

Transforming West Cumbria: Mid-Programme Evaluation



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Cumbria Community Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Launched in 2020, the Transforming West Cumbria (TWC) programme focuses on supporting and improving West Cumbria's communities. Funded through the Sellafield Ltd social impact, multiplied (SiX) programme, and delivered by Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF), the programme uses the power of local partnerships to tackle the area's most entrenched social and economic problems.

This mid-programme evaluation assesses TWC just over halfway through its delivery. The evaluation aims to:

- ∞ Assess the relevance of the original rationale of TWC, and illustrate other socio-economic needs it could address.
- ∞ Understand the effectiveness of TWC's programmatic approach.
- ∞ Highlight key differences between TWC's approach and other social impact strategies.
- ∞ Measure the impact achieved to date.

The evaluation included an extensive review of programme documents, the development of a Theory of Change and a Social Return on Investment framework, in-depth consultations, and a review of national and local policy and other similar social impact programmes (see Section 1).

Strategic fit

The report 'West Cumbria: Opportunities and Challenges' (2019) identified the most pressing needs to inform TWC and the design of the original six strands. However, new needs emerged, and many existing ones worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sellafield Ltd and CCF responded quickly, and TWC was updated in March 2021 to provide additional support.

Despite the extra support, new challenges have emerged since, due to the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. These include further health and financial issues (see Section 2).

Effectiveness of TWC's approach

TWC's flexible and responsive approach has effectively addressed the programme's original hallmarks by being needs-led, leveraging local knowledge, and encouraging collaborative partnership working. Third Sector organisations are working towards shared goals, with partners benefitting from mutual skills and knowledge exchange.

Collaboration between Third Sector organisations, Sellafield Ltd and its supply chain is growing slowly. However, Third Sector organisations are still struggling to attract volunteers and employees.

Steering groups have added great value by offering diverse perspectives and expertise, but increasing the visibility among partners could increase their impact.

CCF's management and governance has been crucial to the programme's success. Their support and guidance on many issues and extensive knowledge of the Third Sector has helped delivery partners (see Section 3).

Comparison with other social impact approaches

TWC shares several successful aspects with the three approaches assessed. These approaches could benefit from other key strengths of TWC including its structured programmatic approach, focus on Third Sector resilience, emphasis on partnership working and collaboration, and more (see Section 4).

Impact of Transforming West Cumbria

TWC has had positive impacts across three levels: individuals and communities, projects and delivery partners, and the overall programme.

Individual and community benefits include improved resilience and working practices among Third Sector organisations, increased volunteering opportunities, inspired youth action, an improved entrepreneurial culture, enhanced financial wellbeing, and improved wellbeing of individuals and families.

Project and delivery partners have benefitted from increased partnership working and collaboration, a more resilient Third Sector, and improved monitoring and evaluation practices.

At a programme level, TWC has enabled coordinated delivery and an effective use of resources, while also increasing collaboration between supply chain organisations and the Third Sector, and creating lasting generational change for some.

Overall, the impacts have created a social value of £19.9 million, translating to exceptional value for money of £5.34 value generated per £1 investment (see Section 5).

Conclusions

Strengths and successes:

- ∞ Significant level of investment from Sellafield Ltd.
- ∞ Data-driven and flexible approach, utilising local knowledge and responding to emerging needs.
- ∞ Exceptional programme management from CCF and avoidance of a top-down approach.
- ∞ Steering groups adding value.
- ∞ Significant outcomes achieved to-date.

Weakness and challenges:

- ∞ Growing need for support due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cost-of-living crisis, coupled with decreasing public sector funds and rising demand for Third Sector's services.
- ∞ New emerging issues creating extra pressures on communities.
- ∞ Limited resource among partner organisations restricting ability to collaborate.
- ∞ 'Flat level' funding paired with rising costs.
- ∞ Challenging monitoring and reporting systems.
- ∞ Inability of projects to capture longer-term outcomes.
- ∞ Difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers and employees.

Next steps

A workshop will be held to carry out an impact assessment of the challenges highlighted. Appropriate action plans will be developed to mitigate any risk to the continuity and milestones of the programme.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview of Transforming West Cumbria

Transforming West Cumbria (TWC) was established to address some of the significant socio-economic challenges in the area. It started in 2020 with the goal of enabling local people to take control of their own futures by empowering them to make positive changes.

TWC is a £6.5 million programme, managed by Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF) and funded through the Sellafield Ltd social impact, multiplied (SiX) programme. The following two pages details more information about TWC with an overview and setting out the ‘theory of change’.

About the evaluation

In October 2023, Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF) appointed Forever Consulting (see [this link for more about Forever Consulting](#)) to assess the progress of TWC, which is three years into its five-year duration. The evaluation addresses the following:

- ∞ Is the original rationale for TWC still relevant and are there other socio-economic challenges it should be addressing?
- ∞ How successful is TWC in engaging local communities and addressing the socio-economic problems?
- ∞ What distinguishes the TWC approach from other similar social impact strategies?
- ∞ What impact has TWC made on communities facing these deep-rooted socio-economic challenges?

Figure 1.1 below illustrates our evaluation approach.

Figure 1.1: Method overview

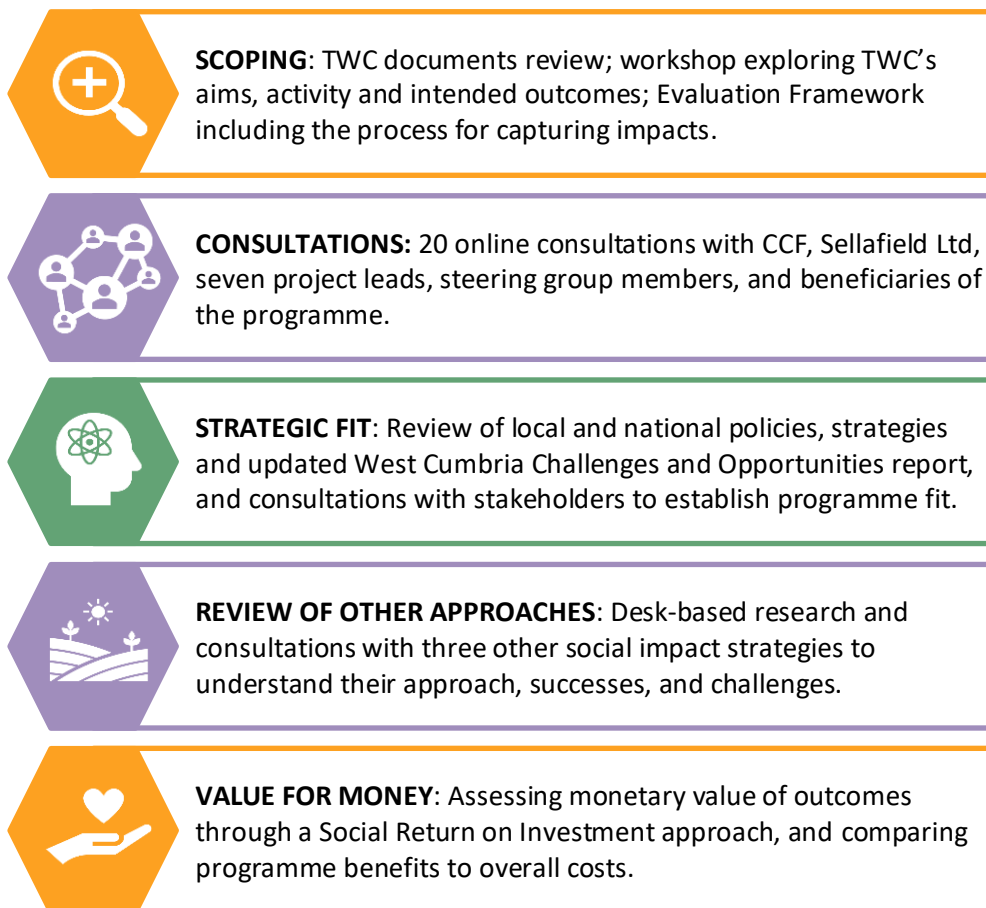


Figure 1.2: Overview of Transforming West Cumbria Programme

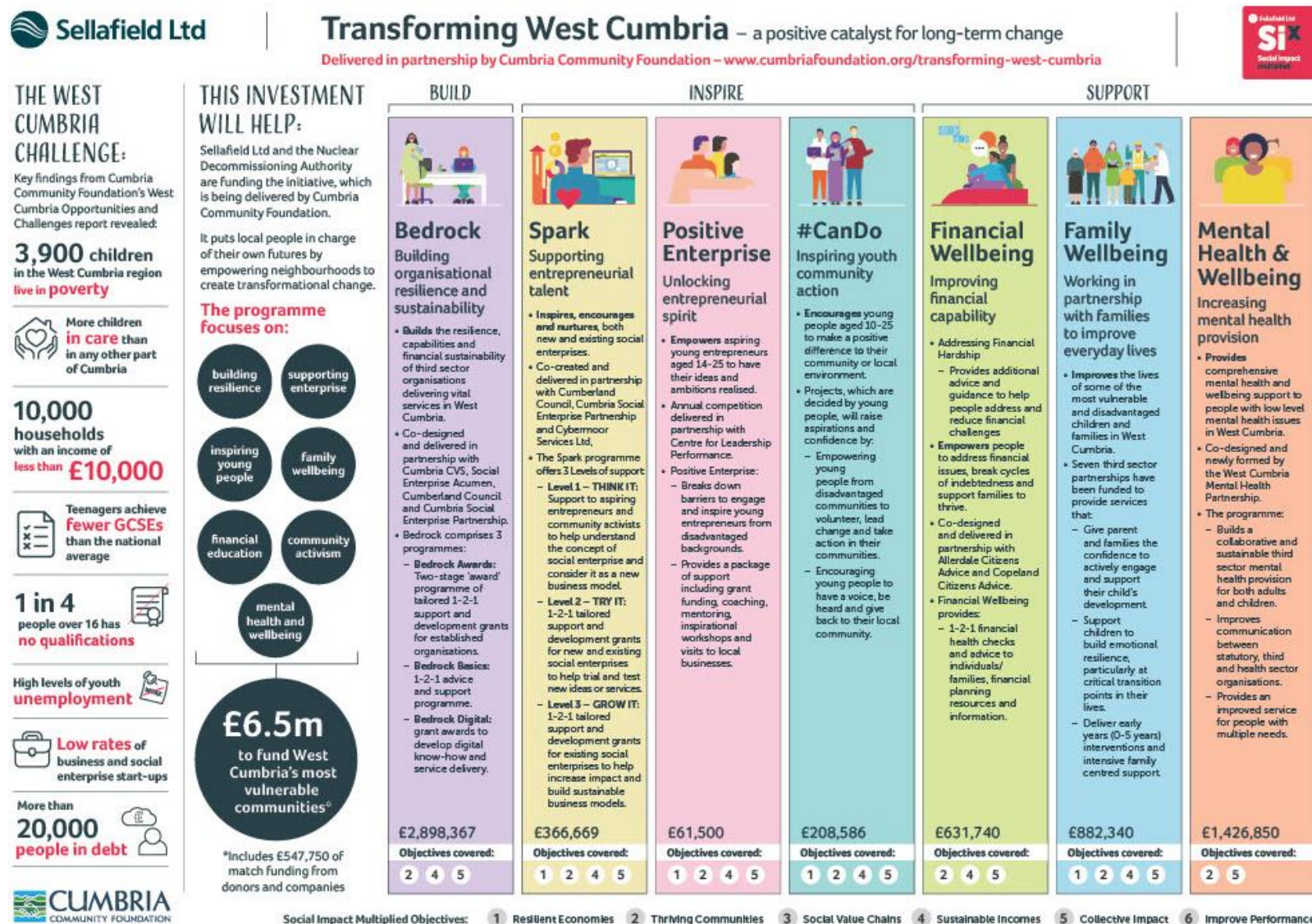


Figure 1.3: Transforming West Cumbria Theory of Change Summary

Rationale and aims	Inputs and resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Address key socio-economic issues including:</p> <p>High poverty rates and levels of debt.</p> <p>Low household income.</p> <p>3,900 children living in poverty and many children in care.</p> <p>High levels of youth unemployment.</p> <p>Low rates of business and social enterprise start-ups.</p> <p>Worsening levels of mental health.</p>	<p>£5,570,946 allocated in first three years:</p> <p>Bedrock: £2,521,000</p> <p>Spark: £324,000</p> <p>Positive Enterprise: £81,196</p> <p>#CanDo: £165,000</p> <p>Financial Wellbeing: £520,000</p> <p>Family Wellbeing: £600,000</p> <p>Mental Health & Wellbeing: £1,359,750</p>	<p>Bedrock Awards: Support and development grants for established Third Sector organisations</p> <p>Bedrock Basics: Support and training for all Third Sector organisations</p> <p>Bedrock Digital: Support to develop organisational digital know-how and financial investment</p>	<p>Third Sector organisations supported and advised</p> <p>Jobs created and people supported into employment</p> <p>Volunteers supported</p> <p>Grants awarded</p> <p>Match funding secured and awarded</p>	<p>Increased Third Sector organisational resilience and financial sustainability</p> <p>Increased partnership working</p> <p>Increased rates of social enterprise start-ups and improved entrepreneurial culture</p>
<p>Three key aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capabilities and financial sustainability of critical community organisations Inspiring, encouraging and nurturing new and existing social entrepreneurs Supporting children, young people and families to thrive 	<p>Over £536,000 in match funding secured</p> <p>£3,728,723 spent to date (September 2023)</p> <p>Other resources include:</p> <p>1 full-time development officer in Bedrock Basics.</p> <p>3 part-time roles in Bedrock Basics.</p> <p>2 part-time wellbeing officers in Financial Wellbeing.</p> <p>'In-kind' resources from the supply chain</p>	<p>Spark-Think It: Support to aspiring entrepreneurs</p> <p>Spark -Try It: Support and development grants for new and existing social enterprises</p> <p>Spark-Grow It: Support and development grants for existing social enterprises to help increase impact</p> <p>Positive Enterprise: Inspire young entrepreneurs through grant funding and mentoring</p>	<p>Children, young people, adults, and families supported</p> <p>Income gains and savings</p> <p>Fewer children going into or returning to care</p> <p>Fewer children on Child Protection Plans</p> <p>People moved into education and training</p>	<p>Increased number of young people inspired to make a difference locally</p> <p>Improved financial wellbeing and confidence</p> <p>Improved mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Improved life chances of younger people</p>

SECTION 2: STRATEGIC FIT

This section reviews whether the original rationale for TWC is still the most relevant. In other words, are the same socio-economic challenges still the most pressing or have others emerged?

TWC was set up to address several socio-economic challenges...

TWC was set up to address many of the socio-economic challenges highlighted in the report 'West Cumbria: Opportunities and Challenges' (2019). **Figure 2.1** illustrates which of these challenges the original six strands were covering.

Figure 2.1: Original needs and their response

	Bedrock	Spark	Positive enterprise	#CanDo	Financial Wellbeing	Family Wellbeing
High poverty / low household income and debt		✓			✓	
High number of children in poverty					✓	✓
Low levels of entrepreneurship			✓			
Vulnerable Third Sector	✓	✓				
Poor youth learning outcomes			✓	✓		✓
High number of children in care						✓

New priorities emerged following the COVID-19 pandemic...

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened some of these challenges and created new ones. TWC responded and was updated in March 2021 to include:

- ∞ **The West Cumbria Mental Health Partnership (WCMHP)** which responded to significant increases in mental health issues.
- ∞ **Financial Hardship** to support people facing financial difficulties amidst a slowing economy.
- ∞ **Bedrock Digital** to help Third Sector organisations develop their digital skills and improve delivery, and tailor their service.

Further challenges have emerged since 2021...

Despite the extra support offered in 2021, many socio-economic challenges have worsened, and others emerged. This is due to the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. This includes increase in number of children and young people affected by poverty, falling household income, more people feeling isolated, increasing school absences, and worsening mental health.

CCF and Sellafield Ltd recognised this and have commissioned a refresh of the West Cumbria Opportunities and Challenges Report in 2024. Whilst not yet complete, emerging themes from the refreshed document show that many of the needs addressed by TWC remain, and have indeed been exacerbated, indicating a continued need to provide support in these areas. In addition, some new challenges have

arisen which TWC could be expanded to consider addressing in the future.

Challenges not being addressed and to be considered...

The following highlights the key unaddressed needs and how they align with local and national policy. These should be considered in future developments of TWC.

Health

There are several health issues that are worsening or emerging. These include:

- ∞ Increase in addiction related issues such as gambling, gaming, and substance abuse.
- ∞ Rising obesity among children and young people.
- ∞ Issues relating to healthy lifestyles.
- ∞ Increased impact of poverty on mental health.
- ∞ Rise in crimes related to domestic and sexual violence.

Many of these are priorities nationally and there are various national and local policies currently focussing their attention towards addressing these issues. There is an opportunity for Sellafield Ltd and CCF to consider how some areas of TWC can be expanded or developed to address these issues.

Finance

The COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis has put even greater pressure on household incomes. Although the Financial Wellbeing

project is already addressing some of these issues, there are others that are worsening:

Limited community banking options:

- ∞ It is becoming increasingly difficult for people to access credit, as recognised by several TWC project leads. Credit unions are often the only viable option for some people who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders.
- ∞ UK government's Financial Inclusion Report (2021-2022) stressed the crucial role credit unions play in enhancing the financial wellbeing of their local communities. To promote this, the government introduced amendments to allow Credit Unions to offer a wider range of products and services.
- ∞ This specific issue is not highlighted in any local policy. Although, Cumberland Council often engages with credit unions locally in various ways to promote their services to residents. For example, in January 2024, the Council partnered with Whitehaven and Egremont District Credit Union to test a pilot scheme to encourage saving and safe borrowing. Additionally, the Council actively supports various financial literacy initiatives aimed at increasing residents' awareness of the benefits of credit unions and building their financial resilience.
- ∞ Financial Wellbeing partners could explore opportunities with local financial institutions and government departments to collaboratively offer community-based credit.

Increased gambling:

- ∞ In 2023, the Department for Culture, Media & Sport announced gambling reforms aimed at safeguarding vulnerable gamblers

across the country. They highlighted that around 300,000 people are ‘problem gamblers’, which is defined as gambling that damages family and personal relationships. This destroys lives, communities, and can even lead to suicide. Measures were outlined aiming to reduce harm including a statutory gambling operator levy, a new online stake limit, and player protection checks.

- ∞ In April 2023, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research estimated that the annual cost of problem gambling in the UK is £1.4 billion. For Cumberland, this equates to an estimated annual cost of around £4.2 million¹, making it a priority need.
- ∞ The Cumberland Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy also highlights plans to develop a multi-agency approach to addressing gambling related harm.
- ∞ TWC is well placed to offer more targeted support through Family Wellbeing partners, which are already working towards addressing this need (e.g. Cumbria Addictions: Advice and Solutions).

Declining rates of recruitment and retention of volunteers and a rising number of older people

West Cumbria’s economy has, generally, long been polarised with those employed by Sellafield Ltd and its supply chain, and those who are not. Those in the former typically have better life prospects and many residents aspire for these jobs. This is recognised by Sellafield Ltd and partners. Projects like Bedrock and Spark are working towards reducing these challenges.

¹ [Cumberland Council](#)

However, most TWC project leads highlighted on-going challenges recruiting and retaining volunteers and employees. They highlight the need for further targeted work here to create sustainable volunteering and recruitment opportunities within Third Sector organisations.

West Cumbria is home to a rising number of older people. While this creates its own challenges, it also offers a potential solution to filling volunteering and employment opportunities with Third Sector organisations:

- ∞ By 2040, it is projected that nearly one in seven people in the UK will be over 75 years old (source: *Future of an Ageing Population, Government Office for Science*).
- ∞ In West Cumbria this is likely to be higher. More local people are opting for early retirement, which intensifies the issue around recruitment.
- ∞ Additionally, it is leading to a rise in cases of isolation, declining mental health, increasing financial vulnerability and poor overall wellbeing.
- ∞ Nationally, some of the government’s current priorities include supporting older people to work for longer, enabling lifelong learning, creating supportive neighbourhoods, communities and families, and adapting health and care systems to meet changing demand. A key policy of relevance is around reducing loneliness through volunteering.

- ∞ Cumberland Council's Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy has a priority around supporting people to live well and age well within their communities.

TWC currently does not have a project which directly addresses the challenges faced by an ageing workforce. Some opportunities can be explored, including:

- ∞ Promoting volunteering opportunities to older people which can reduce isolation and increase the supply of volunteers into Third Sector organisations.
- ∞ Using Financial Wellbeing to target older people and offer them advice around managing their budgets and finances.
- ∞ Funding local facilities offering spaces to residents, especially older people, to regularly gather and hold community events.
- ∞ Collaborating with Sellafield Ltd on their planned project which aims to create regular volunteering among recent and soon-to-be retirees.

New challenges outside the scope of TWC...

There are also additional challenges which wouldn't fall in TWC's remit, but CCF and partners could support through an advisory / advocacy role. Challenges include a lack of good quality social housing and poor public transport. Project leads suggested that Sellafield Ltd and CCF could further engage stakeholders from statutory bodies like local authorities to increase their awareness around these challenges, and why they should be prioritised.

SECTION 3: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH

This section illustrates how well the TWC approach is working. This includes:

- ∞ Whether TWC is meeting the original goals of being needs-led and collaborative.
- ∞ The value of the seven projects operating collectively under TWC and how well they're leveraging funding and other resources from each other and partners.
- ∞ How well TWC is managed by CCF and the benefits it brings to Sellafield Ltd.

This is based on feedback from the consultations.

TWC is doing what it set out to do...

It is evident that TWC's approach is addressing the programme's original hallmarks. This includes:

- ∞ A needs-led approach.
- ∞ Building on extensive local knowledge.
- ∞ A collaborative approach that achieves collective impact.

The following demonstrates some of the evidence. **Section 5** highlights progress on the final two hallmarks: achieving future resilience and sustainability and creating lasting generational change.

TWC adopted a needs-led approach and is building on local knowledge...

TWC is a needs-led approach, meaning it's focusing on what the communities in West Cumbria need. Most project leads say this has helped them identify and tackle important socio-economic challenges by:

- ∞ Using data-driven evidence to inform decisions.
- ∞ Utilising knowledge and expertise of grassroots organisations who are closest to the communities.

"TWC was a massive way forward in terms of informed action. It brought forward well-informed thinking and has put it into action." [a project lead]

Although, some project leads suggested TWC would have benefitted with representation from the community during the design, rather than relying on project teams and the data.

The approach is flexible and has responded to emerging needs...

Section 2 highlights how TWC responded to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This flexibility is praised by most people interviewed.

It also benefitted from collaborative partnership involvement in programme design, creating collective impact...

Over half the project leads were involved in designing their projects.

As the programme progressed, CCF encouraged stakeholders to regularly input into the design to ensure delivery best met the community's needs and adapted to new ones. For example, Positive Enterprise was originally called "Positive Disruptors" and focussed on enabling young people to create change locally. However, partners felt this wouldn't engage young people. Discussions with young people highlighted that they wanted tailored 1-2-1 coaching and support around entrepreneurship. To reflect this, the project was modified in 2021.

"We worked with CCF to help them understand what the real needs of our beneficiaries were. We conducted discussions with local people which helped us change the programme to reflect what the people actually needed." [a project lead]

"This is definitely an open partnership where we listen to each other's recommendations. We have adapted one of our projects to better fit the need after discussions with CCF. They (CCF) are very flexible and responsive in their approach." [a project lead]

Mental Health and Family Wellbeing Partnerships are bringing partners together...

These partnerships have drawn many Third Sector organisations together who have a common purpose. It has encouraged them to

actively contribute to wider discussions and improve delivery around mental health and family wellbeing.

"The push for being collaborative among partners is something that has made our work very easy. It has allowed us to cross-refer beneficiaries among other projects within the mental health partnership." [a project lead]

However, there is further opportunity to increase collaboration here, with evidence of partners operating in their silos. The following feedback demonstrates this well.

"The model of Recovery College is brilliant! But it wasn't promoted very well from the start and most of us within the partnership didn't understand it very well. But had I understood the proper model and the right person to contact from the start, they would have got many more referrals from all partners...Every partner plays an extremely vital role within the partnership, and we would have achieved so much more if there was more information sharing, promotion, awareness from the start." [a partner]

As this understanding has grown, joint working has increased. Within the last few months partners have begun sharing best practice, collectively developing monitoring tools like surveys, and cross-referring beneficiaries.

The umbrella approach is increasing collaboration across other partners, but can be improved further...

Partnership working across projects has strengthened due to TWC. The programme is supporting people and organisations with many

socio-economic challenges. Partners are focussed on clearly defined and different issues. This encourages collaboration across the Third Sector rather than competition.

Most project leads recognise some benefits of collaborating with other projects but have stated this has been limited. **Figure 3.1** highlights the synergy across the seven projects. Bedrock benefitted from collaboration with other projects including Spark, Financial Wellbeing, Family Wellbeing and the WCMHP. This includes:

- ∞ Providing health and safety and digital skills training to others.
- ∞ Sharing office costs such as rent with Spark.
- ∞ Utilising existing networks and expertise. For example, using the same people on their grants panel.

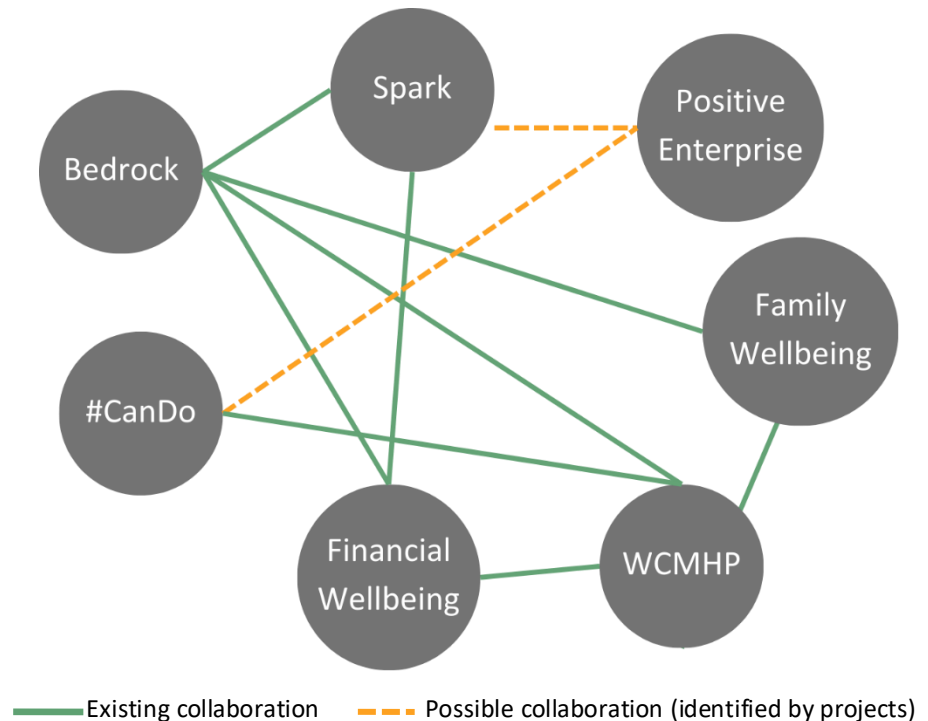
A few other project leads have also recently recognised potential ways of collaborating with other projects in the future. For example, the leads from Spark and Positive Enterprise recently connected with each other through an event. With some overlap in their support, the two projects have identified opportunities for future collaboration.

TWC was launched in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, creating difficult circumstances to actively promote the programme and limit the opportunities to bring projects together. This meant many projects initially worked on their own, and collaboration between projects mainly occurred by chance and through their existing networks.

CCF recognise the value in sharing learning between projects and are creating more opportunities for projects to come together. Some project leads highlighted that they have recently become aware of the detail of what other projects deliver. Most stakeholders want networking opportunities to continue.

A challenge with collaboration is limited resource. Projects focus on their day-to-day delivery and struggle to prioritise collaboration with other partners suggesting they would do more if they had more time / staff.

Figure 3.1: Collaboration between projects



“Organisationally, they’re missing a trick – by not making clear, obvious, and visible links between the different strands and organisations involved. It would have helped us to have CCF give this message from the start and encourage mutual support and engagement across stands.” [a project lead]

Some collaboration with Sellafield Ltd is also taking place...

Working towards a shared objective has brought projects together as TWC has progressed. Projects have also utilised resources from CCF and Sellafield Ltd. This has enabled projects to benefit from:

- ∞ Business development support on marketing and HR provided by supply chain organisations.
- ∞ Sourcing volunteers and mentors from Sellafield Ltd's supply chain and CCF's networks.
- ∞ Support from Sellafield Ltd to develop their trustee's network.

Examples of these were limited at the start but have increased as the programme has progressed, with much more likely going forward.

However, there are challenges associated with some of this additional resource...

Most projects face challenges in accessing resources through Sellafield Ltd's supply chain such as recruiting mentors and volunteers. Project leads stated this has been difficult, time consuming, often not materialising, and lacks sustainability. They suggested that volunteering isn't attractive enough, so people lack a commitment to participate.

It means Third Sector organisations face a volunteer shortage. This creates uncertainty as many key services cannot be delivered without volunteers.

“There is very little social capital available within Sellafield Ltd to make this [collaboration with the supply chain] a success. This needs to be prioritised among employees and they need to be made more accountable towards this.” [a project lead]

A minority feel TWC would benefit from more formal reviews...

Projects highlight the usefulness of quarterly review meetings with CCF which allow them to discuss how well needs are being met, any pressing challenges, whether there are additional issues to address and to share lessons learnt. However, a couple of project leads expressed they would also benefit from more thorough end of year reviews with CCF. This would be an opportunity for partners to reflect on the progress/targets at the end of each year and identify any necessary project design changes.

Steering groups provide good governance...

Steering groups have added value to the projects by providing diverse perspectives and expertise. They provide support on making funding decisions, reviewing progress quarterly, addressing delivery challenges, and offering financial advice. The WCMHP leads, for example, feel meetings with the steering group are a valuable platform to share information and would like to meet them more often going forward.

However, one project lead said that it would be beneficial if the steering groups engaged with them to improve their understanding of the wider aims of TWC, how individual projects are linking to the broader objectives, and how projects are collectively meeting or not meeting them.

Some steering group members would have liked to contribute more to project design at the start, but this has improved as TWC has progressed.

While steering groups have representation from a broad range of stakeholders including members from the local authority, public health department, and primary health services, not all partners are aware of this. Increasing their visibility among other steering group members would be beneficial. This could increase collaboration among partners and tackle some of the challenges identified in **Section 2** regarding an advocacy role.

“We have got very little money (in West Cumbria) so what we can’t have is duplication (of services). So, if Public Health are already doing something, then we need to know this so we don’t do the same thing.” [a steering group member]

CCF is managing TWC very well...

Overall, all projects commended CCF’s efficient programme management. CCF are a “well regarded grant maker” and a “god send”. Their extensive experience of working with communities and Third Sector organisations in West Cumbria is seen as vital for the success of TWC. They are highly trusted and respected, which has helped build good relationships across TWC.

Project leads noted that CCF are supportive, responsive, understanding, and flexible. This encourages open and honest discussions about issues faced and collectively tackling them.

“CCF are incredibly helpful and keep us updated on everything regularly. That makes us more willing to work with them as they don’t dictate things to us, but instead take all our suggestions onboard. They make sure that we are consulted with and not kept out of things. They have the right balance of oversight and support.” [a project lead]

Projects find CCF’s support on quarterly monitoring reports and financial returns very useful with practical guidance provided.

CCF have also helped projects identify additional resources including new funding, such as directing them to appropriate applications, and facilitating match funding from the supply chain. This support is greatly appreciated by project leads.

“It’s quite unusual to be able to apply for lots of different strands with the same funder but CCF have facilitated that, and they have been very supportive. The ecosystem and structure they have created for support through various funding sources has been very helpful.” [a project lead]

Project leads also stated that CCF help them maintain good communication with Sellafield Ltd, regularly contribute towards generating new ideas, provide strategic guidance, and help them change project design and delivery where needed.

But improved monitoring and data capturing is desired...

Some project leads would prefer less complicated monitoring forms with clearer guidance. Some feel that monitoring systems are cumbersome, time consuming, repetitive, and confusing. Reducing the frequency of monitoring reports can help offset some of these issues.

Several project leads suggested they would like to better capture longer term outcomes and would like support with this.

CCF do provide a lot of support here to partners and this is a concern that is frequently highlighted in evaluations.

SECTION 4: OTHER SOCIAL IMPACT APPROACHES

This section presents an overview of three other social impact approaches highlighting lessons learned.

Hinkley Point C Community Fund

EDF Energy is building Hinkley Point C, a nuclear power plant in Somerset. It has a legal duty to fund activity in areas directly affected². This is activity which benefits one or more communities in Somerset experiencing impacts from the construction of Hinkley Point C.

Activity is funded through the Hinkley Point C Community Fund. It is a £12.8 million fund delivered over 13 years. It started in 2017 and is managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF). They were selected due to their experience as a grant maker.

There are three grant programmes:

- ∞ Grants from £5,000 to £49,999 available to Third Sector organisations. It covers both capital and revenue costs. It covers projects including those: supporting people to access education, skills, or employment opportunities; community transport provision; and environmental improvements. Although focus of activity changes throughout programme.
- ∞ Grants over £50,000, with the same criteria as above.

- ∞ Grants of up to £20,000 available to Third Sector organisations that operate on less than £250,000 a year.

Aims

- ∞ Mitigate the impact of construction on local communities.
- ∞ Create opportunities to increase people's wellbeing.
- ∞ Provide access and help overcome barriers to education, skills or employment, community transport solutions or improve the community environment.

Approach

The fund is managed by SCF and is at 'arm's length' from EDF Energy to ensure independence, transparency and accountability to the funder and communities it serves. This includes a specific website for the fund (separate from the SCF website).

Grant decisions made by a panel consisting of members from EDF, the council, SCF (who chair it) and 3 people independent of these organisations. Decisions are made by consensus.

² This is in addition to the Section 106 site clearance funding, which was managed by the council.

Lessons learnt

- ∞ EDF wanted a focus on ‘mitigation of impact’. SCF worked closely with EDF to fully understand what this meant and what could be funded at the outset. This alleviated the need to explore this again.
- ∞ SCF ensured as much flexibility as possible with funding, with a focus on different activity at different times.
- ∞ Due to it being a place-based fund, it has enabled SCF to create new relationships between local charities and organisations and to get to better know many different local communities.
- ∞ It is important for SCF to maintain integrity and not just deliver what the funder wanted.
- ∞ SCF are thinking about legacy early. They want 10% of funding to go into an endowment to use beyond the funding lifetime.
- ∞ Difficulty measuring impact. Focus has been on telling stories rather than demonstrating longer-term outcomes.

Lower Thames Crossing Fund

Launched in 2023, the National Highways’ Designated Funds Programme³ provides £85k a year to Kent Community Foundation (KCF), and £165k to Essex Community Foundation (ECF). This is distributed to communities affected by the construction of the new

³ Funded by the Department of Transport. National Highways are required to provide funding to communities impacted by construction of the Lower Thames Crossing, similar to Section 106 agreements for nuclear sites.

Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)⁴. When building starts, a further £12 million will be available to KCF and ECF.

Aims

National Highways require projects to meet one of its priorities:

- ∞ Encouraging physical activity and increasing public use of local green spaces.
- ∞ Improving the health and wellbeing of local communities.
- ∞ Helping communities to connect with their heritage.
- ∞ Supporting local people to secure employment.
- ∞ Increasing the use of technology and inspiring careers in construction.
- ∞ Improving accessibility for walkers, cyclists, and horse-riders.

Approach

KCF use local knowledge and networks to promote the fund to community groups. The fund offers some flexibility to cover core costs of the CF’s. They have broad eligibility for who they can support including not for profits, charities, local parishes, and others. The fund aims were decided by National Highways.

Grants of between £5K and £10K are available. Applications are submitted and reviewed in March. Projects need to include a

⁴ Grants needed to have a minimum of 50% capital costs.

minimum of 50% of capital expenditure. Grants are awarded by an independent panel. This includes up to 9 people from the local and district council, the CF, local communities, and National Highways. An allocated proportion of projects need to go to different areas.

Lessons learnt

- ∞ Multi-year funding is easier to manage and makes a sustainable impact in an area like northwest Kent.
- ∞ National Highways insisted on a very fast turnaround when processing, reviewing, and allocating the grants. This made it difficult for the CFs to allocate and distribute the funding to community groups in a short timeframe.

Sizewell C Community Fund

EDF Energy is building Sizewell C, a nuclear power plant, from 2024. £23 million, over ten years, will be managed as the Sizewell C Community Fund by Suffolk Community Foundation (Suffolk CF). £2 million is available this year, to support local community projects and mitigate the impact of construction.

The fund isn't open yet, but Suffolk CF will use local knowledge and data to prioritise where funding is spent. This includes the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment from the University of Suffolk and knowledge of panel members. Suffolk CF hope to use some funding to support and grow the local Third Sector.

They also hope to use the connections with Sizewell C to support employment opportunities and career pathways for residents, especially young people.

Aims

Currently the awards panel is being formed. They will establish the process, aims, amount of grants available and which applicants to award.

Lessons learnt

Suffolk CF has taken on learning from previous nuclear power construction locally with Sizewell B and from how the Hinkley Point C Community Fund has been set up and managed.

Conclusions

The three approaches highlighted have several things in common with TWC including...

- ∞ **Applying a needs-led approach:** Suffolk CF is looking to use local data to highlight areas of need. KCF is using local contacts and knowledge of community projects to promote the LTC Fund. The LTC Fund does target areas in the greatest need, but it was determined more by how close communities are to the construction site rather than based solely on need.
- ∞ **Multi-year funding:** All funds offer multi-year funding with huge benefits such as creating financial sustainability, ensuring programmes can continue, allowing long-term planning, and improving the resilience of funded Third Sector organisations.
- ∞ **The need for an impact framework:** All CFs have limitations when capturing the impacts of funding. Some are relying solely on case stories and/or standard output data with challenges capturing longer-term impacts and outcomes. CCF have tackled this by

commissioning this evaluation and its focus on capturing wider impact.

- ∞ **Funder involvement:** The funders are involved to varying degrees. For LTC National Highways are more directive and involved in awarding grants and evaluation. Whereas EDF Energy is more at 'arm's length' for Hinkley Point C Community Fund and only involved in the awards panel for Sizewell C. Sellafield Ltd's involvement in TWC is somewhere in-between. They sit on the steering groups and have guided some the programme activity through identifying the seven key themes with CCF.

One area has a unique approach to addressing longer-term sustainability...

Although all approaches offer multi-year funding, SCF is considering what happens after that ends to offer greater sustainability. They hope to agree to invest 10% of funding per year with EDF to go in an endowment and fund activity after the programme finishes.

There are many things that other approaches can learn from TWC...

This includes:

- ∞ **A more structured programmatic approach** centred around the seven themes rather than an open grant fund approach. Each of the seven themes has a particular focus with clearly defined objectives addressing specific challenges. Whereas, open grant funds may offer more flexibility, they can have less focus.
- ∞ **Providing sustainability by supporting the resilience of the Third Sector.** One challenge TWC is addressing focuses on building the resilience, capabilities, and financial sustainability of Third Sector

organisations. Larger Third Sector organisations delivering vital services can have a heavy dependence on a senior manager, for example. TWC support is tackling this and ensuring the sector is more sustainable.

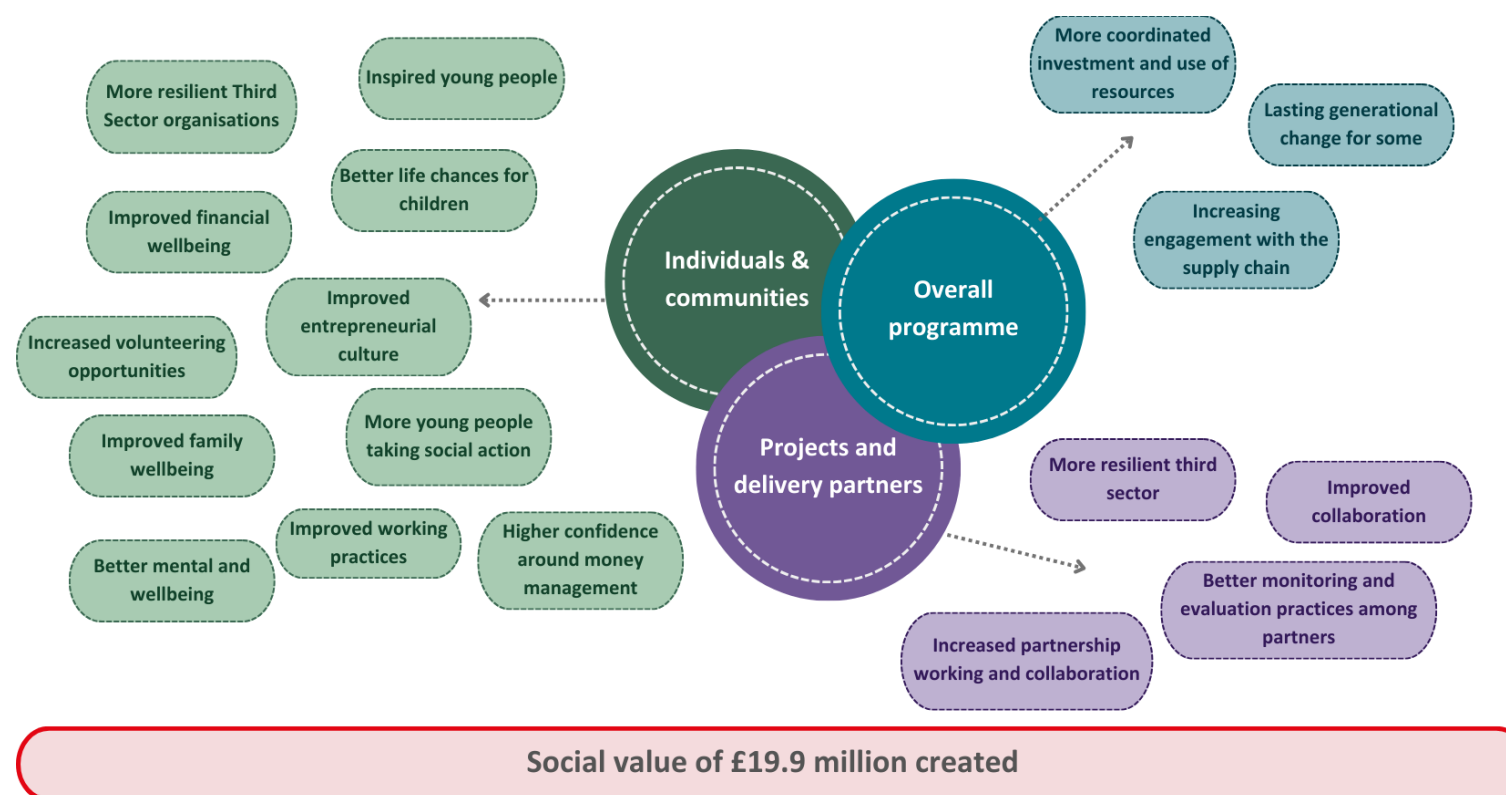
- ∞ **Partnership working and collaboration is encouraged.** The approach encourages partners to collaborate. This included broad representation in programme design.
- ∞ **Broad representation on steering groups.** This includes representation from groups based in the communities they serve with extensive local knowledge.
- ∞ **Extensive evaluation and learning.** CCF has encouraged continuous learning through evaluation. This includes many of the seven themes as well as this programme evaluation. Evaluation can often be a requirement of the funder. Here, CCF goes beyond this and wants to understand how they can learn as they go to inform future programme design and maximise impact.

SECTION 5: THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMING WEST CUMBRIA

This section demonstrates the impact TWC has had to date. **Figure 5.1** summarises outcomes across three levels:

- ∞ **Individuals and communities:** Beneficiaries of the programme including Third Sector organisations, individuals, families, young people, and children.
- ∞ **Projects and delivery partners:** Organisations leading and supporting the delivery of the programme.
- ∞ **Programme:** Overall impact created through the programme.

Figure 5.1: Impacts of TWC to date



Individual and community level impacts

Individuals and communities in West Cumbria are benefiting from TWC in many ways.

Third Sector organisations are more resilient...

Business support and advice has helped over 300 new and existing Third Sector organisations and entrepreneurs set up and/or grow their businesses. The support has:

- ∞ Improved organisational governance, capacity, and strategic planning.
- ∞ Increased resilience and developed capacities of leaders in the Third Sector.
- ∞ Developed staff skills and prepared organisations for future challenges such as succession planning, health and safety issues, insufficient funding, and the loss of staff.
- ∞ Improved digital skills within organisations.
- ∞ Enabled social enterprises and entrepreneurs to test and launch new ideas. Examples include a farm-based alternative educational setting to support children with additional needs, and digital literacy workshops and IT support for older people.

Improved working practices...

Organisations supported under TWC, delivery partners and project leads have benefitted from training offered through Bedrock Basics. The training has helped organisations improve their working practices and become more efficient by introducing new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, digital tools, HR tools, and improving the management of their financial records.

Volunteering opportunities created...

TWC has created volunteering opportunities for around 90 people. Most of these individuals volunteered under Bedrock Basics, Positive Enterprise, #CanDo, and the WCMHP, helping projects deliver vital support and services across West Cumbria.

Young people are inspired and taking action in their local communities...

The #CanDo project has supported 1,944 young people across West Cumbria, inspiring and encouraging many to take social action in their local communities. For example, 150 young people from the Phoenix Youth Project have engaged in activities such as awareness raising among the community to reduce bills, increase savings, socialise and reduce isolation and loneliness, volunteering, fundraising. The following outcomes have been observed so far:

- ∞ Increased engagement of young people in meaningful social and environmental activities addressing issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, youth mental health, community wasteland development, social isolation, and poverty.
- ∞ Greater involvement of young people from disadvantaged communities in volunteering, leading change, and taking action in their communities. Examples include conducting environmental compliance checks and events, picking litter on beaches, and learning skills to support victims of bullying.

Improved sense of empowerment among young people, with more feeling their voices are heard and actively contributing to their local communities.

CASE STUDY: Bedrock Basics provides training and support to a charity’s employee, increasing her confidence and knowledge....

A development officer was looking to learn ways to measure social value for her organisation. She is the only person based in Cumbria in her organisation and has limited peer networks locally.

A colleague recommended she get in touch with Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) who in turn told her about Bedrock Basics.

In March 2020, she started receiving support from Bedrock Basics through multiple free online training courses. This included a four-week online course on social value storytelling, a course on digital tools such as Canva (an online graphic design tool), and a course on dealing with organisational change. She also received regular support on funding searches and advice on filling grant application forms. This support was extended to the rest of her team as well.

The training has massively helped her develop her understanding around social value. She has now started embedding social value in her role and is leading this for the charity’s board.

She said that the support has made her more efficient at work, made her more confident while applying for funding, and increased her awareness around various funding sources.

“It is good to know that there is someone here I can go to. Gordon (Bedrock Basics Development Officer) helps point me in the right direction, listens and talks things through and is like a safety net.”



She feels that if it wasn’t for Bedrock Basics, she would not have been able to learn these new skills as they would not have been able to afford these courses. She said that the support was of excellent quality and more people should be made aware of this.

“They need to shout about what they’re doing. It is great that they offer so much to charities and the Third Sector. More people need to know about this...They are showing how professional the Third Sector is and can be in the future and puts it in a more positive light.”

Going forward, she wants to access more support through the project but stated that it would be good to have a directory of training planned in the future. This would allow her to see what’s on the horizon and how she can link her work with it.

CASE STUDY: Young people bring a community together through a #CanDo funded youth club...

Three young girls aged between 9 and 10 wanted to bring their community together and do things to help them. But they didn't know where or how to start. When one girl's mother mentioned the local youth club – Phoenix Youth Project - to her, she quickly joined and encouraged her two friends to join too.

A 14-year-old girl joined the same youth club six years ago. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she and her friends organised activities to thank NHS workers for their hard work, and help people living in care homes.

As part of National Savings Day, these young girls learned about saving money and energy. Using this knowledge, they designed posters and leaflets and delivered them to people in their community to improve their awareness. Additionally, they supported their local Citizen's Advice Bureau by helping organise fundraisers such as 'Funday' which included running a tombola stand, collecting donations, tattooing, and cake-baking.

“We made flags for the NHS and the people they were helping. We dropped off pamper packs at local care homes to help them get through the lockdown. We made keyrings with inspirational messages on them to help them keep going.”

Being part of the youth club has helped the four girls develop new skills, especially communicating with others. They now have more opportunities to meet new people, make new friends, and get out of the house engaging in physical activities.

The 14-year-old feels she gained confidence from her involvement in the club. She is now a volunteer at the youth club and runs sessions,

organises activities and workshops, and helps look after the younger children.

They all expressed that before this, nothing much happened for young people and families in Cleator Moor. The #CanDo projects changed this. More young people are helping others and encouraging others to get out and socialise more. The girls feel extremely proud to contribute to their community and are keen to continue doing this.

“The project has enabled me to do things that I wouldn't have thought about doing otherwise. I enjoyed seeing how many people showed up at the Funday, it shows how much we're helping people to bond and bring them together as a community.”



Improvement in entrepreneurial culture and career prospects among young people...

Seven young people received tailored one-to-one business development training and coaching, resulting in:

- ∞ Increased appetite for entrepreneurship and aspirations to run a business/social enterprise as a viable career path.
- ∞ Deepened understanding of various business-related topics such as branding, business planning, marketing, time management, and leadership.
- ∞ Improved communication, social media and other skills that have enhanced their employability.
- ∞ Increased confidence in experimenting with new business ideas.

***“Our support is helping these young people in developing tools and resiliency to overcome challenges they face in the future.”
[a project lead]***



CASE STUDY: Business support through Positive Enterprise helps young person establish a business...

A teenager with a keen interest in business engaged in various projects in high school and sixth form, exploring entrepreneurship. As a hobby, he bought, repaired, and sold football shirts.

When he moved to a new school during the COVID-19 pandemic, he knew very few people there, felt isolated, and struggled in classes. This stunted his confidence. He then received an email about Positive Enterprise from the Centre for Leadership and Performance and felt this could help develop his hobby.

He attended weekly sessions where he learned various things such as marketing and budgeting, while sharing experiences with peers through online group calls. Positive Enterprise also funded the scale-up of his business. Attending the online calls and hearing other people’s experiences improved his confidence significantly and helped him realise that others were facing similar issues.

“The programme has made me more outgoing and I’m now more confident in approaching other challenges.”

He described the support as brilliant. The project team was accommodating and catered to everyone’s individual needs. This has inspired him to make entrepreneurship his future career, something he couldn’t have done without this support.

“With the support, I’ve managed to build my idea from a hobby into quite a feasible thing. I’ve been doing this for two years now and this is funding me at university - I don’t need a part time job like my peers.”

Improved financial wellbeing and confidence with money management...

The Financial Wellbeing project provided essential financial advice and guidance on issues such as debt reduction, benefit support, and managing household finances. Observed outcomes include:

- ∞ Decreased debt.
- ∞ Improved management of finances including an assessment of their expenses and reducing their energy bills.
- ∞ People feeling more in control of their finances.
- ∞ Reduced stress and anxiety over financial concerns.

Overall, this support has saved around £240,000 for nearly 400 people and their families, many of which are vulnerable and in desperate need.

Many of these outcomes have been realised recently, especially increased savings. Further significant improvements will be realised in the future from these individuals and others with sustained and long-term support.

CASE STUDY: Single mother in crisis offered crucial support to improve her financial wellbeing...

A 35-year-old single mother of three young children was struggling with the rising costs of living. She works part-time and her wages wouldn't cover her food and energy bills. Living in an isolated village with limited public transport, she relied on her car to commute and get her children to three different schools.

Close to a crisis point, she contacted Citizens Advice who lead Financial Wellbeing. She had just been back from dropping her children to school that morning, and her fuel was running low. She had no money to buy more fuel to pick up her children after school, no electricity as her prepayment meter had run out, and didn't have much food for dinner.

A specialist adviser at Citizens Advice discussed her situation applied for an emergency hardship payment. She received the payment straightaway and used it to refuel her car. She was also given a food voucher to ensure she could feed her family.

She had other debts and bills and was referred to a specialist debt adviser to discuss repayment options.

Additionally, the advisers identified more benefits she might be eligible for and scheduled to discuss this later. She was signposted to the Citizens Advice website for tips on reducing her energy and household costs.

She has arranged another meeting to discuss further ways she could save money. The advisers hope this will help her manage her money better and prevent this situation arising again.

Improvement in wellbeing of families and better life chances for children...

The Family Wellbeing support has:

- ∞ Improved family relationships, including reduced tension between parents, and parents and carers prioritising the child's needs.
- ∞ Parents improving their communication skills, coping mechanisms, self-care practices, and learning better ways to deal with trauma.
- ∞ Reduced alcohol and substance abuse among parents who are then able to look after their children better.
- ∞ Increased sense of belonging among young mothers through support groups and peer networks.
- ∞ Children returning to live with their parents after living with other family members, and being taken off of child protection plans.

“Sustained change is happening for many people being reached through projects within the Family Wellbeing strand. The projects are supporting families in a holistic way, working with the whole family as one unit.” [a project lead]

Improved mental health and wellbeing...

The COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have added extra pressures on many vulnerable communities across West Cumbria. This has led to a significant worsening of issues such as stress (including financial stress), anxiety, depression, and isolation. TWC has provided wide-ranging mental health and wellbeing support to over 6,300 individuals resulting in:

- ∞ More people sustaining employment and earning steady wages.
- ∞ Reduced suicidal intent and self-harm among individuals.
- ∞ Increased feelings of hope among individuals.
- ∞ Increased number of young people trained to offer mental health support in their communities.
- ∞ Reduced isolation, more people feeling part of a community and sharing experiences with their community support groups.
- ∞ Improved understanding and management of stress and anxiety among individuals.

CASE STUDY: After years of trying, a single mum finally gets support for her autistic sons through West Cumbria Mental Health Partnership (WCMHP)...

A single mother of two young autistic children was struggling to cope with their different needs. Over the years, she has tried to access support from several different places but failed.

“My two children are at very opposite ends of the autism spectrum. I kept trying to get support for them but kept getting knocked back. I was at my wits end!”

She works at the Phoenix Youth Project – a partner of #CanDo – and was told about Always Another Way offering mental health support as part of WCMHP. She completed an online referral form and then a follow-up call. She was allocated a support worker who helped gain Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs) for her sons. Through this, the school was then required to provide specialist support to her sons.

The organisation supported her through regular phone calls and with the EHCP referrals. Her support worker offered advice and contacted other services on her behalf. She found the support really helpful, especially the emotional support.

“He (support worker) validated my experiences and views as a single parent. To have that extra person in my support network has been great and I never felt abandoned.”

She was also referred to alternative therapies to help her de-stress and look after her own wellbeing. She’s had two reiki sessions so far and is looking to book more.

“It did take the stress off me. This is a day-to-day situation I’m dealing with. I’ve learnt how to keep myself grounded and cope with negative thoughts and catastrophising.”

She said the support was excellent and was impressed with the expertise of the staff and their in-depth approach. She suggested that the support was tailored to her needs, and that she was matched to the right support worker.

She believes that she wouldn’t have got any support if this service didn’t exist. She had been fighting this battle alone for a long time and didn’t know where else to go. After almost a year of support, she is relieved that her oldest son now has a draft EHCP in place at school.

“The support has made such a big difference to my family. They have stabilised my family unit.”



CASE STUDY: Sexually abused child has improvement in mental health following support through Family Wellbeing...



A single mother was concerned about her 5-year-old child's behaviour. The child suffered from anxiety when separated from her, often complained of stomach aches before school, became upset when she briefly left the room, and had regular tantrums.

The child had experienced sexual abuse from their father as a toddler, leading to legal orders preventing contact. Confused about why they couldn't see their father anymore; the child frequently asked the mother who struggled to respond.

The mother was already receiving support from Safety Net, a local charity which is a part of Family Wellbeing and supports survivors of rape, exploitation, and sexual and domestic violence. She decided to refer her child into the service too.

The child started receiving weekly play-based counselling sessions at the community hub, while the mum stayed in the room. The counsellor encouraged the child to be in control of their actions, giving them a sense of empowerment. Given their experience of a lack of control over what was happening around them, this was crucial for the child. The counsellor also guided the mother on responding to the child's concerns.

Gradually, the mother started spending less time in the sessions. She could now explain to her child, in an age-appropriate manner, why they couldn't see their dad. This helped the child understand it wasn't their fault. She also started reassuring the child when they worried that their mother might leave them too.

As the child gained a better understanding of why their father left, their emotional wellbeing improved. They expressed feeling happier and no longer complained of stomach aches. The mother observed a positive change in the child's behaviour, and they were much less anxious now, which made getting them to school easier. Monitoring forms indicated a reduction in post-trauma symptoms and an overall increase in positive feelings.

Project level impacts

Increased partnership working and collaboration...

TWC has encouraged collaboration by bringing together Third Sector organisations. Many are now collaborating and sharing ideas, best practice, resources, training, skills and in some cases, cross-referring beneficiaries.

“Cleator Moor is now a hotbed of collaboration which it wasn’t before!” [a project lead]

“The programme is built on the history of good partnership working in West Cumbria. It has made the Third Sector collaborate rather than compete with each other.” [a project lead]

However, there is an opportunity to increase this going forward and further enhance impacts.

The Third Sector is becoming more resilient...

Many Third Sector organisations are learning new business skills, accessing different funding sources, and receiving other business support. Organisations are becoming more agile, changing their ways of working, and becoming more digitally skilled. This is leading to a more confident, resilient, and sustainable Third Sector.

“This (TWC) is helping us work towards and create a more assertive, confident and equal not-for-profit sector.” [a project lead]

Better monitoring and evaluation practices among some partners...

Working closely with CCF to deliver the programme has allowed some partners to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, CCF worked with Family Wellbeing and trained them on capturing success stories of their beneficiaries.

Programme level impacts

Significant social value created...

The impacts highlighted in this section equate to a social value of £19.9 million. This represents exceptional value for money of £5.34 social value created per £1 investment.

Figure 5.2: Key Measures captured in the social value framework



Social value approach

Social value was assessed using best practice and technical guidance, including the HM Treasury Green Book (2022), the Cabinet Office Guide to Social Return on Investment, and the HCA Additionality Guide (2015).

The benefits are based on information provided by CCF and projects. Monetary values of the outcomes were adjusted to calculate net impacts. This means assessing the level of impact that would have occurred without investment and resource from TWC. This includes:

Deadweight: These are impacts that would have happened without the activity taking place. For example, people accessing support regardless of TWC being there.

Displacement: An assessment of the benefit accounted for by reduced activity elsewhere in the target area. For example, a new business set up due to TWC reducing revenue from another similar business locally.

Attribution: This refers to allocating responsibility of impacts among all partners that played a role in that outcome. For example, someone entering employment for the first-time will likely have received multiple support.

Impacts last different periods of time and different timescales are applied.

Outcomes are monetised by applying proxies or substitute indicators where a value can be applied. These come from many sources including the Office for National Statistics, the HACT Social Value Bank and many other published reports.

Lasting generational change, for some...

There are several ways in which the diverse support is creating lasting generational change for some families, businesses, and communities.

- ∞ Third Sector organisations are better equipped and therefore resilient, meaning they are more likely to survive for longer.
- ∞ Young people are learning entrepreneurial skills and creating viable careers for themselves.
- ∞ Parents are finding better ways to manage their mental health and improve their parenting, meaning some children have a better start at life.

“Recovery College has given hope to people about accessing non-traditional therapeutic strategies. This in turn is having a positive impact on children growing up in stronger families as parents are becoming more resilient.” [a project lead]

“In terms of tackling generational issues, we’re doing really well with this multi-pronged approach. A lot of services (under the programme) are offering different activities...which are also helping reduce the stigma around mental health services.” [a project lead]

Despite this, the COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis has worsened many challenges and created others. TWC partners are under no illusion that there are no quick fixes here, and much more time and funding is needed to achieve lasting transformational change.

“TWC is looking at the hidden, dark, dirty and unsavoury things in our communities like trauma and abuse, which are often the result of intergenerational issues. There are still a lot of inequalities here and true transformation in such cases can take 20 years. Five years is not enough to “transform” West Cumbria!” [a steering group member]

“The sustainability and resilience lies on the back of the funding. If we can’t sustain the funding, we can’t create sustainable change for organisations as they can’t sustain themselves. The grassroots organisations do need that continuity in funding right now to sustain the delivery of their support.” [a project lead]

More coordinated investment and use of resources...

TWC’s approach has enabled coordinated delivery and use of resources. Partners have come together under the programme umbrella, delivering activity which support the same wider objectives. The investment is tackling most issues through more than one project, but with no duplication, helping achieve greater impact.

Engagement with the supply chain is increasing...

The programme is gradually increasing opportunities for the supply chain to collaborate with Third Sector organisations. An increasing number of supply chain partners are enquiring around ways they can contribute to the programme and help address gaps. However, there is potential for more targeted activity to increase their engagement further.

SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS

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

Strengths and successes

TWC has achieved many successes to date including:

- ∞ Using significant investment from Sellafield Ltd to tackle many major local socio-economic challenges.
- ∞ The approach is data-driven and flexible, delivering support where it is most needed. This includes responding to new challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ∞ An approach which utilised local knowledge and allowed it to target and respond to emerging community needs.
- ∞ Avoidance of a top-down approach with regular input in design and delivery from local stakeholders, community groups and grassroots organisations.
- ∞ Exceptional programme management from CCF with projects receiving excellent support, strategic guidance, and funding advice.
- ∞ Steering groups providing added value to projects through their inputs and governance.
- ∞ Significant outcomes achieved to date for individuals and communities, projects, and at a programme level. This includes:
 - Over 300 new and existing Third Sector organisations and entrepreneurs setting up and/or growing their businesses.
 - Around 90 new volunteering opportunities.

- 1,944 young people inspired and supporting local communities.
- 400 vulnerable people and their families saving around £240,000.
- Better life chances for many children.
- Over 6,000 people with improved mental health and wellbeing.
- Increased partnership working and collaboration.
- A more resilient and sustainable Third Sector.
- This has generated exceptional value for money of £5.34 social value created for every £1 invested. With some lasting generational change.

Weakness and challenges

- ∞ TWC is addressing some difficult challenges across West Cumbria. Many of these have been worsened because of the COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. Additionally, public sector funding is decreasing. The Third Sector is therefore required to deliver more with rising demand for their services and an increased cost of delivery.
- ∞ New issues have also emerged because of the national outlook. This creates extra pressure in West Cumbria, especially for the most vulnerable.

- ∞ Limited collaboration at the start of the programme, due to the COVID-19 pandemic leading to a lack of knowledge among partners about other projects. Partners struggle with collaboration due to limited resource. Organisations weren't given funding to support additional partnership and networking meetings.
- ∞ Organisations were given three years 'flat level' funding. This did not increase when inflation was high and as such costs increased dramatically.
- ∞ Monitoring systems create challenges for projects.
- ∞ Capturing longer-term outcomes is difficult.
- ∞ Difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers and employees across Third Sector.

Recommendations

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

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