

# Bedrock Awards: Programme Evaluation



Prepared by Forever Consulting for  
Cumbria Community Foundation

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Bedrock Awards, a key part of the Transforming West Cumbria programme, aimed to build the resilience, capabilities and financial sustainability of Third Sector organisations in West Cumbria.

Launched in 2020, Bedrock Awards is funded through Sellafield Ltd's social impact, multiplied (Six) programme and managed by Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF). Social Enterprise Acumen (SEA) – a business support consultant – provided tailored support to 16 organisations over two Cohorts / time-periods (i.e. each with 8 organisations supported).

CCF commissioned this end-of-programme evaluation to assess the impact of Bedrock Awards. The evaluation aims to:

- ∞ Assess the difference made to 16 beneficiary organisations.
- ∞ Review the effectiveness of its design and the quality of delivery.
- ∞ Assess the future need for this type of support.
- ∞ Compare its funding model with other business support models.

The evaluation included a detailed review of beneficiary applications and programme documents, in-depth consultations with all beneficiaries, steering group members and other stakeholders, a review of other programmes, and qualitative data analysis (see **Section 1**).

### Effectiveness and quality of Bedrock Awards

The design and delivery of Bedrock Awards was very effective. The overall aims of the programme were clearly communicated by CCF and SEA from the outset. Organisations were enthusiastic about the

support available and felt it was different from other traditional grants. The level of funding was highly praised and viewed as an impactful amount. Organisations suggested that the funding allowed them to make real changes, which enabled them to achieve good outcomes or set effective plans in place.

The overall quality of delivery was excellent. SEA was central to the programme's success. Beneficiaries shared highly positive feedback around the support received, including the advice and guidance given, their strong skillset and expertise, and their access to a broad network of professionals across the Third Sector. SEA were approachable and tailored their support to every organisation's specific needs. Action Learning Sets allowed access to peer support sessions and helped reduce isolation among organisations.

However, the support was inconsistent across the two Cohorts as SEA faced unexpected capacity issues whilst delivering Cohort 2. The lack of communication made some organisations lose momentum and caused uncertainties for them during this period. (see **Section 2**)

### Impact of Bedrock Awards

Organisations benefitted from Bedrock Awards in several ways (see **Section 3**). These include:

- ∞ Outcome 1: Organisations have made new investments and realised new opportunities.
- ∞ Outcome 2: Organisations have become more financially sustainable.
- ∞ Outcome 3: Organisations have improved their strategic planning.

- ∞ Outcome 4: Organisations are more resilient and have a new energy.

### **Comparison with other funder plus business support models**

Bedrock Awards has many things in common with the other three funder plus business support models reviewed. All programmes address similar needs in their respective areas and offer support across similar themes.

However, Bedrock Awards offered more comprehensive and holistic support than other models, including:

- ∞ Providing direct funding to free up leadership time.
- ∞ Distributing a higher funding amount directly to organisations.
- ∞ Offering ongoing support for a longer duration.

The three other funder plus models reviewed had broader eligibility criteria and some unique aspects such as access to a wide network of charities, collaborative development of organisational resilience guidance, working with public bodies, private businesses, funders and commissioners to provide additional focus on external resilience, and emphasis on greater participation of underrepresented community groups (**see Section 4**).

### **Conclusions**

Bedrock Awards has been very well received by organisations supported, and in many cases has been transformational.

Stakeholders confirmed that this funder plus model had provided invaluable support to Third Sector organisations.

### **Strengths and successes:**

- ∞ Organisations had time, security and support to step back from day-to-day operations.
- ∞ Well-timed support following the uncertainty and change caused by Covid-19.
- ∞ Impactful level of funding.
- ∞ Significant outcomes achieved by the organisations supported, for many Bedrock Awards has been transformational.
- ∞ Bedrock Awards has reached the right organisations, and the approach was tailored to their needs.
- ∞ Flexible and extensive support available, especially the Action Learning Sets.
- ∞ Friendly and approachable nature of SEA.

### **Challenges and limitations:**

- ∞ Inconsistent delivery across the two Cohorts.
- ∞ Unsustainable SEA approach with heavy dependence on one staff member.
- ∞ Many organisations found recruiting new employees a challenge, which led to delays in development plan implementation.
- ∞ Vulnerability of the Third Sector and increased demand for services.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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### Overview of Bedrock Awards

Bedrock Awards (sometimes referred to as ‘the programme’) was designed to support a small number of Third Sector organisations delivering vital services in West Cumbria that met the published eligibility criteria. A Funder Plus model<sup>1</sup>, it focuses on building the resilience, capabilities and financial sustainability of these organisations. The vulnerability and financial instability of some community organisations delivering essential services in West Cumbria was identified as an issue in the West Cumbria Opportunities and Challenges community needs report in 2019.

To address these challenges, Bedrock Awards was launched in 2020 as part of a wider programme called ‘Transforming West Cumbria’, funded through Sellafield’s social impact, multiplied (SiX) programme.

As a two-stage programme, Bedrock Awards offered:

- ∞ Stage 1 support to undertake a business diagnostic and facilitate the production of a business strategy and plan. This was supported by up to £25,000 of unrestricted funding to free up senior leaders’ time.
- ∞ Stage 2 ongoing support for the implementation of the business development plan. Additional funding (up to £85,000) was available for each organisation to support this.

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<sup>1</sup> A funding model where funders provide additional non-funding support to go ‘beyond the money’ with grantees, by offering them support to build capacity, leadership, resilience and financial sustainability.

Two Cohorts, each with eight organisations, have progressed through Stage 1 and are currently in Stage 2. The first Cohort of organisations began Stage 2 in the first quarter of 2022, with one exception who began at the start of 2023.

The second Cohort has slightly different criteria and began Stage 1 in the middle of 2022. Stage 2 awards were presented to eight organisations between March and December 2023. This means Cohort 2 has had much less delivery time.

Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF) manages Bedrock Awards’ application, grant making and monitoring processes. Applications were considered by the Bedrock Awards Steering Group<sup>2</sup>. Recommendations for approval were considered by CCF’s West Cumbria Grants Committee, which included representatives of the local community.

Social Enterprise Acumen (SEA) is the business support consultant, providing tailored support to each organisation.

### About the evaluation

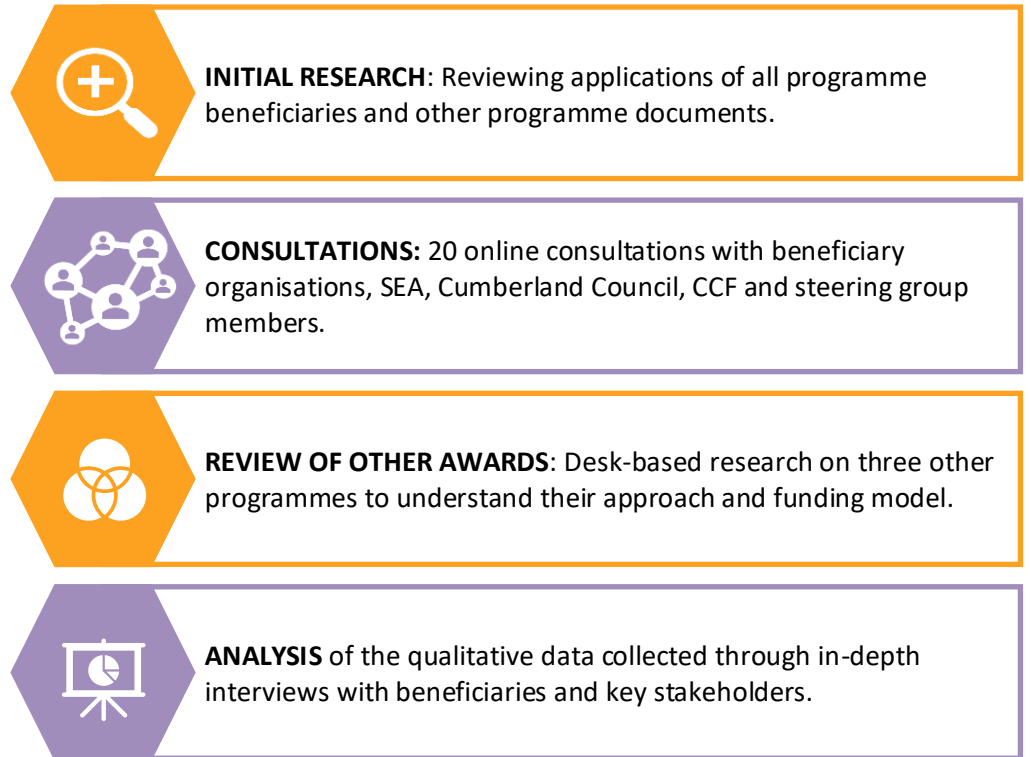
In February 2024, CCF appointed Forever Consulting (see [this link for more about Forever Consulting](#)) to assess the progress of Bedrock Awards. The evaluation answers the following:

<sup>2</sup> Included members from Sellafield, Copeland Borough Council, Allerdale Borough Council, Cumbria County Council, Copeland Community Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, Cumbria CVS and private sector stakeholders.

- ∞ What difference has Bedrock Awards made or is expected to make to the 16 organisations?
- ∞ How well was Bedrock Awards designed?
- ∞ How do organisations rate the quality of delivery?
- ∞ Should Bedrock Awards continue?
- ∞ How does the funding model of Bedrock Awards compare to other similar programmes?

Figure 1.1 illustrates our evaluation approach.

**Figure 1.1: Method overview**



## SECTION 2: EFFECTIVENESS AND QUALITY OF BEDROCK AWARDS

This section explores the design and quality of delivery of Bedrock Awards. It focuses on whether: aims were clearly communicated, expectations were met, the amount of funding was adequate, whether the support was tailored, and any differences between Cohorts 1 and 2.

This section is informed by the interviews with the 16 beneficiary organisations.

**Figure 2.1: Summary of feedback on effectiveness and quality of Bedrock Awards**



**2.1 The aims of Bedrock Awards were clearly communicated from the outset, and organisations were enthusiastic about the offer available...**

Bedrock Awards was advertised through CCF communication channels and Third Sector newsletters. Many organisations were also directly approached by CCF. Most organisations felt that the overall aims of the programme were clearly communicated by CCF and SEA.

*“It’s absolutely vital, most organisations don’t have funding for their infrastructure and the additional costs that don’t fall under projects...to allow organisations to build their sustainability and work in areas where they can apply for further funding, it’s really important.”*

Many organisations were attracted by the unique funding offer which included support to evaluate their delivery, missions, and values before developing an effective plan for their future sustainability. Organisations felt this was different from other traditional grants which often offer only a cash injection for a specific project/activity.

*“They’ve gone way over and above what we could have expected ... Bedrock Awards is far more than just giving people money and letting them get on with things.”*

Organisations praised Bedrock Awards for allowing them to step-away from their day job, giving them the time and security to make informed decisions about how they could use the funding and support. They also praised the flexibility of the programme, in that they didn’t have to commit to rigid, set outcomes.

*“Because we have always been so busy, we have been on a hamster wheel, and haven’t been able to jump off and look at the bigger picture.”*



## 2.2 The level of available funding was praised...

Organisations felt that the funding available allowed them to make real changes.

Although all organisations were positive about the level of funding, there was a split between how they would use it. Some of the larger organisations had a clear idea of what they wanted to use it for and viewed it as a useful 'cash-injection'.

Other, generally smaller organisations, highlighted that finding funding for non-specific projects was rare and Bedrock Awards delivered significantly more than just an influx of cash. It:

- ∞ Allowed them to back-fill management time to properly develop their plans.
- ∞ Looked at the entire organisation and was wide-ranging in its approach.
- ∞ Wasn't prescriptive or set to one thing.

In general, the level of funding was viewed as an impactful amount allowing organisations to achieve good outcomes or set effective plans in place. It was seen as generous but given the environment that organisations are working in there is always a need for more funding.

*"It came in at a good time. The cost-of-living crisis made life harder for people and charities, due to which there's less money available. People can't donate as much, but demand for services is high."*



## 2.3 The overall quality of delivery was excellent...

Beneficiaries were highly positive about the support they received from SEA, particularly those in Cohort 1. They felt supported throughout the process and that SEA had gone above-and-beyond in terms of the service provided.

***"[Would rate them] 10/10. Can't imagine what it would look like without the support now."***

***"I really like them – I think [SEA] are well connected and resourced. If I had money and wanted to pay a consultant, I would go to them. I'd recommend them to others as well."***

Both Cohorts found external advice and guidance helpful. They felt having a 'critical friend' who could ask the hard questions, particularly of staff (especially those that had been within an organisation a long-time) and Trustees, was useful.

***"[SEA] rattled cages that weren't happy, planted a lot of seeds. [They] brought up issues that hadn't been discussed; it was a complete 360-degree review."***

There were some concerns raised in Cohort 1 regarding a push towards selling or commercialising their services. They believed that the focus on financial sustainability, as set out at the start, equated towards finding ways to charge people for using their services, which was against their core values.

***"I was worried how it was going to work, as remaining a free service is an absolutely key element of our values. We won't charge, and we can't generate new funding by doing [that]."***

Cohort 2 felt less obliged to commercialise, and found that Bedrock Awards gave them the confidence to pull back, as demonstrated by the following:

***"You don't want to spread too thin, and you want to stay good at what you do. When you are first starting from scratch you may get involved in more things than you maybe should, but we're past that stage now."***

Organisations were positive about the support provided by SEA (although this varied by Cohort, as set out below). They were surprised about how in-depth it was, with no apparent limitations in terms of the number of hours of support available (unlike other support experienced). Key areas of appreciation highlighted included:

- ∞ A broad network of professionals across the Third Sector SEA has access to.
- ∞ Strong skills and expertise among the SEA team.
- ∞ Wide knowledge of the Third Sector held by the SEA team.
- ∞ Ability to contact SEA after implementation of development plan.

***"[SEA employee] was probably one of the most positive people I've met, and [their] contacts throughout the Third Sector and business is phenomenal. [Their] skills and experience are just huge."***

Some beneficiaries (mainly Cohort 1) weren't aware that so much support was available and felt like they may have missed out, feeling they could've asked for more.

***"I didn't know what I was entitled to – SEA didn't set out X days available (for support). I feel like I've not wanted to ring them sometimes as I didn't want to take the mick, if I'd known what was formally available, I'd have taken full advantage."***



## 2.4 SEA were approachable ....

SEA were described regularly as “approachable” and/or “friendly”. The following quote summarises this well:

***“[SEA employee] is one of those people who goes beyond the job... [they’re] a robot, I don’t know how [they] keep going. I feel like I’ve met a friend for life, and a mentor for life... if they could bottle [them] and send [them] out that would be fantastic!”***



## 2.5 The support was tailored to the organisation’s needs...

Beneficiary organisations varied in terms of size, how established they were, and the level of support they needed. SEA arrived fully informed about each organisation and tailored their approach accordingly.

***“Absolutely [tailored to our needs] ... [SEA] took a lot of time to understand us, researched us before we met, read all our accounts and were starting from a really researched position.”***

The support provided was also adaptable, with some organisations having to change their plan partway through the process due to external factors around feasibility or recruitment.

***“We didn’t have to fit the pot of money available... We’d had other business supporting initiatives, but Bedrock Awards was very different, their support was flexible, adaptable, and very timely.”***

The support provided also had to adapt to the environment. West Cumbria is geographically isolated, with a limited recruitment pool. Organisations in Cohort 1 in particular found they were competing to recruit for the same type of roles. Smaller organisations were at a disadvantage as they could not offer the same pay or contract terms. Where recruitment was not possible, organisations were supported by SEA to adapt their approach, including bringing in external consultants as an interim measure.

## 2.6 Peer-to-peer support sessions were seen as particularly beneficial for smaller organisations...

One particular area that beneficiaries enjoyed was the peer-to-peer support. It was highlighted that this support is usually missing from similar programmes, which can lead to feelings of isolation. They found that having someone to bounce ideas off, both other organisations and SEA, was useful.

This was delivered through 'Action Learning Sets' that brought together different organisations participating in Bedrock Awards. They were viewed favourably by smaller organisations, or those who felt isolated.

***"Bringing Third Sector leaders together to be able to have a confidential space to talk about what was going wrong [was good], because quite a lot of the time it feels very lonely, and you think you're doing things wrong, but actually lots of others are having the same experience."***

Larger organisations felt they had less to gain from these sessions as they were well established, but some still praised the fact that these types of events were taking place locally:

***"Geography makes it a difficult area...the services and offers available tend to be in very large cities, which takes us out of the office for over a day each time."***

## 2.7 However, support was inconsistent across the two Cohorts...

During Cohort 2 a key member of the support team from SEA was unavailable for a 3 to 4-month period, and there was a lack of communication regarding what was happening. Organisations felt in limbo at this point, and it led to a loss of momentum.

Organisations in Cohort 2 also felt they were being squeezed to submit their Stage 2 application before they were ready, and that the deadline and format of this was unclear due to the absence of SEA.

***"[SEA] did a session with the chair and office manager and then dropped off the radar. [We weren't sure] what we needed to do in advance of putting together a plan for Stage 2 and were squeezed time-wise with getting business plan and application put together."***

Organisations in Cohort 2 struggled to contact SEA and had to contact CCF directly to find out what was happening:

***"No response to emails, phone ringing dead every time. They said they were just busy and going through a restructure. That part was poor. Everything else has been great."***

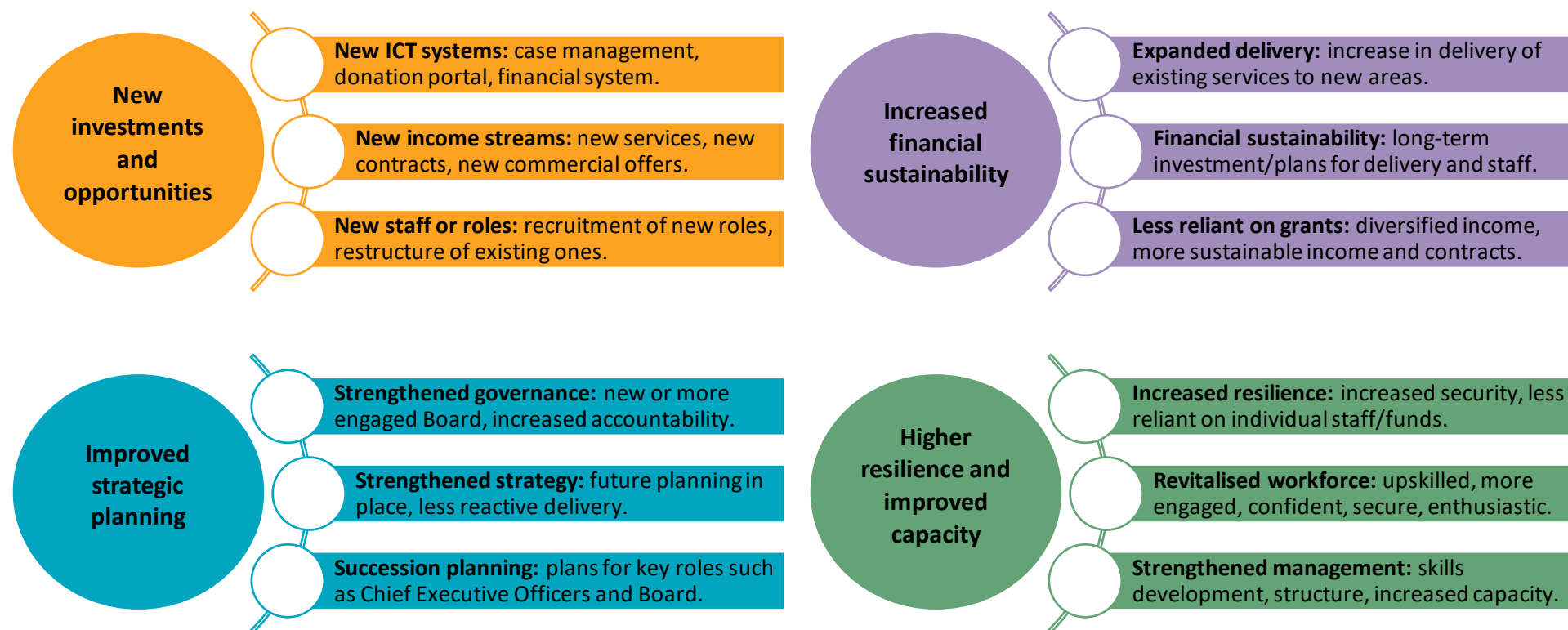
## SECTION 3: IMPACT OF BEDROCK AWARDS

This section highlights key benefits achieved among beneficiary organisations due to the support received under Bedrock Awards.

These outcomes are grouped under four main themes as below. Within these, further sub-categories of outcomes are seen across organisations. While most organisations have achieved outcomes across multiple themes, two case study examples are highlighted under the theme where a certain outcome is the strongest.

Case studies on all remaining organisations [can be found on this link](#).

**Figure 3.1: Overview of outcomes achieved**



## Outcome 1: Organisations have made new investments and realised new opportunities

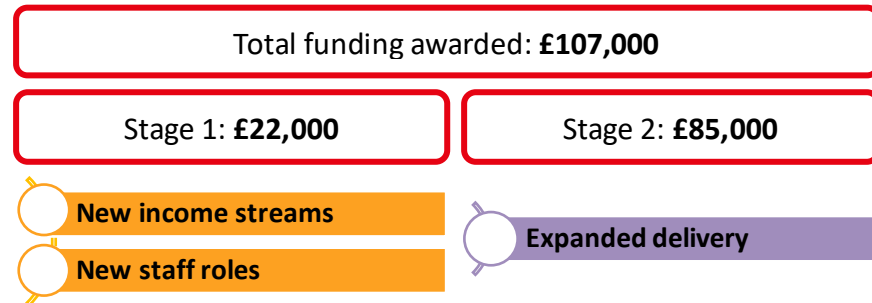
Many organisations have invested in building or buying new Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems. Examples include a portal for receiving donations, a financial management system, and a tool for managing client cases. In some cases, additional funding was secured through the Bedrock Digital Fund.

Organisations have also created new sources of income by launching new services, securing new contracts and commercial offers.

Additionally, many organisations have recruited new staff to support delivery, while many other have restructured existing staff to improve their efficiency.



## Case study (Cohort 1): Hospice at Home successfully launched a new service without risk to existing delivery...



### About the organisation

- ∞ Hospice at Home provide at-home care for people with life-limiting illnesses and end of life care to people in West Cumbria. They have been delivering home nursing services since 1987.
- ∞ The majority (80%) of their funding comes from fundraising, donations, and legacy funds. The other 20% comes from the NHS. They have a turnover of around £2 million and 56 employees.
- ∞ They heard about Bedrock Awards through a local advertisement and signed up due to the extensive offer of support.



### The organisation aimed to launch a new service...

Hospice at Home had a clear vision of how they wanted to use the funding from Bedrock Awards. They knew many patients nearing the end of life wished to die at home but couldn't be discharged from hospitals due to a lack of local care packages. They wanted to offer a service through their skilled team to support people with personal care and keep them in their place of choice.

As of April 2024, they have completed Stage 1 and 2 of Bedrock Awards.

### Stage 1: Creating a business development plan

As a large and established charity delivering specialist services, they felt they already had the required skills and knowledge to expand their services. However, during Stage 1 they utilised the advice and support of SEA to create a high-quality application for Stage 2 funding.

During Stage 1, SEA and the Board of Trustee worked together to examine the effectiveness of the organisation and possible future opportunities to support their existing strategy. SEA also attended the staff away day and encouraged different ways of thinking.

The support was seen as a good sounding board to confirm they were on the right track in terms of the existing development ideas.

### Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan

#### The new service has been successfully launched...

Hospice at Home's new service launched in June 2023. The original launch date was delayed by 12 months due to challenges in recruiting a project manager.

So far, the service has provided over 5,400 hours of care.

One of the key aims of their business development plans was to reach a turnover of £360k by year five – and with the new service, they have already reached £250k. The new service is currently being delivered alongside existing home care and night care nursing services, and the charity is subsidising it. However, they plan to double the delivery size of this new service and make it standalone in the future when increased team capacity and NHS funding are available.

### Other aspects of the plan have also been implemented...

The organisation has successfully recruited the following as part of the business plan: six healthcare assistants, a project manager, a data coordinator, and a part-time administrator.

Bedrock Awards funding also allowed them to deliver an intensive induction programme for new staff that they would otherwise have been unable to do. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was able to justify to the Board that the induction programme was worth investing in, as they had the security of the additional Bedrock Awards funds. These inductions have increased the effectiveness of the service.

### Some concerns regarding income generation remain...

The new service has yet to become fully financially sustainable, with the charity still subsidising delivery.

There was also an underestimation of IT costs, with assumptions made regarding what the NHS would be providing. This meant that capital costs weren't factored in at the start, and additional funding is required.

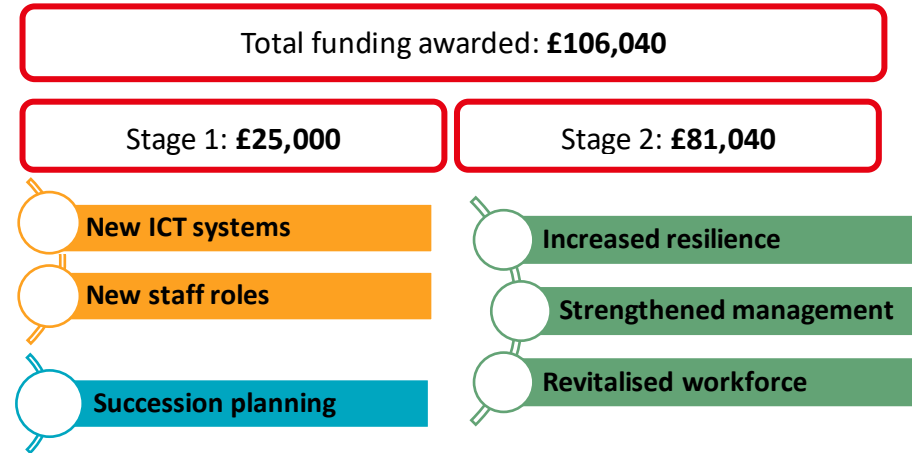
Hospice at Home recognise that there is still a need to increase income, and they are aware they don't have the internal skills and experience to increase their social enterprise arm. This is something they are keen to explore further with SEA.

They also plan to double their team size to increase their reach.

### The new service is filling a gap in statutory service in West Cumbria...

The need for this new service in the local community is substantial. For a population of 90,000 there is only a four-bed palliative care ward available. Therefore, the new service has had significant benefits for West Cumbrian patients and families.

### Case study (Cohort 2): Home to Work Ltd has increased capacity by expanding their team...



### About the organisation

- ∞ Home to Work is a registered charity running several social enterprises, established to tackle unemployment in Copeland.
- ∞ They are mainly grant funded and have a self-financing social enterprise. They take a holistic approach to supporting individuals. They have a Therapeutic Life Coach who delivers wellbeing activities and supports individuals with deep-rooted challenges.

They heard about the programme through a CCF advertisement.

### Learning from an expert drew the organisation to the programme...

The Managing Director was keen to access the support because of her ambition and desire to learn. She wants to leave the charity in a stronger position. Her role can be lonely, and she faces a lot of pressure to constantly seek funding. Bedrock Awards allowed her to step back and use peer support from a knowledgeable consultant.

## **Stage 1: Creating a business development plan**

### **Staff and the board were included in the development of the plans...**

SEA led workshops with staff and board members on strategic planning. They reviewed their mission and vision for the future, explored ways of building on their current offer, and worked on setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives.

SEA also assisted in mapping their client journey and developing a Theory of Change and outcomes framework. Staff feedback was taken onboard throughout. This was important as they are the people who will be doing the job and supporting the service. She understood that this was also important to improve their job satisfaction.

## **Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan**

### **Despite challenges, they have made several successful changes...**

Staff changes and difficulty with recruitment has resulted in delays in implementing some aspects of the business development plan. To date, the organisation has:

- ∞ Recruited a Job Coach internally.
- ∞ Recruited a Community Engagement Co-ordinator.
- ∞ Invested in a tracking system to monitor client progress, with improved reporting functions. Staff have received training for this.
- ∞ All staff have completed a Level 2 Certificate in Information, Advice and Guidance from Training Qualifications UK, and a Highfield Level 3 Award in Education and Training. Both trainings are Regulated Qualifications Framework accredited.

- ∞ The Managing Director has increased networking with other organisations and is working with them to develop potential new service offers, such as a handy man scheme, to strengthen the future and sustainability of income streams.

There are still plans to recruit an Employer Liaison Co-ordinator. They did employ someone for the role, but they left. They hope to have someone soon.

### **The Managing Director wants shared ownership of the plan...**

The Managing Director has involved staff in the implementation of the business development plan, using their feedback throughout.

### **Succession planning is in place and they are more resilient...**

A succession plan is in place, and they are less dependent on key staff.

They are benefitting from the recent recruitment of two additional staff, both of whom are thriving. New recruitment and the upskilling of staff means the overall support available to clients has improved. The new tracking and reporting system has enhanced their ability to demonstrate their impact and learner journeys. This improved reporting will contribute to stronger funding applications, and contracts for skills and employability.

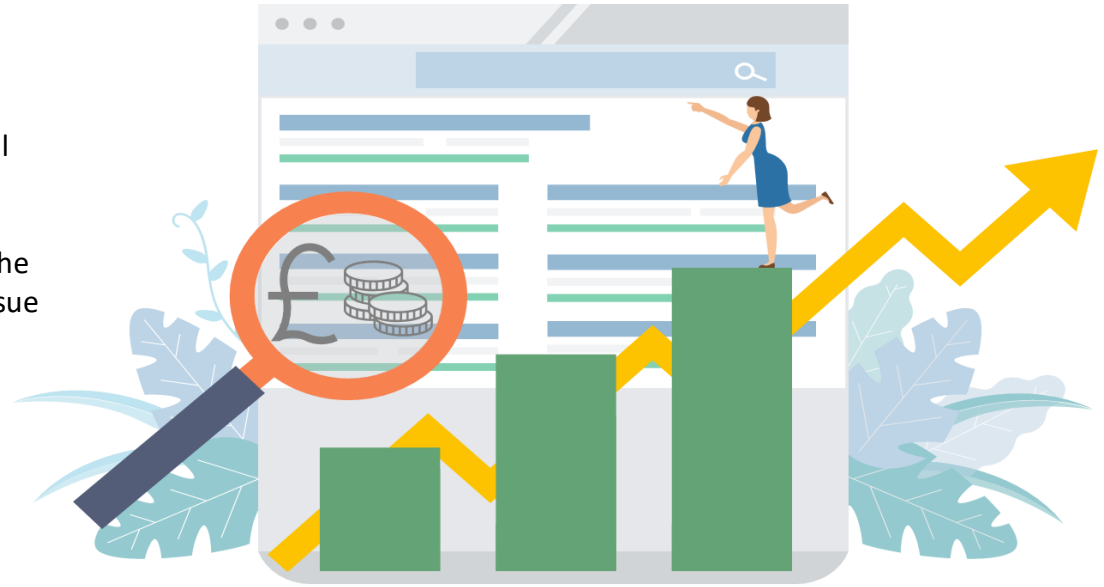
Increased networking and strengthening external relationships will continue to build overtime and contribute to developing new income streams and securing future contracts.

Due to the support received, including the employability skills training, they feel they are in a much stronger position to start bidding for more contracts moving forward, and have begun to explore new income streams.

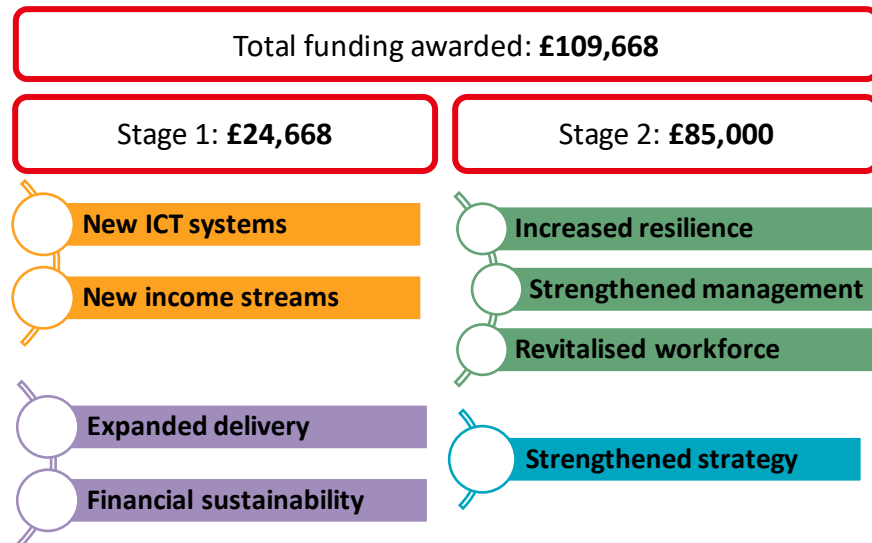
## Outcome 2: Bedrock Awards has helped organisations become financially sustainable

A key outcome achieved in many organisations is greater financial sustainability. Many organisations supported are more stable financially due to increased delivery in new service areas. Organisations have also created long-term investment plans for the delivery of their services, ensuring that funding is much less an issue and staff costs can be supported.

As a result, there is a reduced reliance on grants as they have diversified their income and secured contracts which are more sustainable.



## Case study (Cohort 2): Fit 4 Life expanded service delivery and boosted income...



### About the organisation

- ∞ Fit 4 Life is a social enterprise which was founded in 2004.
- ∞ They are a community health and rehabilitation gym service. Their primary offer is exercise on referral from health professionals and social prescribers. They also run specialist classes for individuals with other health conditions.
- ∞ They are based in Maryport, West Cumbria, with two outreach centres in Workington and Whitehaven.



### The organisation hoped to become less reliant on external funding...

Fit 4 Life heard about Bedrock Awards through Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service (Cumbria CVS) and were encouraged to apply by a member of the Bedrock Basics project team.

They wanted to access support to increase their profitable income and move away from reliance on external funding. The organisation's leadership was stuck in a cycle of service delivery and grant seeking, without an opportunity to plan strategically.

### Stage 1: Creating a business development plan

#### Staff and the Board of Directors were involved early on...

An additional Fitness Instructor was hired as a first step in the programme, recognising that the manager needed more time for strategic planning.

SEA attended a board meeting to gain Directors' perspectives. They also conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the organisation, and engaged them to assess their mission and values. A business diagnostic tool was completed by staff, management and the Board of Directors. Following this, SEA provided support with the Stage 2 development plan.

### Stage 1 support helped create a more positive outlook for the future...

Having an external consultant as a sounding board for future plans and concerns was a real benefit for the manager. Stage 1 provided an opportunity to change their ways of working. The new strategy created a more positive outlook for the future.

## Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan

### Many key actions have been implemented to date...

Fit 4 Life is coming to the end of the first year of Stage 2 and have made significant progress. They have created new income generation opportunities and made new investments. This includes:

- ∞ Extending the opening hours of their main centre providing access to their gym out of hours. This involved building upgrades to improve safety out of hours.
- ∞ Purchasing a body composition analyser which is paid for use.
- ∞ Moving away from paper-based monitoring. This is ongoing due to the volume of data being transferred to a digital system.
- ∞ Improving business development, including increased networking, involvement in panels, boards and steering groups. This has led to:
  - Strengthened relationships and development of new ones.
  - Securing new contracts and an increased ability to respond to NHS commissioning.

### Some aspects are yet to be implemented...

Some elements of the business development plan are yet to be implemented, including:

- ∞ Employing an additional fitness instructor. This is planned for the summer of 2024 with the hopes of improving capacity.
- ∞ Improving digital marketing. Improvements here will hopefully translate into better awareness of the organisation.
- ∞ There is also appetite to extend the opening hours of the two outreach centres to expand service delivery further.

### Progress on the business development plan is shared with the team...

The manager of Fit 4 Life is leading the implementation of most aspects of the business development plan but keeps staff up to date with the progress and future plans to ensure everyone is on board.

### Succession planning is not yet formalised...

A succession plan is not yet in place. The manager of Fit 4 Life is aware of the work that goes on behind the scenes that others may not be aware of and recognises this as an area for development.

### Fit 4 Life is more resilient than before...

They have strengthened income streams through expanding their opening hours, offering a body composition analysis service, and securing new contracts; increased awareness of the organisation, strengthened relationships, and allowed the organisation to become more ready to respond to commissioning through the NHS.

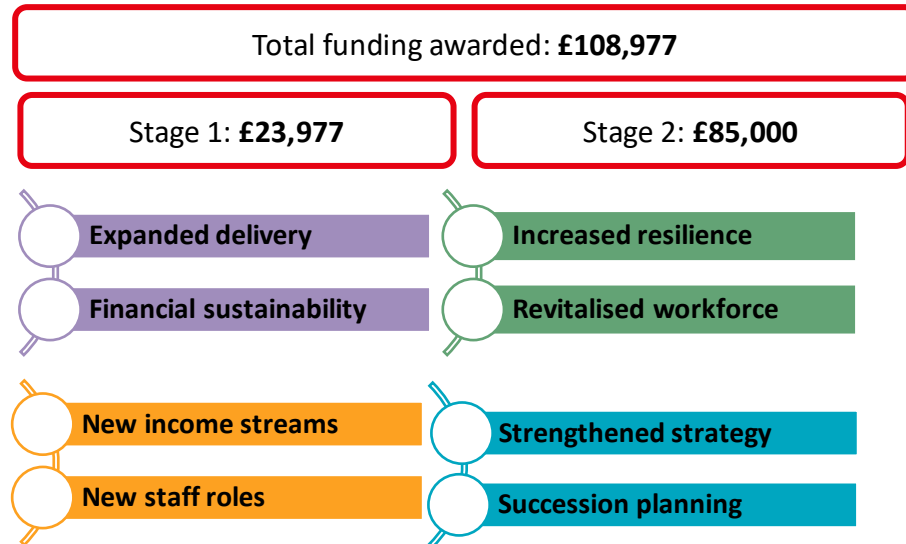
### Many benefits are evident...

The organisation's staff are benefitting from increased job security, long term increased salaries, and spending more time doing what they love. They are less worried about chasing funding and confident with a forward-looking strategy.

The extended opening hours has increased membership with more people from the community now having increased access to their gym. This is expected to result in improved health and wellbeing the local community. Many clients are over 65 and are supported to stay independent for longer.

Health professionals are also benefitting from the services provided by Fit 4 Life as without this service there is nothing similar locally. They are therefore contributing to long-term cost savings to the NHS.

## Case study (Cohort 2): Copeland Age and Advice Service (CAAS) have strengthened their service offer...



### About the organisation

- ∞ CAAS is a social enterprise, which supports individuals over the age of 55.
- ∞ They provide advice around benefits, legal matters, and housing, as well as low level daily aids and equipment.
- ∞ They were founded in 2019 following the closure of a similar service within a larger local organisation.



### CAAS wanted to develop new income streams...

CCF recommended Bedrock Awards to CAAS.

Due to a 6-month gap in provision between the service closing in one organisation and CAAS starting up, they had a huge backlog of clients waiting for support and had to hit the ground running from the start.

Bedrock Awards provided them an opportunity to take a step back and assess how they could improve their service and become self-sustaining and less reliant on external funding.

### Stage 1: Creating a business development plan

#### Staff involvement early on was important...

Stage 1 support included several business consultancy sessions between SEA and the Executive Director to identify opportunities for increased sustainability and financial stability. SEA facilitated a strategy planning day with all staff to identify their future vision, including identifying opportunities to generate more income, as well as how they can reduce some of their issues. The team undertook a SWOT analysis and created value propositions.

#### Learnings from Stage 1 were cascaded down through the organisation...

The Executive Director benefitted from the peer support and learnings from SEA, and communicated lessons to other staff. It gave all members of staff the option to take time to consider development of their roles and opportunities for the organisation going forward.

## Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan

### Significant progress has been made to date...

CAAS are halfway through Stage 2 and have made significant progress in developing new income streams and investing in staff and systems. So far, the organisation has:

- ∞ Strengthened their retail offer. They now offer new products as well as second hand products. This means a broader offer for more people, including additional products for hire.
- ∞ Employed an Equipment Worker.
- ∞ Trained all staff as Trusted Assessors, to increase their capacity in supporting clients.
- ∞ Trained more staff on their internal database and reporting, to improve how they can demonstrate their impact, which will be used in future funding and contract applications.

### The organisation has ambition to expand further...

Looking forward, the organisation hopes to:

- ∞ Employ an Administrator for the equipment project. This has not yet happened due to reaching maximum capacity in their current office space.
- ∞ Move to an industrial unit where they can set up all of their operations in one space, including their retail offer with a showroom. They are continuing to seek support from SEA to find an appropriate space and hope that this will be in the near future. The organisation expects a reduction in rent in the type of new space they are seeking, leading to cost savings.

### A succession plan is already in place...

Everyone is involved in implementing the business development plan, and the organisation has undertaken their succession planning. This has also helped them receive a grant for the next 3 years, which required their succession plan to be in place. The organisation has progressed to a place where the Executive Director can now consider cutting her hours.

### Strengthening income streams has increased resilience and stability...

CAAS is more resilient since accessing support through Bedrock Awards, particularly due to the success of expanding their retail offer which has created financial stability. Plans to further increase their capacity and move to a new base with lower costs, will further improve resilience.

### The benefits of business development are wide reaching...

The Executive Director has benefitted from the peer support provided by SEA. Her staff have benefitted from upskilling through training and increased capacity, and ultimately their clients are benefitting from an improved service offer. Overall, the organisation has been able to plan strategically, ensuring these benefits carry on over the long term.

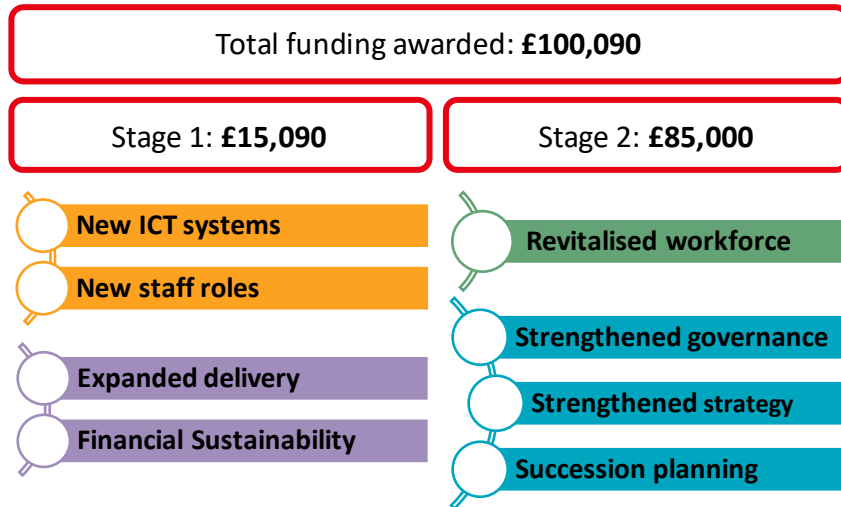
### Outcome 3: The support has improved strategic planning

Bedrock Awards has given the organisations an opportunity to invest their time into strategic thinking. As a result, organisations now have stronger governance systems, higher involvement from their board, and increased accountability among staff.

Organisations are now planning strategically for the future and are less reactive to service delivery. This has also allowed senior staff to step away from delivery and look forward - creating succession plans to ensure the long-term stability of the organisation.



**Case study (Cohort 1): Cumbria Youth Alliance (CYA) is more focussed on delivering their core missions and values...**



**About the organisation**

- ∞ CYA is a charity aiming to ensure young people in Cumbria reach their full potential.
- ∞ They are a membership organisation comprising of the Youth Sector in Cumbria. The membership is open to all organisations working with children and young people to support their development and act in their interests. They work at a strategic level in the sector to support and develop organisations to deliver a range of high-quality services and programmes.



**The programme came at the right time...**

They heard about Bedrock Awards through their network and CCF. When Bedrock Awards launched, CYA were going through a re-structure and reviewing their work. There was uncertainty around which areas to prioritise, so the support was well-timed to help.

**Stage 1: Creating the business development plan**

**Staff were supported to express their views with confidence...**

During Stage 1, SEA worked with CYA to review their purpose, mission and values, and to ensure strategic alignment. Before the support, the organisation identified a need to change the current model from one that 'chased the funding' and was reactive to delivery demands to one that focused on their original purpose to support other organisations to deliver.

There was a feeling amongst staff that they had lost their voice. SEA supported the leadership team to bring staff onboard and to understand the changing infrastructure. Team members felt confident to communicate their views.

The main benefit of Stage 1 support was the time to focus on a new strategy to become less reactive. The work they have done here would have taken significantly longer without the support.

**Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan**

**CYA implemented a new Management Information System (MIS)...**

CYA has progressed with the implementation of many aspects of their business development plan. This includes:

- ∞ Making significant improvements to the staffing structure by ensuring every strand within the organisation has a lead.

- ∞ Establishing a bespoke MIS. The outputs of the MIS are valuable, and it has been rolled out to 17 organisations in Cumbria. The system allows data to be streamlined, and for youth voices to be included.
- ∞ Evidencing outcomes and demonstrating the impact of their services is now easier as a result. This has played a key role in successfully accessing additional funding. They are now being approached by more funders and organisations and are coordinating funding amongst other youth support organisations.

#### **However, some aspects of the business plan have been changed...**

Through further development of the business plan, CYA decided that setting up a registered training centre to provide a pathway to a professional career in youth work would be too costly, and not add enough value. Simultaneously, there were government changes to criteria for youth training centres. Therefore, they changed direction and are working with a training provider (National Youth Agency, NYA) who ordinarily only offer training online. They negotiated with the provider and have secured provision of face-to-face training three times per year. This is a unique service offer developed as part of Cumbria Community Foundation's Better Tomorrows programme and will help upskill a significant number of people to become qualified youth workers.

#### **The CEO and Senior Manager for Development and Finance led the implementation of the development plan...**

Although led by the senior management team, the activity in Stage 1 ensured there was buy-in from the whole team. A lot of effort was made to improve staff confidence and give them their voice back.

#### **The organisation has become more financially stable and less reactive to service demands....**

CYA have reduced their service delivery from 80% to 36%, focusing delivery efforts on gaps in the sector, strategic alignment and where they are best placed to deliver. Due to this, they are able to focus on their mission to be a strategic lead across the sector, supporting other organisations to do the service delivery.

CYA have also been awarded two major funding contracts that prior to Bedrock Awards they were concerned about being able to deliver.

#### **The biggest beneficiaries of the plan have been other youth organisations throughout Cumbria...**

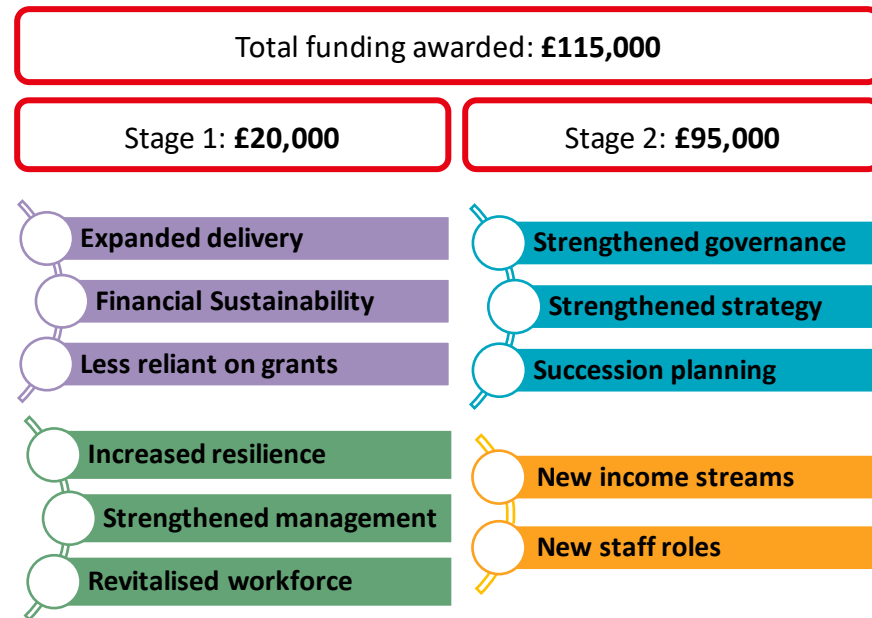
CYA are now delivering their strategic purpose (which they had moved away from) - supporting organisations to make sure they have access to the right funding. They have built new partnerships as a result.

The organisation suggests they have "the best Youth Work training offer in the country" as they are delivering in-person training sessions in youth work in collaboration with the NYA, which is an offer that no one else is offering.

Previously online only, they are now offering a series of in-person sessions that aren't available anywhere else.

Additionally, data across the sector is now being streamlined with 17 different youth organisations across Cumbria using the same MIS system. This means impact and outcomes are being evidenced, and organisations are more effectively bidding for contracts and funding.

## Case study (Cohort 1): Phoenix Enterprise Centre have planned for the future through a clear succession plan...



### About the organisation

- ∞ Phoenix Enterprise Centre has been delivering services to alleviate hardship and support small business start-ups in Cleaton Moor since 1985.
- ∞ They rent out office accommodation at low rates, and provide advice and guidance on finding employment, benefits, and digital exclusion. They also work to bring life back into empty properties.



### Phoenix Enterprise were enthusiastic about Bedrock Awards...

They heard about Bedrock Awards from CCF and were keen to apply. They had got to a stage where they felt they were drifting, with no plan or opportunity for development. They needed investment to generate income and recruit new staff. They were also completely dependent on grant funding, and recognised they needed to be more financially resilient.

Bedrock Awards arrived at the perfect time as they were able to fully assess their purpose and create an in-depth development plan for the future.

#### Stage 1: Creating a business development plan

They received comprehensive support during Stage 1 that included:

- ∞ A 360-degree review of the organisation, including assessing their mission and values.
- ∞ Self-assessment that covered communication, marketing, and business planning to identify where changes were needed.
- ∞ A review of the organisation structure and the Executive Director's role, including succession planning.
- ∞ Training for the Board of Trustees, and Action Learning Sets to share best practice.
- ∞ Sharing examples of good practice from other charities, such as online donation pages.

With the help of SEA, they were able to provide an opportunity for different voices to participate in discussions about the future of the charity, allowing for greater diversity.

Stage 1 was led predominantly by the Executive Director, but the Finance Manager was also heavily involved. A lot of work was also undertaken to motivate the Board.

## **Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan**

### **Most of the business plan has been successfully implemented...**

Phoenix Enterprise Centre has achieved the following during Stage 2:

- ∞ Developed a marketing strategy which has resulted in an updated and maintained website, coordinated marketing campaigns, and increased social media hits.
- ∞ The charity's Memorandum of Understanding and Articles of Association were reviewed and changed.
- ∞ Recruited a Business Development Manager and marketing role. The two roles were permanent positions, with their salaries covered by the additional income generated.
- ∞ Additional income generated through:
  - Successfully renting their sites, for which occupancy rates have risen from 82% to 100%.
  - An increase in corporate giving as a result of their marketing, which has generated £6.5k to date.
  - A new donation page added to their website, helping receive donations of £3k within the first year.
  - New paid for services, such as cleaning, Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), furniture loans, and administrative services.

- ∞ Succession plans in place for the Executive Director. The Board now contains two new members, both female which is a change to the previously male dominated Board.
- ∞ Implemented new financial structures, including new invoicing arrangements.

Phoenix Enterprise Centre are continuing to build on the success of Bedrock Awards and are in the process of developing a tenant satisfaction survey so they can better understand their future requirements and additional services they could provide.

There has been ownership of the development plan across the organisation, with many staff are volunteering to get more involved in.

### **They are in a much stronger position now, and for the future...**

Succession planning is in place for key roles.

There are also plans as part of The Town Fund (part of the national Levelling-Up Agenda) to deliver up to 6 business startups, 30 jobs, and regenerate one of Phoenix's buildings. This will have a significant positive impact locally, and is further evidence of the stronger financial position they are in, and the increase in demand for their services.

The business plan has had a positive impact on the workforce too. This includes:

- ∞ Staff, who are better paid.
- ∞ The Board, who are more involved,
- ∞ The senior management team, who have a succession plan in place.

The charity's beneficiaries have also benefitted as they have seen an increase in available services within the properties they rent.

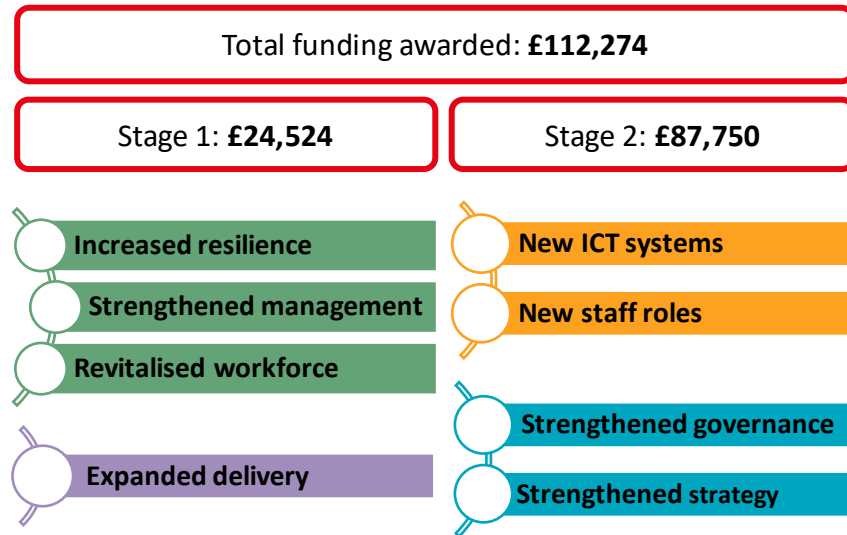
## Outcome 4: Organisations are more resilient and have a new energy

There is evidence of increased security among organisations as they reduce reliance on key staff and funders.

Regular engagement with all staff has led to a revitalised workforce, where staff are upskilled, confident and enthusiastic. Additionally, management teams are now better skilled to manage their staff and services, with more structures in place to support them, and have increased capacity to dedicate to strategic thinking.



## Case study (Cohort 1): Howgill Family Centre (HFC) have recovered from a damaging contract loss and strengthened their delivery...



### About the organisation

- ∞ HFC is a registered charity, with 40 years' experience providing services for children and families in Whitehaven and Cumberland.
- ∞ They run nurseries in Cleator Moor, Kells and Whitehaven, and community outreach services throughout the area, delivering therapeutic work across schools.



### Unexpected loss of a long-term contract created a crisis...

The charity had been running services for Cumbria County Council for over 20 years, but lost that contract at short notice in 2019. This had a significant impact on the charity, with a reduction in over 50 staff, including the majority of the management team, the CEO stepping down, and being stuck with a large delivery building and rent that they no longer needed. They were in a position where they had 3 years' worth of reserves to run on, and had a very uncertain future.

They were contacted directly about Bedrock Awards from both CCF and Sellafield. The arrival of Bedrock Awards was seen as a lifeline for them to recover from their changing circumstances and become more sustainable.

### Stage 1: Creating a business development plan

SEA worked alongside the Trustee Board to help create a development plan. They also conducted workshops with the full staff team, ensuring everyone was onboard.

The initial support allowed the charity the time and confidence to start thinking strategically again and strengthen their governance.

Through the business support they were able to identify where and how they were 'stuck' and reassessed their mission and values. Understanding the scale of their challenge was a vital first step in their ambition to recover.

### Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan

#### Many actions have been implemented to date...

HFC have achieved the following as part of Stage 2 implementation of their business plan.

This was achieved through Bedrock Awards and Bedrock Basics:

- ∞ Employing a human resource consultancy to restructure management of staff delivering direct services. This helped improve communications with staff and worked on improving relationships that had been damaged during the contract loss.
- ∞ New Trustees in place with experience of business redevelopment.
- ∞ Employed four new apprentice positions.
- ∞ Extended opening hours and delivery in Early Years settings; they now run all year round.
- ∞ Launched a new website and significantly improved their social media presence.
- ∞ Established and invested in a new automated booking system that takes payments in advance. This has reduced the risk of missed payments and staff having to chase parents.

#### **Some aspects of the business plan were adapted or are yet to be implemented...**

Some elements of the business plan have yet to be realised or have changed due to circumstances. HFC have adapted their approach in reaction to these:

- ∞ The organisation had struggled to recruit the planned Business Development Manager and HFC's Manager had left. HFC appointed an interim CEO (a member of SEA and paid for through their Bedrock Award funding) to manage the changed plan. A permanent CEO was then successfully recruited.

- ∞ They are no longer planning to recruit a Finance Officer. This is because the new finance system is highly effective and has reduced the need for this role.

#### **The charity is more resilient than before...**

HFC have overcome some of the challenges they were facing. Bedrock Awards has:

- ∞ Helped them recover from the contract loss.
- ∞ Allowed them to increase income through the introduction of an automated payment scheme and extension of delivery hours.
- ∞ Created a strong Board that is more fit for purpose.
- ∞ Enabled restructuring of service management so they run more efficiently.

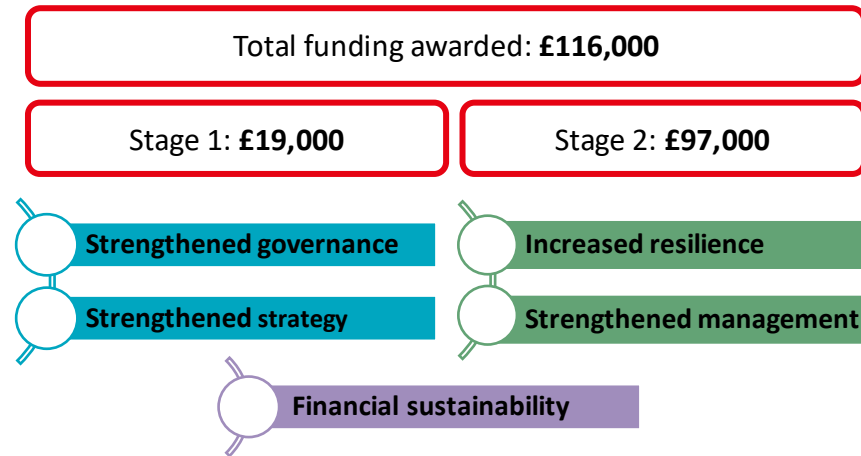
There is a sense of shared ownership of the development plan among staff, who now have a much better understanding of the decisions the management team have had to make. Trustees are likewise more informed and involved.

However, there are concerns that a lack of ongoing funding now that Bedrock Awards has ended may put the benefits they've achieved at risk.

#### **Many benefits have been realised for the staff, customers and community...**

Staff at HFC now have greater job security and improved relationships with the management. Families now have access to an increased service offer due to the extended delivery hours, and a clearer way to book and pay for services.

## Case study (Cohort 1): Together We CIC gain stronger governance and management skills...



### About the organisation

- Together We CIC is a not-for-profit organisation, founded in 2017.
- They provide four distinct wellbeing services: pre and post-natal support, talk, fitness and recovery. They empower people to better manage their own physical and mental health in West Cumbria and seek to fill the gaps in statutory services.



**together we**  
Cumbria

### Together We needed to develop their business management skills...

They were approached by CCF to apply for Bedrock Awards. At that point they had experienced a significant expansion of their services and this led to operational demands which made it difficult to fully focus on governance and background development. Although they were confident in their ability to deliver services, they needed time and resources to strengthen the governance of the organisation.

Bedrock Awards arrived at a time when Together We were first contemplating the scale of the challenge before them. As of April 2024, they have completed Stage 1 and 2.

### Stage 1: Creating the business development plan

Stage 1 of Bedrock Awards allowed the two Managing Director roles to be backfilled so they could fully engage with the programme. With the support of SEA, they conducted a full review of their vision, values, and purpose. They also took the time to think about how they wanted to move forward strategically, following their organic expansion since inception.

They created specific goals and a comprehensive development plan. To inform this, SEA surveyed the founders, partners and staff to gain a full understanding of how they were working and what could change.

Due to the small team, it was mainly the two founders who were involved in developing the business plan.

One of the major benefits of Stage 1 was the opportunity for them to step back and fully assess what they do and have to offer.

## Stage 2: Implementing the business development plan

### Many aspects of the business plan have been implemented...

Together We have successfully implemented most of their business development plan, but have experienced mixed results:

- ∞ They successfully recruited a Volunteer Manager to increase recruitment of volunteers. The manager stayed in the role for 16 months and recruited 18 volunteers, with 8 now having a small caseload. These volunteers helped achieve a key aim of the business plan - reducing staff time for projects - and resulted in financial savings equivalent to half a full-time role. However, the Volunteer Manager left the organisation and it was felt that individual service managers were better placed to undertake this work.
- ∞ A new website was successfully developed and launched, making it much easier to navigate. It currently includes one of their guided discovery courses, and the plan is to have the full suite of these available online.
- ∞ A public donation tool was also launched, and donations now account for 1% of their total income. Although this is an improvement, the costs of the tool outweigh the benefits in terms of running costs and fees so they took the decision not to continue using it.

### Some parts of the business development plan didn't go as planned...

They have been unable to recruit a Business Manager due to a competitive job market locally. The salary and terms on-offer were lower compared to other organisations, creating significant hurdles. As a result, the needs of the organisation were further reviewed with CCF

and instead an Officer Manager was recruited. This role has worked well.

### The governance and procedures are strengthened, but more work is needed...

They have become more aware of their operational costs and this has created more sustainability following the significant work in Stage 1 on strengthening their governance and learning to clearly communicate their offer. As a result, they have secured a new NHS contract. There has been no reduction in their dependency on grants, but they are confident that this will not inhibit their ability to be sustainable and deliver high quality services. They are now more aware of what their services cost and run things accordingly. They feel more structured and professional as a result.

### Senior staff feel more confident than they used to...

Due to the size of the organisation, implementation of the plan was undertaken by the co-founders, and as a result there has been no reduction in the organisation's dependency on them. However, they used the time away from their day-to-day roles to put the right policies and procedures in place. Consequently, they are in a stronger position than they were before.

### Many benefits realised for the senior management and staff team...

The senior management team have benefitted significantly from Bedrock Awards. They have increased confidence and improved their existing business management skills. They also feel less isolated following the events and peer support groups they attended. The rest of the staff team are now supported by an appropriate set of embedded policies.

## SECTION 4: COMPARISON WITH OTHER FUNDER PLUS BUSINESS SUPPORT MODELS

This section presents the models of three other Funder Plus business support programmes, and demonstrates how they are different to Bedrock Awards. Other models reviewed include:

- ∞ The Weston Garfield Charity Awards from the Weston Garfield Foundation in partnership with Pilotlight.
- ∞ The Organisational Resilience programme from Lloyds Bank Foundation in partnership with The School for Social Entrepreneurs.
- ∞ The Access to Resilience programme from The National Lottery Community Fund in partnership with Dormant Accounts Northern Ireland.

Figure 4.1 below provides an overview of the programmes.



Figure 4.1: Comparisons with other Funder Plus business support models

	The Garfield Weston Foundation In partnership with Pilotlight	Lloyds Bank Foundation In partnership with the School for Social Entrepreneurs	The National Lottery Community Fund In partnership with Dormant Accounts N.I.
<b>Overview</b>	The <b>Weston Charity Awards</b> offer up to 22 charities unrestricted grants (up to £6.5k) to instigate strategic change and innovative growth, and leadership coaching from public and private sector professionals (worth up to £16k).	The <b>Organisational Resilience programme</b> , offers support for up to 22 organisations, including Third Sector organisations to improve internal resilience; and public and private bodies, funders and commissioners to address challenges and increase external resilience within the wider ecosystem.	The <b>Access to Resilience programme</b> offers funding of up to £150k for up to 3 years for 25-30 organisations. Funded projects seek to improve skills, capacity and resilience of smaller community groups working with disadvantaged people, and address barriers they face to accessing support.
<b>Start date</b>	2014	2024	2024
<b>Needs addressed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Increasing organisational reach and income.</li> <li>❏ Strengthening strategic vision and effectiveness of senior management teams.</li> <li>❏ Improved confidence and leadership skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Increasing resilience within Third Sector.</li> <li>❏ Addressing wider ecosystem and community challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Improving access to existing support and increasing participation of community groups.</li> <li>❏ Increasing resilience of small, underrepresented community groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ At least 1 full-time role in a leadership position.</li> <li>❏ Income &lt;£5mn p.a.</li> <li>❏ Based in the North of England, The Midlands or Wales.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Exclusively for Third Sector organisations and larger bodies engaged with Lloyds Bank Foundation.</li> <li>❏ Based in Telford, Wrekin or Great Yarmouth (trial).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Third Sector umbrella/support organisations.</li> <li>❏ Underrepresented community groups with income of £10k - £100k p.a. supported.</li> <li>❏ Based in Northern Ireland.</li> </ul>
<b>Type of support</b>	Grantees receive coaching from ‘Pilotlighters’ (business professionals) covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Operational efficiencies.</li> <li>❏ Sustainable long-term business strategies.</li> <li>❏ Organisational growth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Using the Lloyds Bank Foundation Organisational Resilience Guide, organisations work in peer groups to evaluate purpose, financial agility, identifying development areas and developing strategy.</li> <li>❏ Larger bodies work with peers to discuss challenges and strengthen their offer.</li> </ul>	Grantees offer a range of support to groups including financial planning, project management, governance, diversity and inclusion, leadership, succession planning, digital skills, measuring impact, strategic planning, volunteer management, and collaboration.
<b>Delivery model</b>	10 sessions over 10 months including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ One-to-one meetings with ‘Pilotlighters’.</li> <li>❏ Two peer support sessions with other award winners to share good practice.</li> <li>❏ Collaboration opportunities through the Pilotlight network of charities.</li> <li>❏ End of programme celebratory event.</li> </ul>	10 days delivered over 10 months, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Three, day long residentials.</li> <li>❏ Online sessions.</li> <li>❏ Action learning sets.</li> <li>❏ One-to-one business coaching meetings delivered by expert practitioners, Third Sector and business leaders.</li> </ul>	For up to 3 years, grantees will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❏ Use diagnostic tools to identify skills gaps within organisations supported.</li> <li>❏ Provide advice, mentoring, coaching and training.</li> <li>❏ Develop guidance materials suitable for organisations supported.</li> </ul>

### **Bedrock Awards offers more comprehensive and holistic support than other models...**

Whilst other Funder Plus programmes address similar needs and offer support across similar themes, there are some key differences when compared to Bedrock Awards, including:

- ∞ The programmes presented do not offer direct funding to free up leadership time.
- ∞ Only The Weston Charity Awards offers funding directly to organisations and is limited to a much smaller amount (£6.5k). Whilst the Access to Resilience programme has a large funding pot, funds are distributed to organisations who will provide support, and not the organisations who are supported to increase their resilience and participation.
- ∞ Support is generally limited to a shorter period and is not ongoing to cover the implementation of any new strategies developed or weaknesses addressed.
- ∞ Although, the income eligibility criteria in other programmes is generally broader and minimum thresholds are lower than Bedrock Awards.

### **However, other models also offer some unique support...**

The three models reviewed showed some unique ways in which support to organisations is being maximised and can benefit Bedrock Awards going forward too. These include:

- ∞ The Weston Garfield Awards offers grantees access to a wider network of charities through their partnership with Pilotlight. This

may allow external relationships to be strengthened, best practice to be shared and provide opportunities for increased collaboration beyond the immediate Cohort of grantees.

- ∞ Lloyds Bank Foundation collaborated with charities, funders, and commissioners to create a free guide on organisational resilience. This guide helps organisations assess their strengths and weaknesses in resilience through a discovery process. It can be used independently, in peer group sessions, or within the broader ecosystem to examine resilience collectively. Organisations participating in this programme evaluate their resilience within peer group settings.
- ∞ The Organisational Resilience programme works with a blended Cohort, including both Third Sector organisations, but also public bodies, private businesses, funders and commissioners. The programme recognises that external resilience in the wider ecosystem is necessary for Third Sector organisations to thrive.
- ∞ The Access to Resilience programme is in its second phase. Phase 1 offered grants to organisations to tackle internal resilience challenges. However, it was found that small and micro-organisations, as well as those serving disadvantaged groups (such as older people, disabled individuals, women, ethnically diverse communities, faith-based communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, or rural communities), were underrepresented. To address this, Phase 2 offered funding support to organisations to increase participation from these underrepresented community groups. Alongside this, bespoke support is being provided to increase the skills, capacity and resilience of these groups.

## SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS

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This section presents the conclusions in terms of the strengths and successes, as well as challenges and limitations of Bedrock Awards.

### Strengths and successes

- ∞ Giving organisations the time, security, and support to step back from the day-to-day running of their organisation. This allowed them to take appropriate time to review what they did well and how they could improve, and ultimately become more sustainable.
- ∞ Bedrock Awards arrived at the right time for many organisations who were in the midst of or coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic meant that many organisations: were trying to deliver their services remotely without the right infrastructure in place; had experienced a loss of volunteers; and saw the demand for their services increase dramatically.
- ∞ The amount of funding provided was impactful. This is evidenced by the significant outcomes achieved by the organisations supported. For many, Bedrock Awards has been transformational. Some probably wouldn't exist now without the support, and most are more resilient than before. This includes organisations who have:
  - Made new investments in ICT systems, created further income streams, increased their efficiency and employed new staff.
  - Improved their strategic planning and strengthened their governance, put succession planning in place and have forward looking plans for the first time.
- Increased their financial sustainability by expanding their delivery and offer and are now less dependent on grant funding.
- Improved their capacity with lower dependence on key staff, a happier and more energised workforce, and better management structures.
- ∞ Bedrock Awards has reached the right organisations and the approach was tailored to their needs. The support exceeded expectations of most organisations, with the aims clearly articulated.
- ∞ The amount of support available and the timeframe in which it was delivered was another key strength, as was the fact it wasn't based on rigid outcomes like other support.
- ∞ The friendly and approachable nature of SEA was a key reason for the success. Their knowledge of the sector and of the organisations they worked with was highly commended.
- ∞ The Action Learning Sets were regarded as particularly helpful, especially for the smaller organisations who felt isolated. Larger organisations benefitted too in terms of strengthening their relationships and having access to networking locally.

## Challenges and limitations

- ∞ Although the quality of support was very well received, there were inconsistencies across the two Cohorts. SEA had capacity issues and were delivering support from a small team. There was a single point of failure whereby when one SEA worker was unexpectedly absent, there was a gap in support. This impacted organisations in Cohort 2 more. There was a lack of communication at this point leaving them in limbo.
- ∞ Given the gap caused by the absence of the established SEA worker, it appears that this approach is potentially unsustainable and backup personnel are needed, and better communication about what support SEA can provide outside individual staff.
- ∞ Many of the development plans included investment in new staff and capacity. But recruitment was a challenge. Many organisations were recruiting for similar roles and beneficiaries were sometimes competing. The competitive nature and the limited recruitment pool meant that the smaller organisations (who were offering lower salaries) often missed out.
- ∞ The vulnerability of the Third Sector and the high demand for their services was another challenge. Organisations felt vulnerable following the closure of large charities such as West Cumbria MIND. Losses such as this meant surviving organisations had to address higher levels of need with less partnership/peer support.

## Summary

As stated, Bedrock Awards has been very well received by organisations supported, and in many cases has been transformational. Stakeholders confirmed that this funder plus model had provided invaluable support to Third Sector organisations.

## Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the evaluation findings are currently being reviewed and will inform future programme considerations.

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