish the likely demand from residents for mesh Wi-Fi before investing in the infrastructure

The short lead-in time to develop project proposals meant that community mesh site selections were based on housing association managers' perceptions of need, rather than on direct insight from residents of the site properties. Where a community mesh was installed as intended at one property, uptake was not at the anticipated levels.

The procurement and installation of community mesh Wi-Fi were more costly and complicated than envisaged

The initial procurement notice received no interest, and tender responses quoted prices significantly more than had been expected. This highlights the need for more research and planning at the application stage to ensure that associated costs are as accurate as possible.

Case Study 16

Intervention Type:	Investment in digital skills
Project Name:	Breaking Digital Skills: A Pathway to Digital Employability for Greater Manchester
Local Authority Area:	Greater Manchester Authority

Summary of Project

In 2020, Good Things Foundation and Liverpool University identified that 42 per cent of the Greater Manchester population (approx. 1.2 million residents) were limited or non-digital users. The Breaking Digital Skills project set out to support working-age residents across Greater Manchester to overcome barriers to digital inclusion via Online Centres and to bridge the gap between informal community-based digital skills provision and more formal training routes. Online Centres provided a space in which local people could gain free or low-cost access to the Internet. This included the provision of skills development support and resources such as tablets and data packages for residents experiencing digital poverty in conjunction with local community organisations.

The project supported 2,090 residents across the Greater Manchester Authority and surpassed all outcome targets. This included successfully supporting residents to access further learning, as well as supporting economically inactive residents to access support in order to improve life skills and engage in job-searching activities.

Evaluation Methods:

- Telephone interviews with 46 Online Centres
- Eight in-depth case studies with Online Centres as well as eight in-depth case studies with participants, which were undertaken via virtual interviews
- Monitoring information systems analysis of the following surveys:
 - Eligibility survey undertaken with all participants (n=2,090)
 - Baseline survey undertaken by all participants to identify who was taking part in project delivery and what they were hoping to achieve (n=2,090)
 - Impact survey which identifies which types of support participants received (it is assumed that all participants completed this survey (n=2,090))

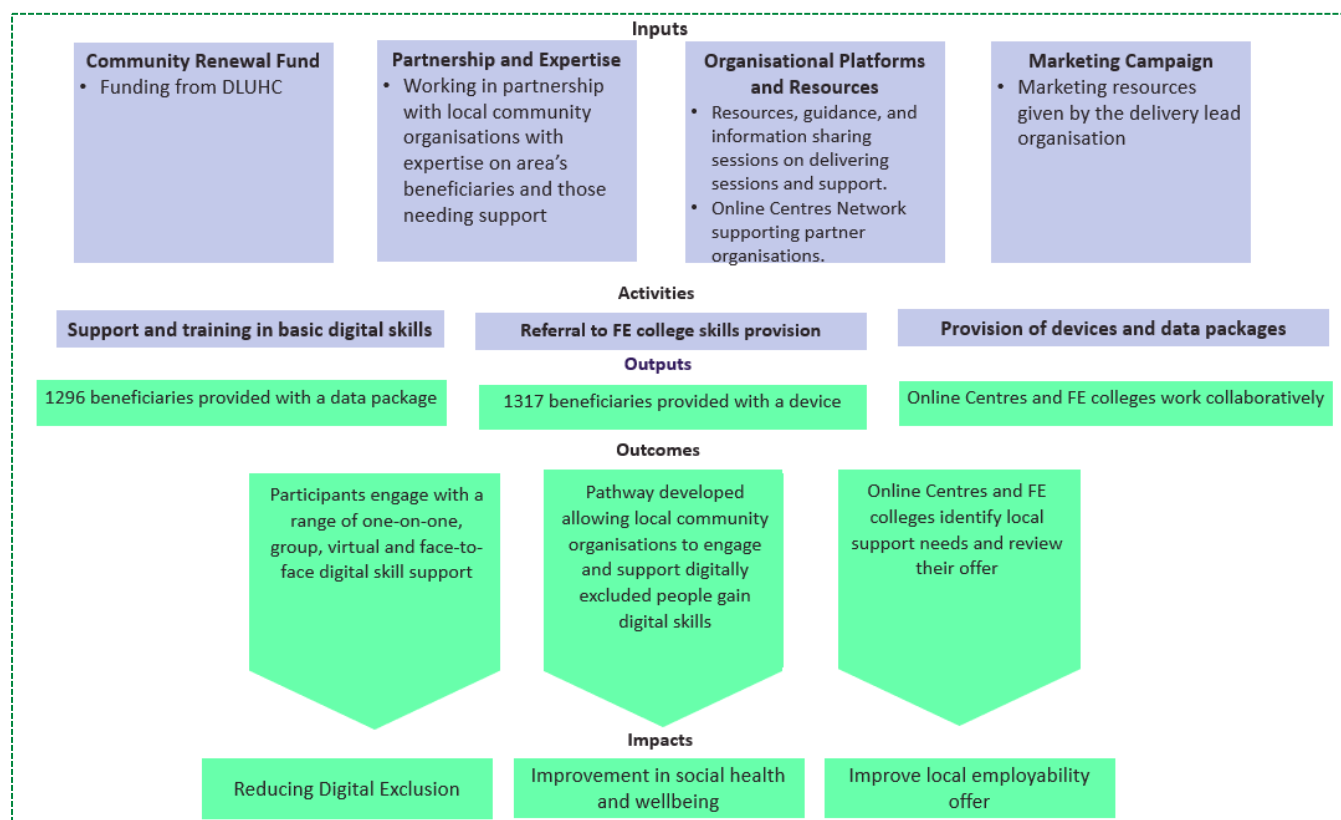
Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- A high proportion of the Greater Manchester area population are limited or non-digital users, estimated to be 1,200,000 or 42 per cent of its population.
- The project was delivered in an area with a diverse and multicultural population. The project worked with organisations already embedded within communities with experience of engaging the target audience. This approach minimised the need for marketing and other recruitment processes, as referrals were typically received due to word of mouth and drop-ins.
- The project was delivered in an area (GM) with a higher unemployment rate

(4.7 per cent) than in North West England (3.9 per cent) and England (3.7 per cent).

- Project delivery was dispersed across urban and semi-urban areas in the region.
- The project was led by Good Things Foundation, a leading digital inclusion charity that provided access to their Learn My Way learning platform (which included 30 online courses). Good Things Foundation also led the Online Centre Network.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Trusted local organisations were critical to participant engagement and support

The knowledge and expertise of local organisations, including Online Centres, allowed delivery partners to better reach prospective participants and respond to the specific needs of local communities. Working with organisations already embedded in local communities was highly beneficial, as said organisations were experienced in engaging with target groups, which reduced the need for marketing and better equipped organisations to support participant skills building. Centres based in local communities also commonly had multilingual staff who were well placed to deliver support to participants.

The provision of devices and data to participants was key to overcoming digital exclusion

The majority of participants stated that they could not afford a suitable device and

did not own one. Through the project, the provision of devices was perceived to be having a considerably positive impact on participants' digital confidence and skills. The identified need for devices was greater than had been anticipated during the project design. Whilst needs appear to have been met, staff identified that future provision should account for a greater need for suitable devices to effectively provide participants with the digital infrastructure required to progress.

Greater consideration of the target audience and the required support needs at the project design stage may have resulted in a more intensive support model

Most Online Centres supported participants in small groups or one-to-ones. Online Centre staff commonly flagged that group support was challenging for some participants due to severe support needs but that funding did not allow for the intensive one-to-one support needed. Furthermore, the eight-week support model was perceived to be insufficient for participants with multiple barriers to learning, e.g. limited English language skills. To ensure that support was deliverable, some delivery partners were reliant on community partners and community partner volunteers. This was perceived to be unsustainable in the longer term (where the digital skills gap for participants was substantial).

A streamlined registration and baseline form may have reduced the administrative burden on some delivery partners

Good Things Foundation used existing data capture systems to gather baseline data, but this did not meet the reporting requirements of the combined authorities. This meant that participants were required to complete an eligibility form and baseline questionnaire when registering for the project, which led to some duplication. Staff suggested that streamlined forms which could be amended by Online Centres would have improved the administrative process.

Participants' preference for progression towards employment resulted in fewer further education (FE) outcomes than anticipated

Almost three quarters of participants engaged in the project for an employment-related reason, and Online Centres commonly reported that participants cited a preference for employment (rather than college provision). Whilst some colleges, e.g. Manchester City College, offer employment support provision, some Online Centres reported that participants were not confident enough at the end of eight weeks of support to access FE. Moreover, FE providers, however, suggested that Online Centres could be reluctant to refer participants to FE due to concerns surrounding competition to claim outcomes.

Case Study 17

Intervention Type:	Investment in skills to improve employability
Project Name:	Staffordshire Means Back to Business
Local Authority Area:	Staffordshire County Council

Summary of Project

Reflecting Staffordshire County Council's five-year strategy, the Staffordshire Means Back to Business project aimed to support Staffordshire's economy after COVID-19. In particular, it offered support in Newcastle-under-Lyme and sought to create higher-quality jobs across the region by supporting start-ups and existing businesses to access funding and non-financial support.

The project also aimed to address skills shortages faced by SMEs through the development of a mentoring and complementary loan service, a carbon literacy training pilot, grants for business recovery, apprenticeship recruitment and training, and staff retraining or upskilling. The project has surpassed its broader profile and outcome targets but engaged fewer unemployed individuals and medium-sized businesses than anticipated.

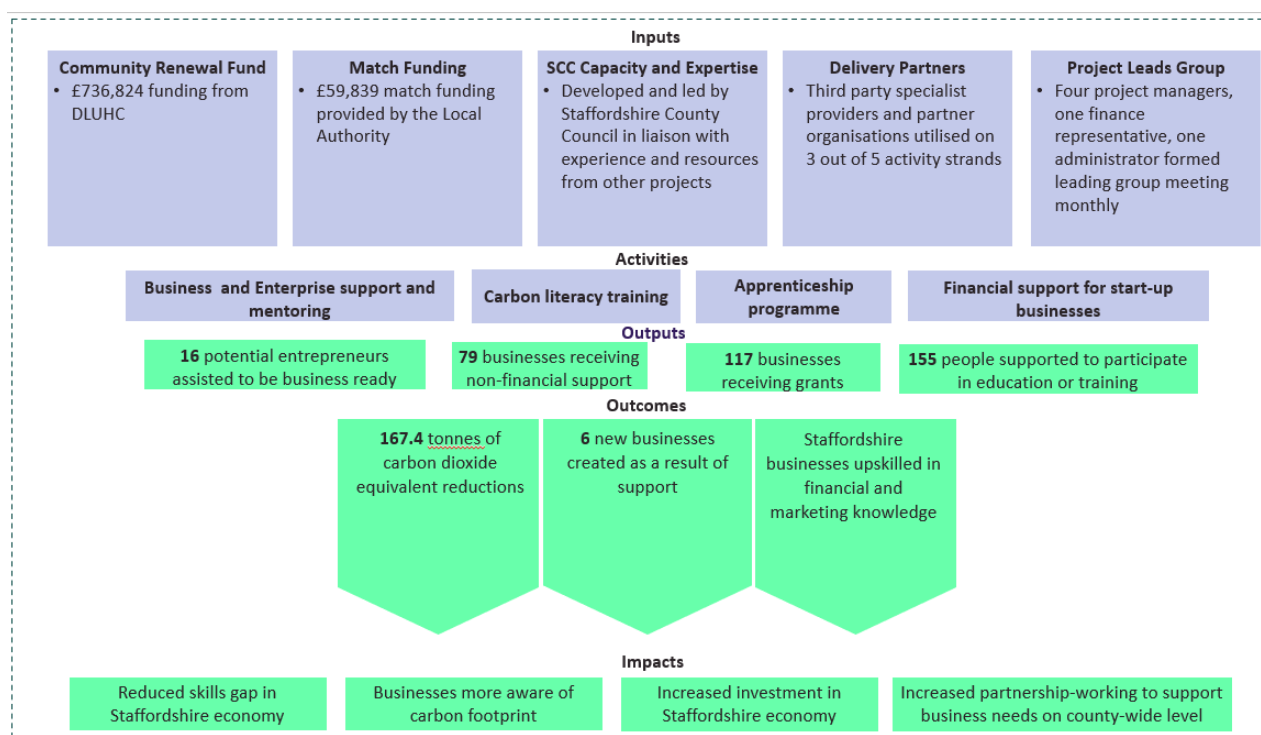
Evaluation Methods:

- Carbon literacy pilot business beneficiary interview (n=16)
- Start-Ups: Get Started mentoring and loan scheme individual beneficiary interview (n=16)
- Staffordshire 500 grant and apprenticeship programme individual beneficiary interview (n=14)
- Nil Cost Training Grants scheme business beneficiary interview (n=13)
- Staffordshire To Thrive Business Grant business beneficiary interview (n=9)
- Value-for-money analysis

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- This project was developed in direct response to COVID-19 to support the recovery of local businesses.
- The project worked in partnership with an accredited CLP training provider for the Carbon Literacy Plan strand to develop Carbon Literacy Engagement and Training programme content, training and delivery.
- Local businesses previously reported chronic skills shortages and difficulty in attaining appropriate staff.
- The business density rate in Staffordshire is 410 businesses per 10,000 residents. This is lower than the average rate across the West Midlands (425 businesses per 10,000 residents) and the national average rate (482 businesses per 10,000 residents).
- Staffordshire has a low-value economy with generally low-paid jobs. The GVA per head is also significantly lower in Staffordshire (£21,536) than in the West Midlands (£24,599) and England (£30,840).

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

The support provided was felt by stakeholders and business beneficiaries to be well timed and reflective of needs

In light of COVID-19 and wider skills shortages in the region, business beneficiaries described the support as transformative. The grants and training available through the project allowed micro-, small, and medium-sized businesses to take part in opportunities that they would not have otherwise had the capacity or resource to undertake. In some cases, this resulted in the upskilling of staff in strategic areas, increased turnover, and the development of new products and services.

The use of existing delivery channels ensured that businesses were able to access support easily

Pathways for businesses to access the project support utilised existing and well-known delivery channels. This ensured that efforts to engage businesses did not duplicate existing networks and available support. This method of engagement was seen to simplify pathways for businesses to participate.

Effective project and partner management ensured clear lines of working and strategic oversight

The project established a Project Leads Group at the outset of delivery to monitor progress and act in the interests of the county council. This included project managers from all support offers, a finance representative, and an administrator. Monthly meetings ensured that the programme was delivered as intended. The delivery partners at both county and district levels worked effectively in partnership to maximise the reach of the project, minimise potential confusion to Staffordshire businesses, and increase the chances of the project reaching its target audiences

and achieving its overall objectives.

A more tailored approach may have responded better to individual business needs

Additional reflection on how businesses would want to engage with support, particularly considering the varying sizes of businesses, would have resulted in a more tailored offer. In particular, large companies could typically engage face-to-face with training and the carbon literacy programme for 1–2 days. However, it was easier for micro-, small, and medium-sized businesses to engage with a virtual offer. Staff reflected that they traditionally did not offer support virtually and had only done so for this project because of COVID-19.

Formalised referrals between different activity strands may have resulted in more intensive business engagement and impacts

There was no formalised mechanism to refer businesses or individuals that received support from one support stream to other support streams. A greater impact for businesses may have been secured if there were a formalised referral pathway to access other streams of support.

Case Study 18

Intervention Type:	Investment in skills to improve employability
Project Name:	Pathways to Diagnostics Trailblazer
Local Authority Area:	Essex County Council

Summary of Project

The Pathways to Diagnostics Trailblazer (P2DT) project was created with the Colchester Institute to develop new skills and employee pools for the Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) newly formed by East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT). In recruiting the new staff needed for the CDC, there were concerns that it would displace employees in current NHS roles, instead of bringing in new staff from outside of the NHS. To address this, the P2DT initiative offered 12 weeks of training and work placements to 222 residents in the Tendring area, with high levels of unemployment, deprivation, and ill health, providing them with skills for future employment opportunities within the CDC. The project did not achieve its target for the total number of participants who secured an NHS role after the project, but surpassed all other targets.

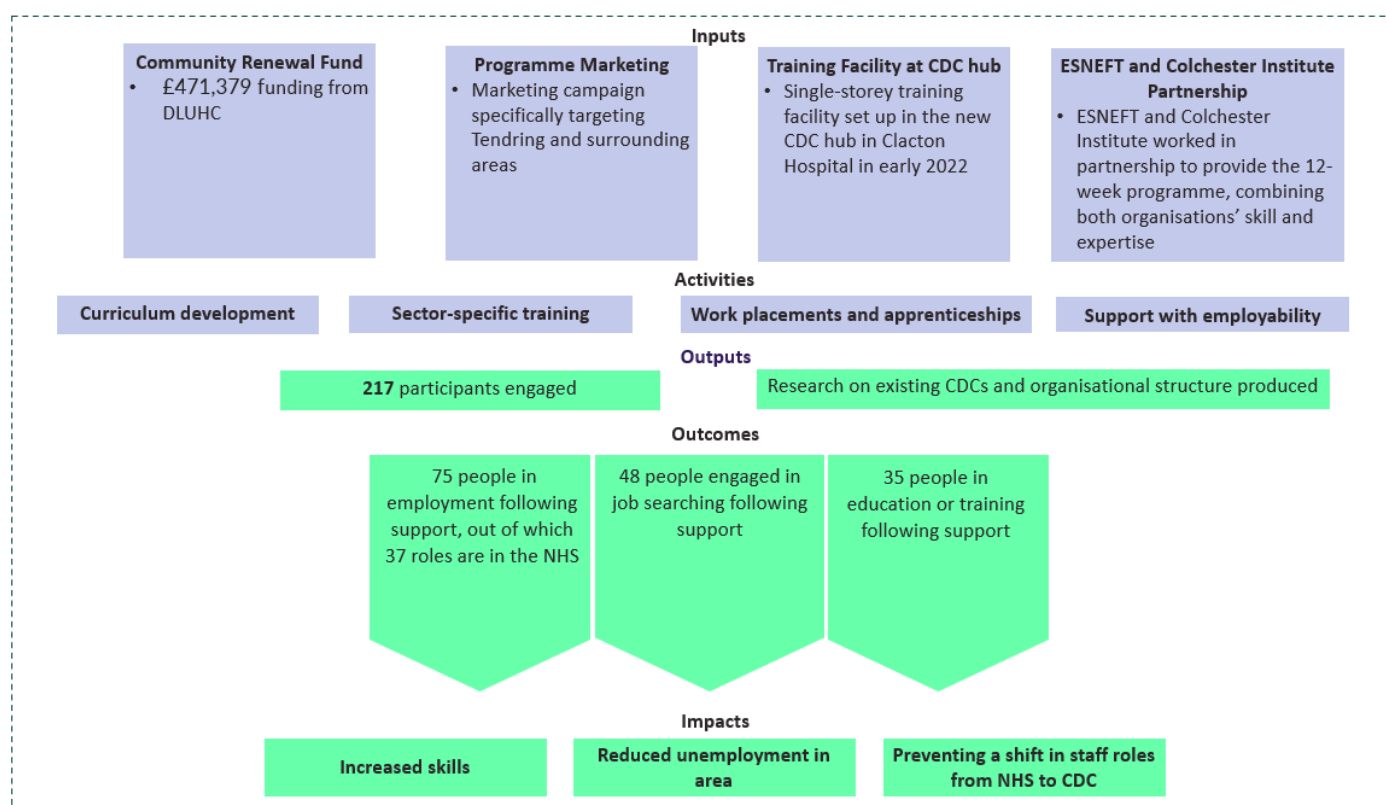
Evaluation Methods:

- Mixed-methods research (using qualitative and quantitative methods) to analyse project data including information related to the specific workstream training
- Eight qualitative interviews with key stakeholders
- Qualitative interviews with 10 service users

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The Tendring district has high levels of economic inactivity (34.6 per cent in 2022) in comparison to the rest of Essex (19.8 per cent) and the UK (21.6 per cent), and has a lower job density (0.66 jobs per population aged 16–64) than in Essex (0.77) and England (0.86).
- As of 2019, the Tendring district is considered to be the most deprived district in Essex and is the 30th most deprived local authority in England out of 317, according to the English Indices of Deprivation. As of 2019, 27 out of Tendring's 89 LSOAs are in the 20 per cent most deprived areas, equivalent to 31 per cent of its population.
- Tendring has lower educational levels than in the rest of Essex and the UK, with 26.2 per cent of the Tendring population having no qualifications in comparison to 18.9 per cent across Essex and 18.1 per cent across England.
- The project aimed to fill roles at a new Community Diagnostic Centre created within a hospital, without shifting NHS staff from their current roles. This could be applied in similar future projects in areas in which a new resource or unit risks displacing the existing workforce from current roles.
- The project partnered with Colchester Institute, a further education learning provider which already offered training specific to the healthcare sector.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Although dropout rates were high, pastoral support and general employability support were key reasons as to why participants remained in the project

The project had relatively high dropout rates, and 59 out of 222 participants (27 per cent) chose to discontinue the 12-week project. For those who remained, pastoral support played a vital role in maintaining motivation and enthusiasm, particularly once they reached higher levels of the programme. The project provided participants with job application and interview support sessions, which aimed to help participants with employability and application techniques, skills and formats. These included how to write a personal statement, how to give evidence and examples, and how to utilise transferable skillsets in application processes.

Project marketing used a variety of different methods, was locally relevant, and effectively targeted a specific cohort

The project marketing, disseminated via social media, newspapers, career services, advertising on buses, and job fairs, mostly focused on attracting local unemployed residents from the Tendring area, where the CDC is placed. This was successful and 80 per cent of participants were from either the Tendring or the neighbouring Colchester area. Furthermore, the majority of participants were unemployed when they first engaged with the project. The project delivery team thought that the programme had attracted people who were suited to care sector jobs and who would remain in the NHS long-term once finished.

Effective collaboration and joint working resulted in clear and effective referral processes

The management of as well as joint working arrangements within the project were effective. ESNEFT and Colchester Institute staff teams were provided with opportunities to give feedback during the project's initial development phase. This resulted in a well-structured and organised 12-week course that was easy for participants to access. When participants contacted Colchester Institute about the course, they were able to book an appointment with a career advisor online or in person (which was noted to be accessible and straightforward). Collaboration with other local partners such as GP practices and NHS properties also ensured that participants could be signposted to other opportunities if they were not suitable for roles in the CDC.

The balance between pastoral support and the opportunities to gain qualifications and undertake NHS job interviews was well received by participants

Individuals were generally positive about their experience of the project and considered the course and support to be well structured and organised. The most important aspect for participants was reported to be the opportunity to gain a qualification and, subsequently, to undertake job interviews for the NHS. Alongside this opportunity to improve their job prospects, many participants also reported improved confidence and self-belief following the support that they received from the project.

The project name needed to be clearer to ensure that prospective participants were encouraged to find out more about the programme before deciding whether it was suitable for them

Individuals commonly perceived the title 'Pathways to Diagnostics Trailblazer' to be confusing, and presumed that the name meant that the project was targeted at individuals seeking employment in diagnostics. This was, however, not the case. As a result, staff had to inform prospective participants that there were a range of job opportunities for which they would be able to apply after the project. Whilst staff looked to reassure prospective participants, this may have limited the number of individuals originally applying for the course.

Case Study 19

Intervention Type:	Investment in skills to improve employability
Project Name:	Enterprise and Skills Pembrokeshire (ESP)
Local Authority Area:	Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)

Summary of Project

In line with the local authority's Recovery and Regeneration Strategy, Enterprise and Skills Pembrokeshire (ESP) aimed to respond to the key challenges faced in Pembrokeshire as a result of COVID-19. Challenges included the considerable negative impact on its businesses, tourism and hospitality industry, employment, and overall deprivation levels.

ESP was designed to build local partnerships and the capacity required for the development of skills, enterprise, and business support in Pembrokeshire. Working with eight delivery partner businesses and organisations, there were 11 strands of project delivery which sought to offer a range of sector-specific training, e.g. green infrastructure and engineering training as well as broader employability and life skills support. ESP supported 54 businesses and 668 economically inactive or unemployed individuals. The project did not meet its engagement targets and fell short of a number of its outcome targets, although it did achieve its outcome target for people engaged in job searching.

Evaluation Methods:

- Consultations with members of the project steering group
- Interviews with 12 representatives from the eight delivery partner organisations
- Beneficiary surveys for each project strand, which included:
 - Sector-specific skills survey (Providence Training, Futureworks, Pembrokeshire College): n=29
 - Enterprise skills survey (Business in Focus, Cwmpas): n=23
 - Youth skills survey (Milford Youth Matters, Pembrokeshire Youth Service): n=14

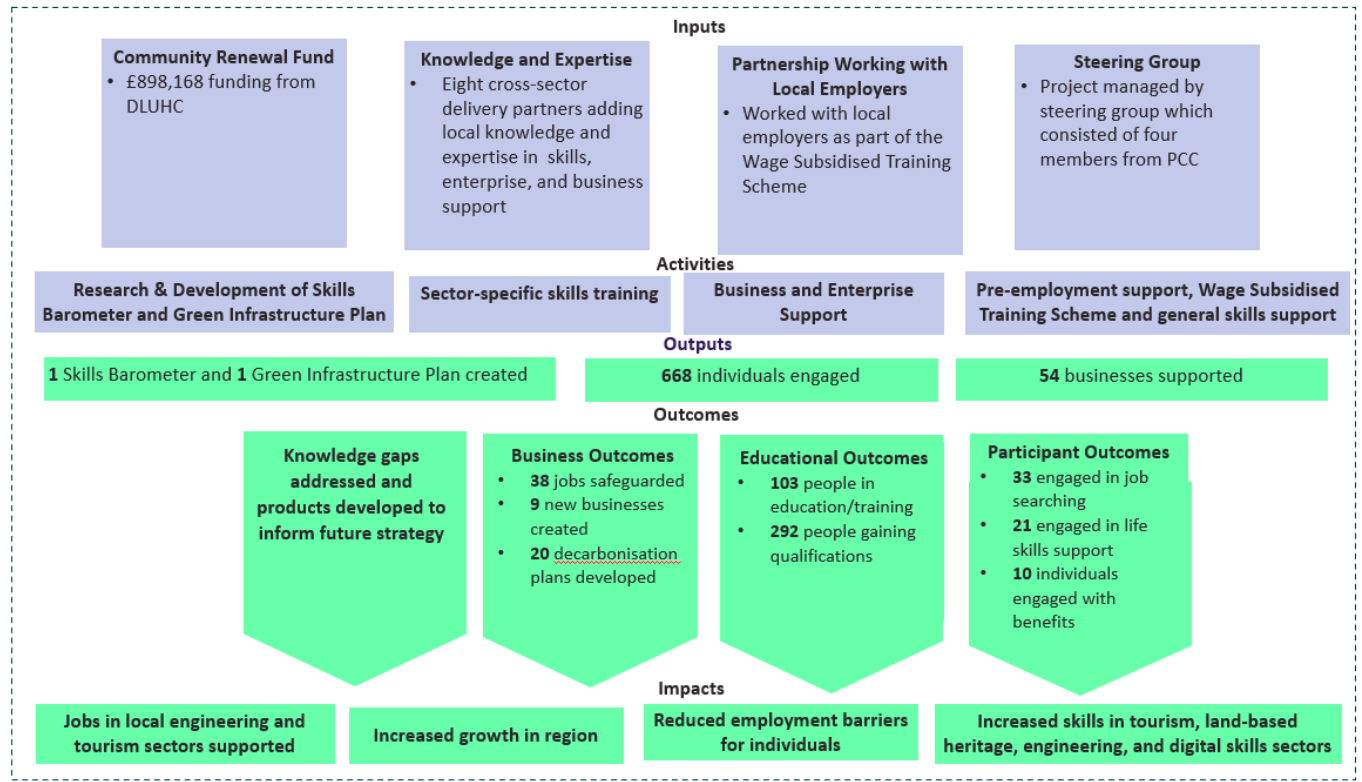
Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The project was delivered across rural and coastal areas.
- The project was promoted to specific groups in the county most disadvantaged in the labour market through a partnership with delivery organisations able to bring specific expertise, e.g. youth sector and training providers.
- More than 20 per cent of all residents in Pembrokeshire are employed within the tourism and leisure sector.
- There were low levels of economic performance and GVA per capita (£21,205 in 2019) in comparison to both the rest of Wales (£21,842) and the whole of the UK (£28,894).
- There was a significant impact on the area's economic performance following COVID-19 (GVA per head was down 13 per cent from 2019–2020) in

comparison to the rest of Wales (down four per cent) and the UK (down three per cent).

- Pembrokeshire's unemployment rate in 2019 stood at 5.6 per cent in comparison to 4.6 per cent across West Wales and the Valleys and 4.2 per cent across Wales.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Appropriate project design tailored to local area needs

Beneficiaries, including businesses and young people, were positive about the quality of activities and felt that the support that they received was appropriate for their needs. In particular, the person-centred support for young people was key. This included support to sensitively overcome individual barriers and develop confidence, resilience and motivation. This enabled staff to identify and support participants' individual needs. Additionally, delivery partners' sector-specific expertise was well received, with beneficiary businesses suggesting that trainers were knowledgeable and helpful.

Partnership working has enabled organisations to share specific expertise and develop new ways of working

Organisations specialising in youth work were able to share their learning on best practice and support training providers engaging with this target group. Partners specialising in youth work brought significant expertise in providing the pastoral support and guidance necessary to support continued beneficiary engagement. Training providers brought expert subject matter knowledge and an understanding of what employers are looking for from potential employees. This collaborative

support between new partners was perceived to be adding value to the support on offer from all partners.

Additional time was needed at the application and inception stages to develop a collaborative partnership model

ESP's management structure was predominantly top-down and managed by the steering group (which consisted of representatives from PCC's Economic Development and Regeneration Directorate, and the Pembrokeshire Enterprise and Skills project manager, once recruited). Whilst delivery partners were positive about the support that they received, they noted that it could have been enhanced further by being more closely involved in steering the project's direction. It was proposed that additional time at the beginning of the project to explore options for collaborative partnership working would have helped to overcome this challenge.

Further administrative capacity was needed to satisfy CRF monitoring and reporting requirements

Steering group members felt that additional administrative support, specifically the recruitment of a compliance and quality assurance officer, would have relieved the burden on the project management team, particularly because CRF requirements were new and unknown. One partner withdrew during the inception phase of the project due to limited capacity to fulfil their administrative requirements. On reflection, stakeholders suggested that this may have been avoided if CRF monitoring and reporting requirements were made clearer during the funding application stage. Alternatively, stakeholders also reported that this may have been avoided if they had a previous working relationship with the partner and, therefore, a better understanding of their administrative capacity.

Case Study 20

Intervention Type:	Investment in skills to support decarbonisation
Project Name:	Decarbonising Rossendale
Local Authority Area:	Lancashire County Council

Summary of Project

Rossendale Borough Council previously lacked the capacity and resource to be proactive in their approach to climate change. The Decarbonising Rossendale project by Valley Heritage aimed to take action on decarbonising its communities and reaching net zero targets. The project included training and skills development for the construction and estate management sectors, consumer awareness events for local businesses and households, the regeneration of a historic Grade II-listed building into a co-working space and living accommodation, an environmental feasibility study, and the formation of a community energy organisation.

The project successfully engaged with organisations for knowledge transfer and innovation plan development, exceeding its targets for reaching people, businesses and organisations. However, it has failed to demonstrate an increase in employment as a result of the project. It was anticipated that with additional time this evidence would be captured.

Evaluation Methods:

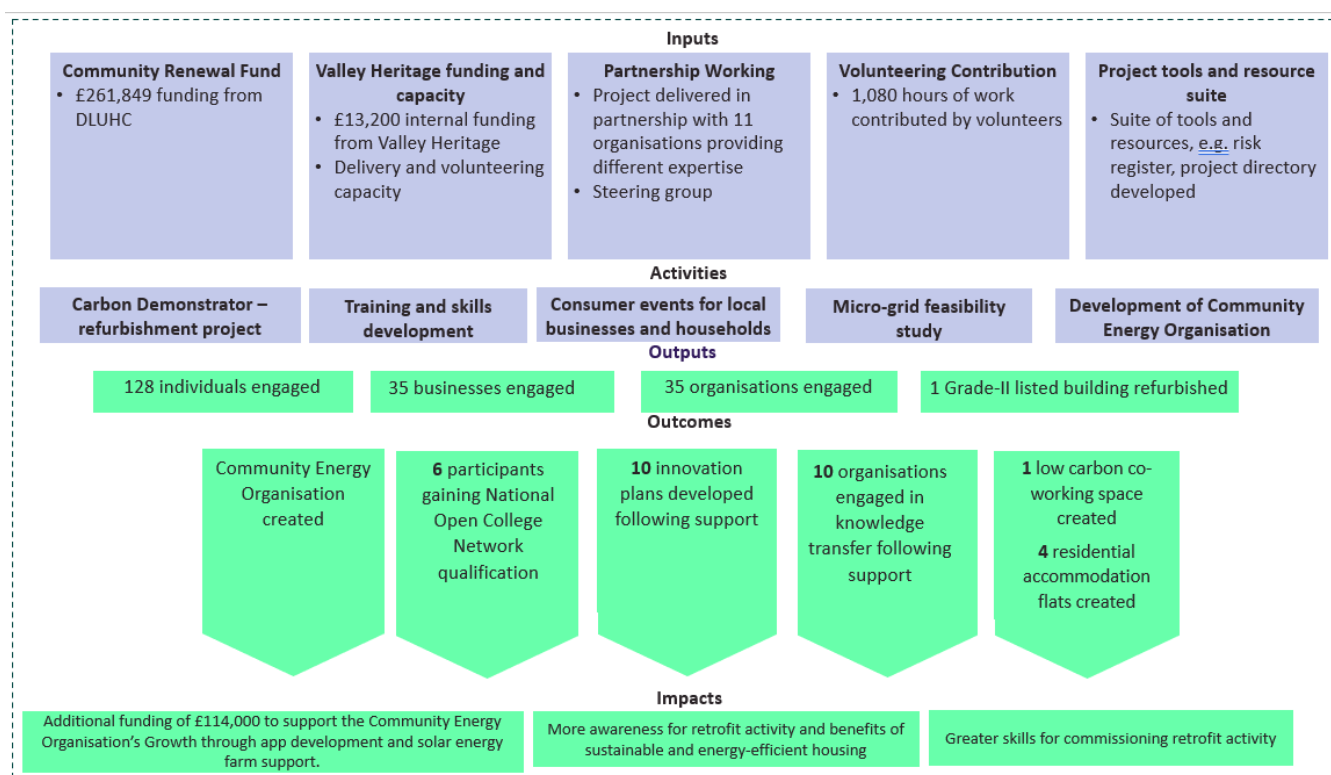
- Review of background information and operational documentation
- In-depth qualitative interviews with the project team, participants, and wider beneficiaries who engaged with consumer awareness events and/or training and skills development activities
- Analysis of feedback and monitoring information
- Ongoing contact with Valley Heritage throughout the commission (including obtaining feedback, discussing emerging findings, and updating on progress)

Factors Affecting Relevance for Other Areas:

- The project was delivered in a mostly rural area consisting of small towns and villages, with a total population of 71,000 as of 2021.
- As of 2019, the sectors 'construction', 'other manufacturing, repair, and installation', and 'electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply' consist of a larger proportion of Lancashire's GVA, at 9.8 per cent of GVA in comparison to 8.5 per cent for North West England and 8.83 per cent for the UK, which reflects the need for the training and development of sustainability and retrofitting skills in the area.
- The housing stock in Rossendale is predominantly pre-1919 traditional stone-built terraced housing, which is largely inefficient for heating and energy retention. The need for retrofitting and a feasibility study is therefore considerable.
- In the English Indices of Deprivation in 2019, Rossendale was ranked 91st out

of 317 LSOAs, as well as 65th out of 317 in the Living aspect of the Deprivation Index.

Logic Model



Project Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Dedicated external project management freed up time for delivery personnel to focus on project delivery

The project's management approach worked well and efficiently during its delivery. While the main delivery was accomplished by Valley Heritage, dedicated administrative support was supplied by a professional management consultancy, alongside the project's project manager. This support was described as essential, allowing the lead team to focus on delivery, rather than administration, bringing independence to activity and encouraging debate amongst the team. Due to volunteer-led partner delivery, the project delivery team would have struggled to collect the required monitoring data without the additional capacity. As a result, the project team will look to include external project management support in future project budgets.

Partnering with expert and strategically important organisations has resulted in longer-term benefits

Working with suitable experts, consultants and subcontractors, as well as the local authority (Lancashire County Council), was vital to the project's success. The strong working relationship as well as fortnightly updates with the expert consultant teams were invaluable in making sense of interim findings and making educated decisions as to future delivery. Building mutually beneficial working relationships with key authorities from the outset and identifying opportunities for

collaboration has allowed partner organisations to consider how best to work together in the future.

The technical and volunteer-led nature of some aspects of project delivery meant that more time was needed for delivery than originally anticipated

Translating expert advice in the feasibility study into layman's terms was a key challenge, particularly for volunteer-led partners (who struggled to respond to the study during project delivery). The time needed to receive, assess and debate technical quotations, reports and studies needed before making informed project decisions was not accounted for in the original project timelines.

Engaging beneficiaries in skills and training activity proved to be challenging, indicating that greater consideration of sectoral challenges and needs was needed

Securing commitment from construction companies and estate managers to engage in training or skills activity was difficult due to their limited capacity after COVID-19. This was exacerbated by the timing of the project, which was during the summer holidays (when organisations were busy). In addition, project staff felt that there was limited concern regarding the fuel crisis at this stage and that if the opportunities were later in the year, companies would have been more aware and more interested in taking part. Future provision will undertake additional market research on the local need and demand for training to encourage engagement and participation.

Better timing of consumer engagement events may have resulted in improved public participation

Consumer events included a range of different activities, including awareness-raising webinars detailing specific decarbonising approaches and technologies, specialist events anticipated to provide guidance on the principles of retrofitting as well as opportunities for local organisations to network, and advisory drop-in sessions designed to support local people concerned about their rising energy bills. Even with considerable promotion and marketing efforts, few local households and businesses attended the consumer events. Staff suggested that this was the result of limited public awareness of the fuel crisis and how it would affect them. Events were also held in the summer during a period of good weather, which was thought to have an additional negative impact on engagement. However, the project and the council have found that smaller face-to-face events are important when looking to encourage meaningful collaboration and idea sharing for organisations. As a result of the consumer engagement events, the project garnered interest from other organisations, i.e. Hyndburn Borough Council, the Architectural Heritage Fund, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (which are interested in funding future project activity related to information dissemination).