



Community-Led Employment Support (A UK Shared Prosperity Fund Project)



Final Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Launched in April 2024 and now moving into its second year, The Progress Partnership (TPP) provides Key Worker support to economically inactive residents of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) to help them overcome the challenges that prevent them actively looking for work.

- Year-1 of the project has been highly effective, improving the lives of hundreds of economically inactive people across the city region, including high numbers of women, people from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds and those with disabilities and long-term health conditions.
- By providing holistic, local and individually tailored support, TPP is opening doors for some of the most excluded and vulnerable people in society. In the absence of the project, this crucial work would not be happening to the same extent at a hyper-localised level. It is vital that this project continues and if possible, is expanded in the coming years.
- 59% of participants progressed to a positive destination following the support they received, including 153 people in employment or self-employment, 160 in education/training and 172 moving from economic inactivity into active job-search. 154 people indicated an improvement in basic skills on exit and 76 achieved basic skills qualifications.
- Every individual on TPP has a different story and starting point. Whilst some are more work-ready, the majority aren't at that point yet, but have still taken huge steps forward in their life journeys.
- Beyond the "hard" job outcomes reached, the project is helping to bring about significant improvements in personal development, aspiration & motivation, health & wellbeing and employability, with clear success in building personal capacity and supporting transformational growth. Explored in more detail in Section 4 of the report, these underpinning enablers and softer skills lay sustainable foundations for future employability, particularly among those facing multiple disadvantages.
- A suite of heart-warming case studies highlighting the real-life stories and positive impacts of the project are provided in Section 5 and Annex 1 of the report.
- A core element of TPP that participants felt made a real difference was having the opportunity to develop trust with their Key Worker as a reliable, consistent point of contact.
- Strong Key Worker/participant relationships form the foundation of the project. This foundation is threatened by the current one-year funding cycles. A 3-year or longer funding cycle would provide the project the stable foundations to enable better and longer-term outcomes.
- The impact of this project highlights the necessity of retaining hyper localised community-based delivery in the post UKSPF funding landscape. The skills, experience and knowledge evident across the delivery partnership (and wider VOLA Consortium) demonstrates a unique resource that should be woven into wider mainstream employability programmes such as Connect to Work.
- Increased strategic collaboration between LCRC Employment & Skills and Investment teams and VOLA should be developed to share innovative approaches and good practice. This would help shape the design of future employment support programmes, harnessing the extensive knowledge, skills and experience of the partnership.

Section 1: Introduction

1. Project Context

The Progress Partnership (TPP) is a community-led employment support initiative funded through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The project is delivered by a consortium of 'not-for-profit' organisations who work with economically inactive residents across the city region to support them in moving towards work.

The Big Picture

1 in 3 people in the Liverpool City Region live in neighbourhoods that are in the 10% most deprived nationally. More than 3 in 10 people in the LCR are living with long term health conditions and life expectancy here is 2.5 years lower than the national average. Unsurprisingly, levels of economic inactivity¹ are higher in the LCR when compared to the national UK average. (Figures from LCRCA Social Value Report 2024²).

Reducing economic inactivity is a top priority for the LCRCA, Local Authorities and other public services, as doing so can help drive economic growth, reduce the burden on public finances and improve social inclusion, ultimately improving the health, social wellbeing and prosperity of people living in the city region so that they can have a better quality of life.

Challenges to Becoming Economically Active

The pathway to employment for socially excluded individuals and families living with economic inactivity can be isolating, confusing and exhausting.

Barriers to progression include (but are not limited to):

Physical and mental health needs, disabilities, childcare or caring responsibilities, substance misuse, migration, lack of information, advice & guidance, lack of awareness of what is available locally, low skills levels /qualification attainment, poor basic and digital skills, EAL (ESOL) needs, lack of confidence and/or anxiety in public situations.

While everyone's situation is unique and different, most people who are economically inactive (E.I.) deal with a combination of these barriers. This can lead to a prevention to entry and participation in the very programmes designed and funded to help them move forward. TPP was specifically designed to meet this challenge and to engage with beneficiaries who (for all the reasons highlighted) are least likely to actively seek help.

Multiagency Approach

TPP is managed by the [VOLA Consortium](#), who provide a support structure for the LCR Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector, facilitating cooperation and collaboration between its members for the benefit of the public. VOLA is registered charity (no. 1158777) with a membership of 68 organisations, of which 14 came together to form *The Progress Partnership*.

¹ Economically inactive individuals are those not in and not actively seeking paid work (unlike unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work), who have not been looking for work in a minimum of 4 weeks prior to engagement and aren't available for work in the following 2 weeks.

² [LCRCA Social Value Report 2024](#)

VOLA has extensive experience of successfully managing large-scale publicly-funded partnerships/projects, including through ESF, Lottery and UKSPF. With TPP, their establishment of a city region wide partnership approach meant the diverse needs and geographical profile of the E.I target group could be met.

Multi-agency collaboration meant all project beneficiaries had access to localised delivery and Key Workers with high levels of expertise, local knowledge and understanding of the target group. TPP provides holistic, individually tailored packages of support. Most Delivery Partners provide “in-house” barrier removal services (e.g. foodbanks/pantries, clothes-banks, recreation, advice, health/wellbeing, counselling and training services), with embedded links into other such services including local education/training providers and employers.

Project Overview

VOLA formed a broad partnership of experienced ‘not-for-profit’ organisations - all highly experienced in delivering employment support to economically inactive and socially excluded individuals - providing comprehensive geographical and thematic coverage, ensuring availability of support across all 6 city region boroughs and targeted towards the hardest to reach individuals:

TPP set out to support a minimum of 680 economically inactive individuals to find employment, training and/or to overcome the barriers that prevent them from actively looking for work. The aim was to utilise a team of experienced and passionate Key Workers, based in a consortium of local, credible and trusted community-based organisations.

This pilot project aimed to support 20% of participants into employment and 31% into training/education, with a range of wider outcome measures in place to also demonstrate progress made.

Key Workers made use of existing networks, referral routes and community presence to engage economically inactive and socially excluded individuals. Robust, initial assessments were used to identify the barriers preventing people from securing or actively looking for work and to also agree achievable, incremental development and progression targets. A blend of one-to-one and small group work was used to help participants access support services and community/voluntary opportunities to build confidence and create further opportunities to progression.

In addition to signposting and encouraging individuals to access complementary ‘barrier removal’ services, Key Workers drew on their wealth of experience in providing tailored employability support (e.g. coaching, confidence building, CV writing, job-search skills, interview techniques, etc.).

Delivery Partners also linked effectively with local employers and training providers so they were able to provide individualised support to access progression opportunities as appropriate.

2. About this Evaluation

In Spring 2025 independent consultant Matt Ball (Make a Change) was commissioned by VOLA to conduct an evaluation of Phase 1 of the project.

The evaluation process took place in February and March 2025, with completion of this final report in May 2025 – providing time for collation and analysis of final performance monitoring data and information to April 2025.

About the Evaluator

Make A Change is a Liverpool based business specialising in creating lasting change for individuals and communities. Matt Ball, the evaluator on this project, has previously worked with both regional and local organisations (including NHS Sefton, The Independence Initiative in Bootle and The Learning Rooms in Southport) to produce evaluations that contribute to future growth and success.

Purpose of this report

This report outlines the findings of the evaluation, with the aim of informing the future strategic direction of community-led employment support in the LCR Combined Authority area.

This evaluation was designed to assess the extent to which the project has delivered on its planned outcomes, to highlight the varied approaches utilised by delivery providers and to showcase the impact of the project on people living in the city region.

The report also reflects on the original project design and rationale, provides an assessment of performance and finances, and reviews delivery and management arrangements.

Key evaluation questions explored under each theme

Project Design and Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the local need / opportunity the project aimed to address?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How was the project designed? Who was involved and what was the rationale for the approach?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What activities were planned to be delivered?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent is the project aligned with local policies/strategies and the UKSPF objectives?
Delivery and management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was the project implemented as intended?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Were there any challenges in setting up and delivering the project & how were they addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent did the project align with and complement other local activities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Were the right processes/structures/resources in place to facilitate management and delivery?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How was the project promoted locally to attract beneficiaries? Did the project engage the right beneficiaries? Which approaches were most effective?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are people's perspectives on the quality of project delivery and management?
Performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did the project spend to profile and utilise its budget effectively?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent have the project UKSPF outputs been met?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has the project achieved or is set to achieve its intended UKSPF outcomes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In addition to core UKSPF outputs/outcomes, has the project achieved any further outcomes?
Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What support did the beneficiaries need, and how well did the project meet those needs?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What impacts / benefits did beneficiaries experience following the support and what impacts do they expect to realise in future?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent has the project delivered wider benefits?
Conclusions and Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the main conclusions on the overall effectiveness and impact of the project?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent would the project have been pursued in the absence of LCRCA UKSPF funding?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the main lessons learned that could be applied to future local growth policy/ strategy?

3. Methodology

To address these evaluation questions the following methods were utilised:

- **Policy review:** Local and national context.
- **Data review:** Of all project monitoring information: output, outcome, financial & qualitative data such as Indicators of Change and exit evaluation surveys.
- **Participant consultation:** Informal interviews and conversations with **over 70 participants** across all Delivery Partners.
- **Delivery Partner consultation:** Interviews with Key Workers and managers.
- **Project Management Team consultation:** Interviews with all team members.

4. Report Structure

The report is presented in the following sections:

Section 2: Project Design & Rationale:

Outlines the local need the project aimed to address, project design and rationale, partnership composition, experience & skills, delivery model, strategic alignment, Theory of Change, and project management systems and processes

Section 3: Management and Delivery:

Explores project implementation, delivery and management; challenges and solutions, promotion and engagement of project beneficiaries.

Section 4: Performance:

This section reports on project expenditure, core and wider outputs and outcomes.

Section 5: Positive Impacts:

Summary impact reports for each Delivery Partner, highlighting individual strengths and celebrating the real-life impact on project beneficiaries through a suite of brief case studies.

Section 6: Conclusions and Recommendations:

Thoughts on next steps for the project moving into phase 2 and beyond.

Annex 1: Additional Case Studies

Annex 2: List of Consultees

Section 2: Project Design and Rationale

1. What local needs did the project aim to address?

TPP addresses 4 major challenges for economically inactive people in the Liverpool City Region, including:

- Multiple barriers to **engagement** with support services
- A lack of **trust** in services as a result of their lived experiences
- High levels of **social isolation** and not feeling part of their communities
- A lack of confidence and uncertainty in how to use and develop their **skills and talents**

2. Project design and rationale

The design and business cases were built on the learning and experience gained from 18 years' successful collaborative delivery across an established consortium of community-based, employment support providers with 'not-for-profit' skills.

The project was initially awarded £892,503 (later reduced to £834,560) for the period April 2024 to March 2025; positioned in the LCR UKSPF investment plan as follows:

Investment Priority	3: People and Skills
Delivery Strand	Employment Support
UK-SPF Intervention	E33: Employment support for economically inactive people.

TPP was designed to provide Key Worker support to 680 economically inactive LCR residents, aged 16+, with a particular focus on supporting women, people from minority ethnic groups, and people with disabilities and long-term health conditions.

Whilst open to any eligible individual, these 3 priority groups were targeted due to them being disproportionately represented within the economically inactive cohort. Statistically, these groups are more likely to be economically inactive than the general population and harder to engage and support due to the social and systemic discrimination they face, with more barriers to education, work and inclusion in general.

More often than not, economically inactive people in these 3 priority groups face a combination of barriers to progression (listed in the Introduction and copied again here for ease of reference)

Physical and mental health needs, disabilities, childcare or caring responsibilities, substance misuse, migration, lack of information, advice & guidance, lack of awareness of what is available locally, low skills levels /qualification attainment, poor basic and digital skills, EAL (ESOL) needs, lack of confidence and/or anxiety in public situations.

3. Partnership composition, skills & experience

Following a robust Expression of Interest process, VOLA formed a partnership of 14 experienced consortium members who were considered best placed to deliver the project. Delivery Partners were selected to ensure good geographical and thematic coverage, based on a thorough assessment of their

experience and track record of supporting the target groups, as well as their capacity, capability, expertise/ specialisms, and readiness to deliver at pace.

Several Delivery Partners were selected for their specialisms, including support for minority ethnic groups (Blackburne House, Granby Toxteth Development Trust, Voice of Nations, Wirral Change), disabilities and long-term health conditions (Knowsley Disability Concern, The Brain Charity) and women (Blackburne House, Voice of Nations). All other Delivery Partners are experienced in catering for varied priority groups at a spatial level. Target geographical footprints were agreed as follows:

Halton: Transform Lives Company (TLC)

Knowsley: TLC; KDC North West (previously Knowsley Disability Concern)

Liverpool South: Speke Training & Education Centre (STEC) in partnership with Employability Solutions (ESL); Granby Toxteth Development Trust (GTDT)

Liverpool East: Alt Valley Community Trust (AVCT)

Liverpool Central: Blackburne House (BH)

Liverpool North: Everton in the Community (EITC); Rotunda (ROT)

Sefton South: EITC; Rotunda; Voice of Nations (VON)

Sefton North: Phoenix Community & Youth Project (PHX)

St Helens: Torus Foundation (TOR)

Wirral: Wirral Change (WC)

Multi-borough: The Brain Charity (TBC) - *neurological/neurodiversity specialists*

The partnership possesses a wealth of experience in supporting economically inactive and socially excluded people, having collectively supported many thousands in recent years, with demonstrable success of supporting progression into, or closer to employment.

Partners have between 12 and 40+ years' experience of supporting marginalised communities, with many recognised as community anchor organisations in their locality, helping to bring about life-changing outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged people in society

4. Delivery model

The project set out to engage people through a grass-roots, community development approach, and to sustain engagement through a welcoming programme of Key Worker support facilitating onward progression; a key component being proactive referral to other activities & services to support personal and social development. Fundamental to the delivery model's design was its holistic focus - much wider than traditional employment support. Key elements of which include:

1. Proactive and varied approaches to engagement:

- Capitalising on the partnership's key strength in engaging marginalised and socially excluded people, by identifying and engaging people through a variety of inclusive and targeted methods - made possible by their established local presence and hard-earned reputations as trusted, caring community organisations.

2. Robust initial assessment & action planning:

- Taking time to develop a comprehensive understanding of individual participant circumstances - talents, strengths, interests and personal challenges - leading to the development of realistic personal development targets.

3. Frequent and consistent Key Worker support to develop trust, sustain engagement and support development:

- Delivered through a range of one-to-one and small group work, focusing on the identification and overcoming of personal barriers/ challenges, alongside coaching, confidence building and employability support. Central components of the delivery model include: a flexible and holistic approach, personalised to individual circumstances, wants and needs; frequent review and celebration of progress; and the agreement of incremental targets building on previous achievements.

4. Referral to complementary activities and services:

- Wider support for issues such as health & wellbeing, benefits/debt advice, housing support, relief of food, fuel or digital poverty, life skills, basic skills (ESOL, maths, digital), addiction. Also, recreational activities to support social enrichment, integration and inclusion in the local community, including sport/exercise, arts/crafts, music, drama & gardening.

5. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) & employability/ progression support:

- Including: personal and social development; confidence, inter-personal, communication teamwork & problem-solving skills; identification of assets and strengths; understanding recruitment & application processes; where to look for jobs; online application forms; CV development; supported job-search, application and interview skills; workplace behaviours, rights & responsibilities; IAG about local job markets and other progression opportunities. Several partners also specialise in providing self-employment advice and support.

5. Strategic alignment

In the **No One Left Behind** thread of The **LCR Plan for Prosperity**³ it is recognised that *“The strategy for Levelling Up People fails if significant numbers of residents cannot participate in an improved economy.”*

TPP meets this challenge directly by engaging with and increasing participation amongst socially excluded, economically inactive residents to achieve economic activity and wider outcomes, targeting deprived areas and members of thematic communities (e.g. women, ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities or long-term health conditions).

The **LCR Social Value Policy and Framework**⁴ highlights the importance of *“Continued delivery of effective services that support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents across the Liverpool City Region: and ensuring that services are designed to consider and support those residents located in the most disadvantaged areas (based on Indices of Deprivation) who may need tailored support to overcome barriers to social, digital and economic inclusion”*

³ [LCRCA Plan for Prosperity](#)

⁴ [LCR Social Value Policy and Framework](#)

The design and partnership approach of TPP was designed with this in mind: Targeted, tailored support for disadvantaged residents, city region wide, helping people to build trusting and fulfilling connections with experienced Key Workers.

The vision laid out in **Innovating Growth (LCR 2024-28 Corporate Plan)**⁵ confirms that *“We know that there remain underlying, long-term structural challenges and inequalities that impact too many of our residents and communities. Talent is widespread, but opportunity is not yet available to all, and too many people have horizons that are affected by inequalities linked to the postcode in which they live. The Liverpool City Region has continually reinvented its economy to meet the challenges of each new age, but it has not yet fully unlocked the potential of all its people.”*

People supported by the project in the past year are those directly affected by these inequalities, too often simply struggling to survive. TPP is opening doors, promoting inclusion and integrating people into wider communities as and when they are ready to do so.

This project also organically implements **Community Wealth Building** principles with community-based economic development nurtured “from within” and not imposed “from above”. With each project Delivery Partner being fundamentally community-rooted, the partnership aligns with the five principles of Community Wealth Building (CLES)⁶.

TPP also aligns with the **Plan for Prosperity** which notes the value and importance of *“Improving the employability of residents to give them the best chance of accessing, sustaining, and progressing in employment - particularly building on, and scaling up, our successful local models for those with complex needs.”* And furthermore that *“This will include narrowing gaps in employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for specific groups, including women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, people with disabilities and those with experience of the care system.”*

All Delivery Partners have established their own successful models for supporting people with complex needs; and the partnership was formed to specifically target and cater for 3 of these 4 priority groups.

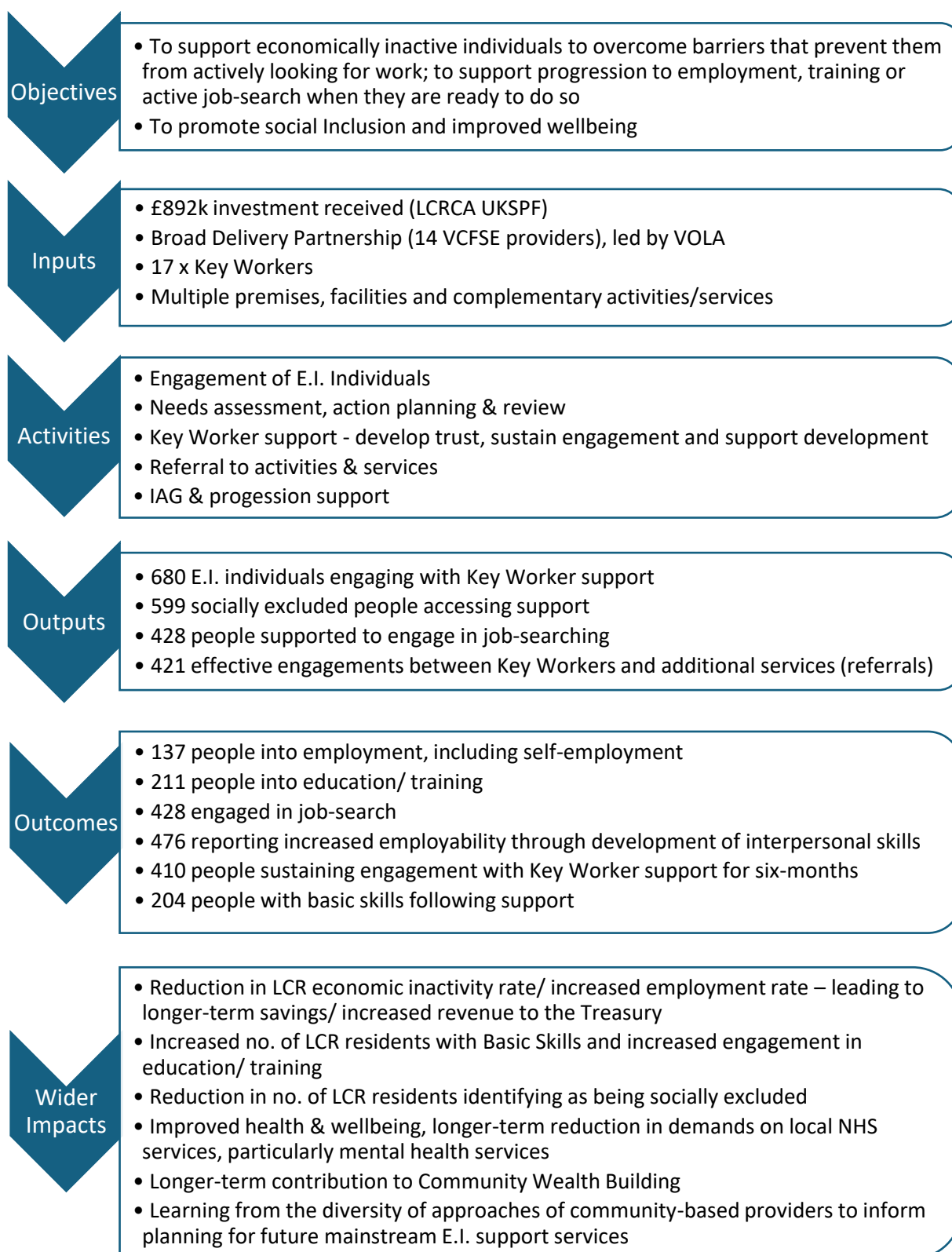
In summary, it is inherent in the project’s design that TPP is strongly aligned with local policy/strategy and the with national UKSPF objectives of *Kickstarting the economy* and *Breaking down barriers to opportunity*.

⁵ [LCRCA 2024-28 Corporate Plan](#)

⁶ [Centre for Local Economic Strategies \(CLES\) - principles of community wealth building](#)

6. TPP Theory of Change

TPPs service model design was based on the following Theory of Change:



Section 3: Management and Delivery

This section provides an overview of project delivery and management. It is based on interviews with Project Management Team members, Delivery Partner management, Key Workers and feedback from participants.

1. Project Implementation

The project is contract managed by VOLA who have an extensive, successful track record of managing large-scale, publicly funded projects, including ESF, Lottery, DWP and UKSPF.

In this pilot year, VOLA worked closely with all 14 Delivery Partners to ensure compliant delivery in line with UKSPF and LCRCAs funding rules and monitoring requirements, whilst also providing a framework for managing quality and performance. Delivery partners unanimously fed back that the direction and support from VOLA was an important factor in helping them to navigate/ abide by the rules and keep on track.

The project mobilised in line with intended milestones, with recruitment commencing in April 2024, as planned. This was aided by the vast majority of Key Workers being existing employees, already in post from day one, with minimal recruitment required – capacity, capability and readiness to deliver being key factors in the Delivery Partner assessment and selection process.

As anticipated, recruitment levels took time to build up over the first few months, but by the end of Quarter 1, the number of reported starts exceeded forecast.

Overall, the project was delivered as intended, with 764 economically inactive people benefitting from its support, 12% higher than target; with all but one priority group target also met, several of which significantly exceeded.

It is clear that this project is dramatically changing the lives of vulnerable, socially isolated people all over our city region, as the report will go on to highlight.

2. Project Management

Central VOLA Management Team

The project has benefitted from the strong leadership of VOLA's central management unit. It is a relatively small, but highly effective and efficient team, led by a dedicated Project Manager, overseen by the Consortium Manager and supported by quality, finance and admin officers - all part-time on the project, with dual responsibilities across other UKSPF projects.

Following the unexpected departure of two longstanding team members immediately prior to the project's commencement, VOLA worked with its employing body, Sefton CVS, to rapidly appoint replacement staff. The first 3 months was a steep learning curve for the newly formed team, but under the Consortium Manager's close guidance, and benefitting from the wealth of experience and transferable skills each of them brought, the new team gelled, quickly becoming highly productive.

Systems and Processes

Robust policies and procedures are in place to oversee the effective management and governance of the project, including financial processes to ensure funding compliance and fraud prevention; and operational procedures relating to project and partnership management. An overarching Partnership Agreement is in place, with detailed, individual Grant Agreements with each partner outlining contractual liabilities and responsibilities.

Financial management: key policies and procedures include anti-fraud, conflicts of interest, whistleblowing, procurement, risk management and payment authorisation, with clear separation of duties in the processing and authorisation of payments. Well-established processes are in place for the processing and submission of quarterly funding claims, including routine checks to ensure the legitimacy and accuracy of financial claims.

Quality and compliance: including quarterly monitoring meetings with all Delivery Partners to review progress, compliance, discuss issues, areas for improvement and forward planning. The quality of Key Worker support is also assessed by the Quality & Compliance Officer through a variety of methods, including review of case notes and discussion with Key Workers, management and participants.

Communications: which include reporting to the Project Steering Group (CM, PM & Chair of Board) and Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis; convening quarterly partnership meetings to share information and good practice; maintaining a dedicated project page on the website; and use of standardised publicity resources to ensure consistent and compliant branding.

Evaluation: Including both process evaluation, particularly in terms of the quality of support provided, and monitoring/ analysis of outcomes achieved. Procedures are in place for:

- Initial assessment of all individuals, with development of tailored action plans, progress against which is frequently monitored, reviewed and updated;
- Entry mid-point and exit assessments to assess perceived improvements/ changes in key areas of people's lives (Indicators of Change); and
- Evaluation sampling of participants.

Such information has been used in this external evaluation process to provide a key input in measuring the effectiveness of the support provided.

Delivery Partner relationships with the central team

- A highly positive, collaborative working culture is evident - with support tailored by VOLA to meet the working practices, styles and cultures of individual partners.
- The central team has been responsive to Delivery Partner staffing challenges including recruitment issues, sickness and the need for more intensive support for those new in post. Partners commented positively on the high levels of support provided by VOLA to new staff members, who confidently guided them in all aspects of the project.

Having had the opportunity to speak with Project Leads and Key Workers at each of the Delivery Partners it is clear that, whilst there were some challenges (as highlighted below), the right processes, structures and resources were in place to facilitate the management and delivery of the project.

Andrea Rushton, CEO at Blackburne House, explained:

"VOLA had the experience and infrastructure in place to help us navigate our way through the guidelines for recruiting people onto the project".

Sophie Chaoul, Project Lead at Transform Lives Company commented:

"I've enjoyed working with VOLA. They've been responsive and supportive throughout. The quarterly statistics and data they provide has really helped me to manage the project from our end".

Sabra Ahmed, CEO at Wirral Change told me that:

"Initially, there was a lot of learning for staff about who the client group was for TPP. VOLA supported us through that process until we got up and running."

3. Delivery

The core delivery model has been implemented across the partnership in line with intended plans – comprising the five key elements listed in Section 2.

- Proactive and varied, grass-roots engagement
- Robust initial assessment & action planning
- Frequent contact with clients, progress tracking and regular review
- Collaboration with and referral to other services and activities to support personal development and onward progression
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) & employability/ progression support.

Common challenges stemming from economic inactivity and social isolation include uncertainty about how to progress, not feeling as a part of society and a lack of trust in public services (often based on previous experience).

In putting this evaluation together, I have had the privilege of meeting with staff from all Delivery Partners and with more than 70 project beneficiaries.

Universal feedback from beneficiaries indicated that having a consistent and familiar Key Worker located somewhere they felt comfortable attending made all the difference - someone that they could get to know, speak openly to and develop a trusting relationship with.

Having this **consistent point of contact** provided the gateway through which participants could access support including one-to-one discussions, small group work, coaching, confidence building, referral to complementary services and employability support. Each Delivery Partner has an extensive offer of in-house activities, also referring to other local service providers where required.

How this process works is evident in the following story described by a participant I met at The Brain Charity in Liverpool:

“As a result of my condition, I became increasingly socially isolated, not sure how to move forward with my life. This continued for more than 3 years until I found out about this support. My Key Worker suggested the in-house confidence coaching programme, where I made new friends who I keep in touch with each week. This led onto me trying out and enjoying many more new activities at the Brain Charity, including theatre sessions, clay workshops, creative journaling and Tai Chi. My Key Worker has been amazing. Without having someone I could trust I was lost. You know that there is stuff going on, but you don’t know what it is or if it’s for you, or how to access it. It’s just stuff that other people do. There is no judgement here and I love it! My life has changed completely and soon I’m going to start some training”.

Alignment and complementarity with other local activities

TPP significantly complemented other local activities and services, both in terms of inward and outward referrals. As expanded upon later in this section, community outreach, active collaboration and effective partnerships, particularly within the voluntary/community sector, proved valuable approaches to engagement and recruitment, with TPP offering something different to other organisations. Similarly, outward referrals rates were high, with 1,100 made to a wide range of complementary activities and services.

The project was designed to avoid duplication with and complement other UKSPF-funded initiatives, primarily, by its priority group targeting. However, with so many other UKSPF projects targeting the

economically inactive cohort, it is impossible to completely eliminate the degree of inevitable overlap. That said, where appropriate, and although relatively low in number, cross referrals were made to other UKSPF provision where deemed more suitable, for example, Households into Work and MYA's Talent Match programme, who also made referrals to TPP where people exceeded their target age range.

With some Delivery Partners also involved in the delivery of VOLA's [Include-IT Mersey](#) digital skills project, there were several instances of active cross-referral between the two, both inwardly to provide additional support to economically inactive learners already enrolled on an IT course, and outwardly as a training activity for TPP participants who needed support with their IT skills.

4. Challenges and Solutions

I met with the VOLA team and Delivery Partners to gain insight on the challenges they faced and how they found solutions. Key themes included:

Challenge	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short delivery window in which to recruit high volumes, generating significant pressure to recruit at pace and meet outcome targets in a tight timescale. The lengthy and complex support needs of many (although not unexpected) presented a key challenge – particularly in relation to the short timescale; the consequence being a lag in progression outcomes, which were much higher in the second half of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tight performance management. Recognition of the uniqueness, strengths and individual challenges of Delivery Partners, enabling the provision of bespoke project management support. Frequent and effective communication concerning performance, at partnership and individual Delivery Partner level. Commitment and desire by all involved to achieve targets. Deployment of additional staffing resource by some partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of required personal data - in the context of engaging people least likely to seek/ accept support - reported as being off-putting for some people, in some cases, preventing their enrolment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended registration and initial assessment processes, where required, to build trust, alleviate fears and prevent people's early disengagement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing evidence of eligibility of refugees, many of whom present requiring support to secure National Insurance numbers - a key eligibility requirement for enrolment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application Registration Cards (ARC) proved an interim solution until NI Nos secured, to show that people were asylum claimants and had the right to work in the UK.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Delivery Partners reported challenges presented by Key Workers moving on to alternative employment and needing to be replaced, particularly in the context of such a short project delivery window. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contingency plans generally involved the redeployment of staff, either temporarily until substantive replacements appointed, with some for the remainder of the project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late confirmation of the project's extension, whilst extremely welcome when it came, presented significant planning issues – in relation to both: 	<p>Whilst little could be done to fully solve this issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective leadership and supportive cultures gained the trust of employees, helping to abate the issue and, ultimately ensure the retention of all project-funded staff.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff retention – a particular issue for the management team, in light of future funding uncertainty; and - Participants continuation/exit strategies. <p>In the absence of continuation funding, significant numbers of people would have no longer been able to access support, which would have been disastrous to their progress, having invested time and energy into developing trusting relationships with their Key Workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Workers used their skills to retain participant trust and sustain engagement. Provisional exit strategies were planned for March in the event of no continuation funding. Several partners also committed to continuing to provide support, with or without funding, such is their culture. • Subsequent confirmation of funding, with permission to ‘carry forward’ participants to Year-2 enabled the retention of 93 people, who currently remain on programme.
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5. Promotion and Engagement

All project Delivery Partners are skilled and experienced in the engagement of socially excluded people, which is reflected in the significant overachievement of the Year-1 recruitment target.

Successful approaches included:

- **Engagement through existing activities and services.** For example. the Swap Shop clothes bank at STEC, The Food Shed at Rotunda and The Food Pantry at Everton in the Community, all provided entry points for people to find out about and sign up to TPP.
- **Community Outreach.** The St Helens mobile food pantry stops in a different community every day. Key Workers Annie and Louise from the Torus Foundation worked with the St Helens Borough Community Food Provider’s Alliance so that they could meet with potential participants in weekly drop-ins at Cross Lane Church in Newton-Le-Willows and Park Farm Community Centre in Carr Mill. At Voice of Nations in Bootle, the local launderette proved a highly productive place to engage with local women.
- **Word-of-mouth, through family/friends and recommendation.** Word of mouth continues to be the most powerful and potent form of promotion for all Delivery Partners – this has been a consistent theme across all of VOLA’s projects since its inception in 2007. This was particularly evident at Granby Toxteth Development Trust, where one beneficiary told me that “My friend told me to come here” and another said “Everyone round here knows that this is where you come for help”.
- **TPP Beneficiaries becoming TPP advocates.** At Wirral Change, there is an ongoing need to find volunteers who can speak different languages so those people newly arrived into the country can access support if they haven’t yet gained English speaking skills. The following story highlights how one participant was able to spread the word about the benefits of TPP into different communities through his wonderful language skills:

Asrin arrived into the UK seeking asylum. When he came to Wirral Change, he was seeking training and employability support. He is fluent in Kurdish, Arabic and English. After finding his feet by getting involved in social activities, he is now volunteering with Wirral Change, providing translation for new people coming into the service. As a result, he has helped get the word out about TPP and the benefits of getting involved to new people and communities. He told me that “Wirral Change is fantastic. I love helping other people, it’s like a therapeutic centre. I just do not feel like I’m a refugee”.

- **Active collaboration and partnerships with other community organisations.** Working with partners to help them understand the criteria and referral mechanism for TPP meant that many people were able to sign up for TPP, who otherwise may not have found out about it. For example, The Brain Charity received referrals from Imagine Independence Mental Health service; Transform Lives Company worked closely with LIVV Housing to identify eligible Knowsley residents; Career Connect referred a steady stream of eligible clients to Phoenix in Southport; Alt Valley Community Trust's partnership with the local Disability Employment Advisor team at Jobcentre Plus generated a significant number of referrals.
- **Community events.** Engagement in alternative settings where people already feel at home is another approach that worked well. Nahima (Key Worker at Blackburne House) got to know many women in this way, through being at the Refugee Women's Connect weekly drop-in at St Brides Church, Savera UK sessions at the Kuumba Imani Centre, as well as regular visits to local mosques.

6. Project Beneficiaries

In line the Equality and Diversity plan laid out in the funding proposal, the project has been highly successful in engaging the kinds of beneficiaries it intended to reach - commonly highly excluded individuals some distance from the labour market, that other service providers struggle to engage.

Indeed, the ability to engage disadvantaged and marginalised people is a clear, collective strength of the partnership. As above, effective collaboration and partnerships with specialist support agencies such as disability, ethnic minorities, housing, health and addiction helped to secure referrals of people with protected characteristics and other barriers to inclusion throughout the project.

84% of participants identified as being socially excluded. Although high, this figure is actually an under-representation of the true proportion, as some people declined to identify themselves as such (as is completely their choice), even though their individual circumstances otherwise meet the social exclusion definition.

MI data shows high numbers of women, people from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds and those with disabilities and long-term health conditions (the project's 3 primary priority groups), exceeding all 3 contractual targets. 42% of participants reported possessing no basic skills, 15% as being lone parents and 6% as being care experienced.

Section 4: Project Performance

1. Project Finance

Due to underspend over Quarters 1-3, it was agreed to reduce the original budget allocation of £892,503 by £58k (6.5%), to £834,560.

As further highlighted in the Section 5 (Impacts), many project beneficiaries accessed complementary services in-house at Delivery Partners' premises, negating the need for travel to other venues. This resulted in regular attendance at partners' centres, which naturally became hubs in which to meet with Key Workers, with less outreach provision than anticipated. Similarly, Key Worker contact was not always in person, with phone and video calls also used. Therefore, less budget was required than originally anticipated for staff travel/expenses, venue hire and participant costs.

In practice, the average notional participant budget of £100 per head, for travel expenses, incentives and other incidental costs was set too high, which was by far the largest area of underspend. Learning from this over-estimation will be taken into consideration in planning future budgets for similar initiatives.

The other area contributing to Q1-3 underspend was marketing and publicity. Using local knowledge and networks, the TPP offer was promoted differently by individual Delivery Partners. Word of mouth was critical in ensuring that the project reached people who may otherwise have not engaged.

For example, at Voice of Nations in Bootle, a Polish woman spread the word about TPP into the local Polish community following her own positive experience of the project. Her advocacy led to more Polish women coming forward to access support. This was especially important in terms of publicity in communities where language could otherwise have been a barrier.

As word of the project spread organically into communities, less budget was required for marketing than originally expected.

Total expenditure was £828,811, 0.7% lower than the revised forecast (7% lower than original budget).

Revised Budget	Actual	Variance
£834,561	£828,811	£5,750

Cost Category	Profile	Actual	% of Budget	Variance
Staff costs (direct)	£683,800	£686,180	82.8%	-£2,379
Overheads (15% flat rate)	£102,384	£102,719	12.4%	-£335
Staff Travel	£3,370	£3,003	0.4%	£367
Marketing	£2,960	£2,339	0.3%	£621
Participant Costs	£15,861	£12,124	1.5%	£3,737
Contract Costs	£0	£0	0.0%	£0
Other Costs	£10,036	£8,544	1.0%	£1,492
Staff Expenses	£3,034	£1,438	0.2%	£1,596
Venue Hire	£3,115	£2,715	0.3%	£400
Project Evaluation	£10,000	£9,750	1.2%	£250
Total	£834,561	£828,811	100.0%	£5,750

As is the norm for human resource intensive projects of this nature, the vast majority (95%) of the budget was expended on staffing costs, plus associated flat rate overheads contribution, which ran slightly over budget. However, this overspend was more than offset by underspend in other areas of the budget.

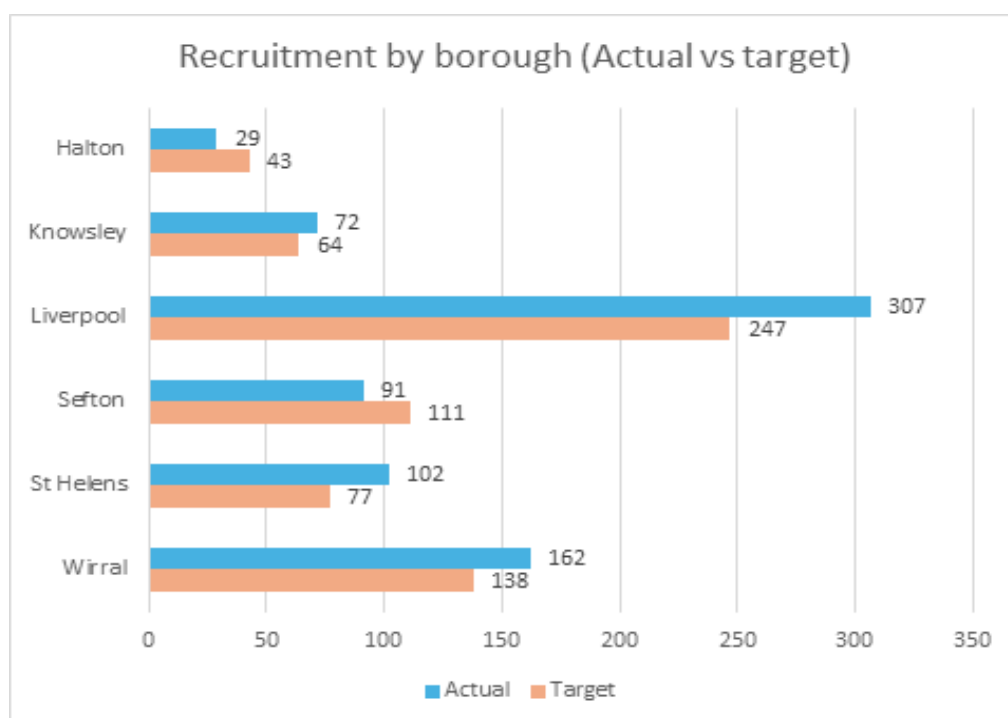
2. Outputs

The project exceeded all 3 of its planned UKSPF output targets:

Output Indicator	Target	Actual	% of Target
No. of economically inactive individuals engaged	680	764	112%
No. of socially excluded people*	599	638	107%
No. of effective engagements between keyworkers and additional services (i.e. referrals made to other services)	421	1,095	260%

* 84% of participants identified as being socially excluded, as expanded upon in part 6 of the previous section.

Recruitment by borough was as follows:

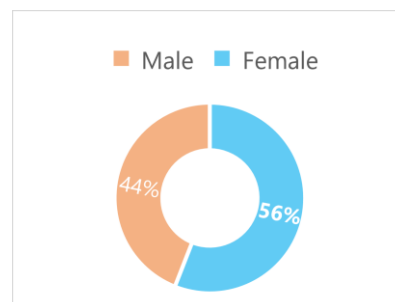


Recruitment of Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens and Wirral residents significantly exceeded their respective targets, by 13%, 24%, 33% and 17% respectively, demonstrating a strong delivery presence, effective local engagement strategies and reach in those boroughs. However, recruitment of Halton and Sefton residents were both below target, due, in part, to a greater reliance on outreach provision by Delivery Partners primarily based elsewhere, highlighting a need to strengthen outreach in these boroughs in future phases, building on the connections and traction made in Phase 1.

Demographic Groups

Gender:

Female participation exceeded the 50% target, benefitting from the involvement of specialist providers Blackburne House and Voice of Nations.



Age, Ethnic Minority, Disability/Long-Term Health Conditions

Participant data analysis (Target vs Actual)



- 47% of participants disclosed a disability or long-term health condition, well above the 25% target, providing clear evidence of the project’s accessibility and inclusive design.
- Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds made up an impressive 37% of the cohort, far surpassing the 25% target - a key achievement of the project.
- Participants aged 50+ represented 21% of the total cohort, only just over half of the 40% target - highlighting an area for future development. Those aged 65+ made up 2.6%, though this was not a specific target group.

3. Outcomes

Outcome Indicator Targets

LCRCA primary outcome targets were (1) employment, including self-employment outcomes; and (2) education/ training progressions.

Overall, the project exceeded the target for progression to employment but fell slightly short against the education/ training target.

Primary Outcome Indicator	Target	Actual	Variance
No. into employment including self-employment on exit	137	153	16
No. into education or training on exit	211	160	-51

- **Education/ training:** many more people than the 160 accessed training while on programme but completed it before their TPP exit date and so could not be counted as a final outcome due to the training not commencing “immediately upon leaving”, as per the UKSPF outcome definition.

Identified as a potential issue from the outset, but with no latitude to claim ‘on programme’ training outcomes against the UKSPF target, the decision was made to ‘do the right thing’ in engaging people in training at the right point for them, rather than delaying until the end of their TPP journey, or ‘exiting’ them early in order to be able to claim an outcome.

In addition to the primary focus on ‘hard’ job and training outcomes VOLA also proposed 4 ‘softer’, secondary outcome indicators as part of its funding proposal. Whilst not the key focus of the Call for Projects (carrying less weight in the bid assessment process), these were offered voluntarily to provide additionality in helping to demonstrate progress made.

Secondary Outcome Indicator	Target	Actual	Variance
No. engaged in job-search on exit	428	172	-256
No. reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills	476	426	-50
No. sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services (6+ months)	270	214	-56
No. with basic skills following support	204	76	-128

In hindsight, three of the four targets - ‘job-search’, ‘sustained engagement’ and ‘basic skills’ - were set too high, proving overly ambitious and unrealistic in practice. Nonetheless, they show significant numbers of people sustaining engagement with the Key Worker support, improving their employability and moving into active job-search as a result of the support.

Job-search:

- Whilst the number of outcomes reported represents less than half of the target number, there were an additional 199 participants who indicated an increase in job-search skills during the support received, making a combined total of 371, much closer to target.

Alongside a perception of concerns by some around openly disclosing their active engagement in job-search (for fear of any potential effect on their benefits), more accurate recording and reporting of these outcomes is recognised as an area for improvement.

Sustained (6+ months) engagement:

- Reasons for the deficit in this target area were twofold. Firstly, due to the short-term nature of the project, only those enrolled in the first 6 months could achieve this outcome and, in practice, high numbers of people were recruited in months 7-10. Also, on average, people spent less time on programme than anticipated, which actually benefitted performance by freeing up capacity to support a higher volume of people.

Basic skills achievement:

- In addition to the 76 people achieving basic skills qualifications, a further 154 indicated an improvement in basic skills on exit, which, when considered together exceed the target. Some of the learning here overlaps with the angles outlined above in relation to job-search outcomes in terms of revising paperwork and improved reporting to capture more outcomes achieved. Also, of note was the significant number of digital skills achievements, which were excluded from the outcome count on the advice of LCRCA, despite wide recognition of digital skills as a basic skill. The target was originally proposed on the basis of including digital skills achievements. Had this restriction been known prior to the project’s commencement, a lower target would have been proposed.

Completion & Progression Rates

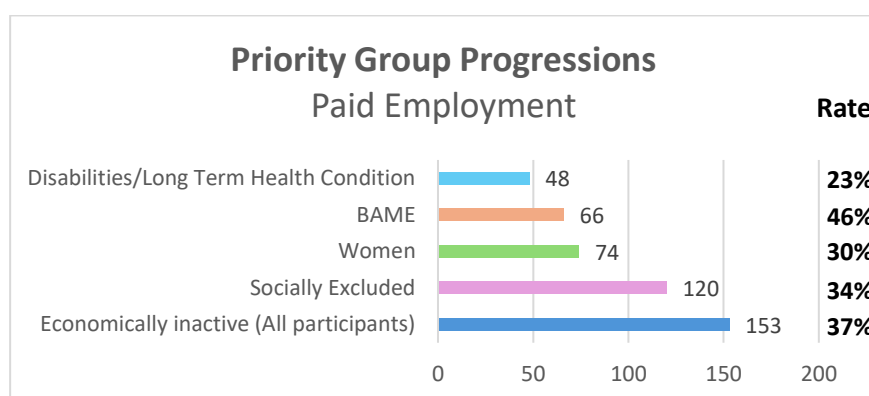
The following figures exclude 93 participants carrying forward to Phase 2 of the project, who were still receiving support at the time of evaluation.

Outcomes	Total (excl. 93 Yr-2 carry-forward)	Socially Excluded	Women	Ethnic Minority	Disability/ L-T Health Condition
Participants	671	564	384	244	318
Completions	419	348	245	144	205
Completion rate	62%	62%	64%	59%	65%
Progression rate (employment, education/training, or job-search)	59%	59%	59%	61%	57%

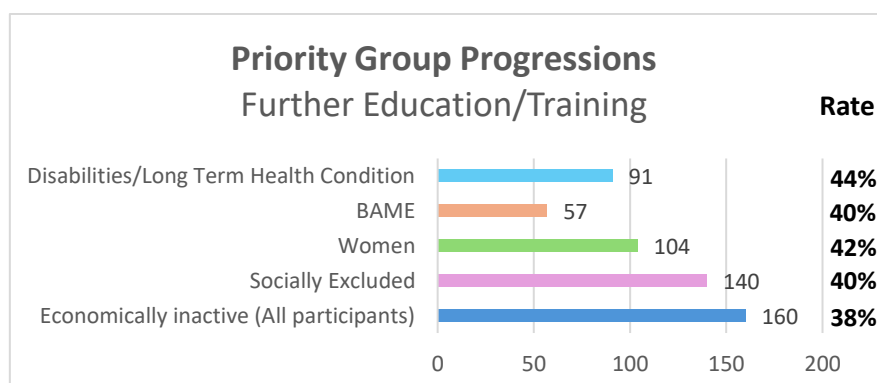
The above table shows that the vast majority of people that completed the programme of support achieved a positive progression to paid work (or self-employment), education/training, or active job-search; and that the progression rates of all priority groups were very close to overall project averages.

Priority group progression rates are explored in further detail below. **These are calculated:**

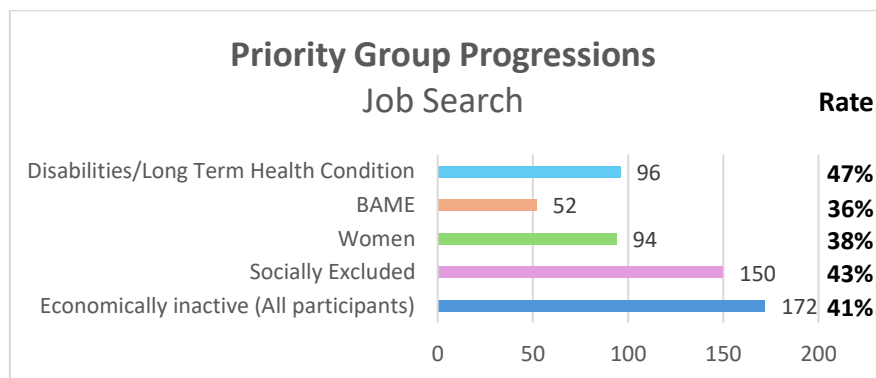
1. **In relation to 419 completers only**, excluding 252 disengaged participants and 93 continuing on programme into Year-2 and so reflect only those who engaged with the full cycle of support.
2. **Eliminate double-counting** of job outcome alongside training/education progressions.



- The employment progression rate of ethnic minority completers compared favourably to the project average, though other priority groups compared less favourably. 50% of 107 completers aged under 25 progressed to paid work.



- For education/training, all priority groups compared favourably to the overall average. For young people (aged under 25), only 32% of completers progressed to education/training, but this was balanced out by the much higher job outcome rate.



The proportion of completers with a disability or long-term health condition moving into active job-search significantly exceeded the project average of 41%, with rates for female and ethnic minority completers slightly below average.

4. Wider outcomes

The project is effectively addressing the 4 major challenges faced by economically inactive people in the Liverpool City Region, as set out in Section 1. As a result, many more people:

- Better understand what barriers they are facing and how to overcome them.
- Now have trust in a local organisation, with Key Workers as trusted points of contact.
- Have made new connections, friendships and networks.
- Are now tapping into their enormous potential through interest groups, training, volunteering, employment and self-employment

Alongside core UKSPF output and outcome measures, the partnership used the following methods to assess additional softer outcomes to monitor progress and distance travelled:

UKSPF Indicators of Change – against which participants rated themselves on entry and exit against four key indicators (confidence, employability skills, job search skills, and motivation/achieving goals) using a scale of 1–6; with upward movement counted as positive progress.





Local Indicators of Change – Key Workers used a flexible, person-centred tool to assess progress across a broader set of life and employability domains- designed to be completed at multiple stages (start, mid-point, end); also scored on a scale of 1-6.

Developed by the partnership prior to inclusion of the above UKSPF IOC's, it was felt that the local model provided a more holistic approach to tracking people's journeys, with the added benefit of its 'spider-web' diagram being a good visual aid for participants, particularly useful where job outcomes may not be immediately feasible, but progress can still be evident. So, it was retained as a project monitoring tool, despite a slight degree of overlap between the two.

Participant evaluation forms - completed at the end of their support journey to capture personal reflections on the project's impact across areas such as wellbeing, digital inclusion, and overall satisfaction.

UKSPF Indicators of Change

Of the 419 participants who completed the programme of support, reported improvements included:

 78%	increased confidence (<i>self-esteem, self-belief, self-respect, self-awareness</i>)
 69%	improved employability skills (<i>teamwork, communication, punctuality, reliability</i>)
 76%	improved job-search skills (<i>CV writing, interview skills, where to search</i>)
 75%	improved in setting & achieving goals (<i>motivation, planning & organising, problem-solving</i>)

These figures highlight the project’s strong emphasis on and success in building personal capacity and supporting transformational growth, not focusing solely on employment outcomes. These softer skills help to lay sustainable foundations for future employability, particularly among those facing multiple disadvantage, and are essential precursors to longer-term success in the labour market.

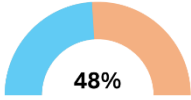
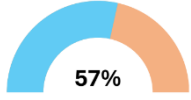
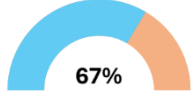
Rates of improvement against different indicators varied across priority groups, with the majority comparing favourably to overall average rates across all participants. Key themes include:

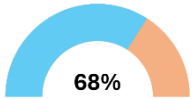
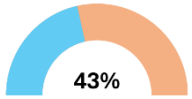
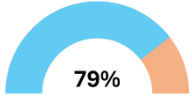
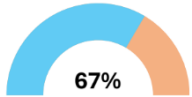
- Participants with a disability or long-term health condition saw the strongest progress across all 4 indicators, showing the project’s ability to deliver inclusive, tailored support.
- Socially excluded and long-term inactive individuals also reported high levels of progress, above-average for all 4 indicators, demonstrating the project’s effectiveness in addressing entrenched barriers.
- A slightly lower proportion of young people (aged under 25) reported improvements in motivation and employability than the average, suggesting a potential area for future development—such as more targeted life skills or early-career coaching. Conversely, this group reported a slightly above-average increase in job-search skills improvement, which tallies with the higher than average job outcome rate.

Local Indicators of Change

Key Workers also used a broader set of progress measures developed around an Outcome Star model, designed to help track individual development across multiple domains, offering a more holistic and personalised assessment of the participant journey.

The proportion of 419 completers reporting improvements against each of the 7 themes are as follows:

Indicator	Themes/ Issues Considered	% Showing Improvement
Stable foundations	Housing, finances (benefits/ debt), family relationships, drug/ alcohol issues	 48%
Health & wellbeing	Physical and mental health	 57%
Aspiration & motivation	Wanting to work, ambition, feeling confident, being realistic, self-presentation	 67%


Workplace & social skills	Interpersonal & communication skills, problem solving, teamwork, empathy, punctuality, reliability	 68%
Basic Skills	English, maths, ESOL, digital	 43%
Job-search, application & interview skills	Identifying, researching & applying for job opportunities, doing yourself justice in writing, interview skills	 79%
Jobs skills & experience	Job-specific and transferable skills, volunteering experience, training, qualifications, etc.	 67%

- These results demonstrate particularly strong progress in the development of job-search skills, followed by social skills, aspiration/motivation and job skills & experience. While reported basic skills improvements were lower, this likely reflects the nature of a cohort with lower starting points and the need for longer-term literacy, numeracy and/or ESOL support.
- Participants with disabilities/ long-term health conditions had the strongest performance across nearly all domains, with 73% reporting an improvement in health & wellbeing, 80% in aspiration & motivation, 76% in workplace & social skills and 72% in job skills & experience.
- Young People (aged <25) had the highest gains in job skills & experience (78%) and job-search/ application/interview skills (81%), but lowest in health & wellbeing (39%) and basic skills improvements (35%); indicating high levels of motivation for work, but potential areas for improvement in wellbeing and foundational learning support.
- For participants from ethnic minority backgrounds, health & wellbeing (50%) and aspiration/ motivation (58%) were notably lower than the project averages; possible contributory factors being cultural stigma around mental health, historic exclusion or systemic discrimination.



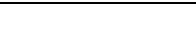
Participant Evaluation

An evaluation survey was conducted with a sample of 118 participants (28% of 419 completers).

- When asked “How often have you connected with your Key Worker in the last 12 months?”

 83%	indicated they connected “often”, with 14% “sometimes”.
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- When asked about wider impacts on their lives:

 92%	indicated they had improved their mental health & wellbeing.
 89%	indicated a “good” or “excellent” impact on their social life.
 91%	responded that it had either a “good” or “excellent” impact on their connections with the wider community, either socially, or by accessing other services and organisations.

This evaluation provides strong evidence of The Progress Partnership’s success in delivering impactful, person-centred support to those furthest from the labour market. The survey demonstrates significant improvements in wellbeing, social life, and digital skills, high levels of engagement with Key Workers, and strong community reconnection outcomes. The responses offer valuable feedback for shaping the future phase of delivery.

Section 5: Positive Impacts

Introduction

This section features a brief overview of each Delivery Partner and a snapshot of their achievements on the project, with case studies highlighting the types of support that people required, positive impacts the project has had, as well as the strengths evident across the partnership. As the evaluator, speaking to Key Workers management and project beneficiaries has really brought home that it is the people who are the real assets of our city region!



To respect confidentiality and protect anonymity, participant names in the following case studies have been changed.

Further case studies are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

Alt Valley Community Trust

Overview

Originally established in 1988, Alt Valley Community Trust (AVCT) works to improve the lives and wellbeing of people of all ages in the communities of North East Liverpool.

Education is the cornerstone of AVCT and they have been delivering quality education and training programmes in the community for over 30 years. Their approach to lifelong learning is based on the belief that education is a powerful vehicle to develop people's potential and improve their opportunities in life. Almost half of completing TPP participants (48%) went into education. 26% entered paid employment and 35% moved into active job-search.

AVCT manage and run a wide range of facilities including community hubs (such as the Communiversity in Croxteth), community libraries (Breck Rd, Croxteth and Dovecot), as well other key community assets such as Walton Sports Centre and Croxteth Park Farm. All of these places are hubs for health, wellbeing and education.

Case Studies

Fred

Fred is a 64-year-old who had cared for his disabled sister over the last twenty years since his parents had passed away. Whilst he had other siblings they had moved out of the local area. When his sister passed away he became anxious and withdrawn. Fred was referred to the project through his Disability Employment Advisor. Keen to improve his IT skills and after constant reassurance from the Key Workers, he attended an IT course, initially with a Key Worker. Fred interacted well with the group and soon made some friends. He has since completed that course and has enrolled on a further IT course; and keeps in regular contact with the tutor and fellow students.

All participants aged 50+ who took part in TPP at AVCT fed back that they feel more confident after completing the programme.

AVCT were also particularly successful at providing progression pathways into education/training for different priority groups, including long-term inactive people (12+ months), women and people who are socially excluded.

Adam

Adam was also referred to the project by his Disability Employment Advisor. He had experienced mental health issues during the last few years. He started a baking course *"just to get him out the house and meet people"*.

91% of TPP completers with disabilities/ long-term health conditions improved their job-search skills at AVCT and Adam feels that the experience in completing the course eventually gave him the confidence to apply for work.

He realises it will take time and whilst he has experienced some disappointments with applications so far, he has shown tremendous commitment and recently attended an employment event for opportunities in the care sector. He now has a couple of interviews arranged as a result of that event and is continuing to improve his interview skills, which should eventually help him to achieve his goal.

Blackburne House

Overview

Blackburne House is a Liverpool-based charity that supports the development of local - and often vulnerable – women.

With a core focus on education, they offer a wide range of nationally recognised courses and qualifications - particularly in sectors in which women are still under-represented. Set in a Grade II-listed building in the heart of Liverpool's Georgian Quarter, Blackburne House enables women to learn and grow in a safe environment. On-site facilities include a thriving bistro, wellness centre and a 30-place nursery.

All TPP participants were women, with 85% of those who completed the programme moving on into education/training and 10% into paid employment. 10% also moved into active job-search.

Case Studies

Udisha

Udisha had recently become unemployed following the closure (due to high running costs) of the food business she had run with her husband for the past 10 years. Udisha signed up for TPP after meeting Key Worker, Nahima at a Savera event. She told me that, *“my confidence was very low because I had gaps in my employment and little experience, but Nahima helped me to navigate through those issues.”*

Blackburne House specialise in raising women’s aspirations through education and training and whilst taking a level 1 interpreting course, Udisha also developed her employability skills, *“I learnt how to create a CV that highlights my skills and abilities whereas before I was uncomfortable ‘selling myself’. And I learnt how to write about myself according to the person specification on the job description, whereas before I didn’t have a clue about this.”* As a result of her determination and development, Udisha now has a job working in the nursery at Blackburne House.

Reflecting on how things have changed, Udisha told me that, *“When I was unemployed, I started to distance myself from my friends and did not socialise as much. I am feeling much more confident and positive now. Having gained employment at my age has made me rethink my goals going forward in life and I feel more ambitious - something I lacked. My health has improved including my mental health, which is having a positive impact on my family and children. I knew of Blackburne House but didn’t really know what they did. I’m so glad I found them and have told other friends & family to come here.”*

Sabita

A real strength of Blackburne House is their presence out in the community. Trusting and meaningful partnerships with other local voluntary, community and faith organisations help to challenge cultural barriers and beliefs, opening up support options for more and more women.

83% of the women who took part were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Sabita. She had been made redundant from her previous role and is also going through an expensive divorce which, as a single mum with 2 teenage children, put her under severe financial pressure. To help overcome this barrier, Blackburne House provided Sabita with vouchers that helped with day to day living costs and also enabled her to buy clothes to wear for job interviews. After engaging with TPP for only a month, Sabita successfully applied for an Employment Specialist role with Mersey Care. She is still in this role and things are looking much brighter now for her and the children.

Everton In the Community

Overview

Since 1988, Everton in the Community (EITC) has been at the forefront of social intervention across Merseyside. Through its 120+ dedicated full-time staff and 160+ volunteers, the charity offers more than 50 programmes covering a range of social issues including health, employability, anti-social behaviour, crime, education, dementia, poverty, youth engagement, youth justice and disability.

Operating seven days a week, 365 days a year, Everton in the Community supports the most vulnerable and underprivileged members of local communities, and the charity aims to instil confidence in others by creating life-changing opportunities. Thousands of people have already benefited from the work they do. The charity's work providing routes into education, training and employment and engaging children and adults, regardless of ability, in physical activity.

EITC specialise in helping people get out of poverty and into employment. Every single one of EITC's 64 TPP participants identified as being socially excluded when they began on TPP. 38 completed the programme, with 32 going into employment. This was more than double the partnership average rate of 37%, including significantly above-average rates across all priority groups.

Case Studies

Isao

Isao is from Japan. He registered onto TPP after coming to the EITC food pantry. Through conversation it became clear that he was inactive and in need of support. Isao had previously worked in hospitality and catering and it is his long-term goal to return to this if he can. Whilst on TPP he completed forklift training as well as the SIA security course, meaning he was ideally prepared for the kind of job opportunities that EITC regularly have in the pipeline.

Isao was living in poverty, with digital exclusion preventing him from looking for and applying for jobs. Through TPP, he took part in digital skills and inclusion activities. He received a free tablet and 6-month SIM card with mobile data. This connectivity has helped him to access job opportunities online. Isao now has a part-time job with OCS as a cleaner in Bramley Moore stadium and as the stadium becomes busier later this year, it is also possible that a hospitality role may also become available for him.

Jimmy

Jimmy came to England 3 years ago from Congo. He first accessed EITC through the Food Pantry. He has his ARC (Application Registration Card) and is currently waiting for a final decision on whether is able to claim asylum. Jimmy already has Permission to Work in the UK and has been training and volunteering to prepare himself for employment. He fed back that:

"To start with I was looking for training while waiting for my decision. I was not very confident at finding work as I needed a CV and access to training, which TPP has provided, as well as a tablet and sim card. I have my CSCS card now and I have completed my Level 2 Stewards Course. Volunteering has helped me to improve my interpersonal and communication skills. At EITC I volunteer on the Walking Football course and in the Food Pantry. I am also a Digital Champion, and I volunteer to support people in the drop-in sessions at the Hub. Being on TPP has improved my skills, experience and confidence. I am motivated now for further learning and opportunities."

Granby Toxteth Development Trust

Overview

Established in 1994, Granby Toxteth Development Trust (GTDT) is the Community Anchor Organisation for Toxteth. They develop and empower people so that they improve their quality of life and become valued members of the community. In the process this improves the social and economic wellbeing of residents and businesses within the area and its surroundings.

At GTDT there is a strong ethos in place that the most sustainable form of community development comes from deep within the community itself, rather than being imposed by government or profit-driven businesses. In line with this, GTDT are excellent at supporting people to develop and set up their own businesses.

GTDT achieved a significantly higher percentage employment/self-employment outcome rate for completers than the partnership average (61% vs 37%), with particular success in supporting people into self-employment. Over half (57%) of their 23 employment outcomes became self-employed.

Case Studies

Adriana

Support from GTDT whilst on TPP has enabled Adriana to follow her dream of starting her own food business. Her Key Worker, Darren, has guided her through the process of creating a business plan and applying for start-up finance. Adriana has been successful in getting a £10k Government start-up loan. As part of this process she has also met with other local food traders, including Niko, who has established a successful local pizza business, to get tips and advice.

Whilst on TPP Adriana has completed her Level 3 Award in Education and Training and regularly volunteers at GTDT, supporting the ESOL classes. She speaks both Arabic and Romanian, which provides great support to people newly arrived in the area who speak those languages. She told me that *“The teaching and volunteering have made me a lot more confident in myself, which is also really helping with developing the business.”*

Chris

Chris was released from prison last year after serving a 16-year sentence. As you would expect, this has been extremely challenging for him, as he did not re-enter the same world that he left in 2008. Chris chose to meet this challenge by educating himself. Firstly, he completed his Level 2 in counselling, followed soon after by the Level 3 counselling qualification at Rotunda College and is working with GTDT on setting up a Social Enterprise to support others through rehabilitation and education.

Chris wants to use his journey of self-discovery, as well as the lived experience and stories of other people who have had their lives taken away by jail to educate the general population through delivery of workshops and sessions in community settings. He has already begun recruiting people to work with him on the project and his confidence continues to go from strength to strength.

KDC North West

KDC North West (previously Knowsley Disability Concern) is a Knowsley-based charity with over 40 years' experience delivering services designed to help people live independently. They provide an extensive range of practical services for disabled people across the North West.

These include provision of up to the minute information about disability-related issues, support and facilitation of the Being Involved Group (BIG) for people with learning disabilities, support for parents with learning and support needs to help raise their children independently, and information, advice and support to access direct payments. KDC is a trusted local provider with more than 12 years' experience in helping people with managing their personal budgets.

As a specialist disability provider, 97% of the TPP participants supported by KDC had a disability and/or long-term health condition. When they joined the project all of this group considered themselves to be socially excluded and 95% of had been E.I for more than 12 months. All bar one of KDC's 39 participants gained a basic skill qualification, and 29 of 34 completers progressed to further training and job-search, with the other 5 moving into paid employment.

Case Studies

Sarah

Sarah lives with her mum in a bungalow. When she began on TPP she was very self-deprecating and lacked confidence. She had a particularly bad time at school. Sarah was adamant that she didn't want to join in any of the sessions and was happy doing her own thing in the day centre. After her Key Worker had explained that all activities would be hands on (and fun!) and that she was free to stop if she didn't enjoy it, she decided to give it a go and join in.

Sarah thoroughly enjoyed the session and said she *"had learnt lots and it was nothing like school."* Sarah joined in all the sessions after that, with her Key Worker supporting her with some pre-teaching before every session, so that she wasn't triggered by anything unexpected. Sarah went from strength to strength and began volunteering at the Shakespeare North Theatre. The confidence she developed in her voluntary role showed her that she was ready to look for work and Sarah now has a paid job in her day centre as a Learning Disability Mentor.

Christina

When she began on the project, Christina was extremely introverted. This was the consequence of a turbulent home life. She is now settled in foster care with her brother and has considerable support from her foster family. She has high emotional and academic intelligence but suffers with crippling anxiety. Through TPP she has gained a secure friendship group and core basic skills and was extremely proud of the accreditations she gained.

All those who completed TPP at KDC improved their basic skills, achieving a qualification and increasing their educational attainment level in the process. Along with these academic qualifications Christina has also now developed strategies to help improve her mental state. She has grown and developed enormously through pushing herself out of her comfort zone and she is now about to begin a part-time job.

Phoenix Community & Youth Project

Overview

Phoenix is a key hub for the local community in Southport, with service users directly involved in the development and evolution of the organisation.

They provide support, assistance and advocacy through structured educational, recreational and leisure activities. They provide a nurturing environment for isolated young adults to meet friends and take part in a range of informal educational projects, including an extremely popular in-house basic skills programme, which brings people closer to the labour market. This is reflected in the fact that, of those completing TPP at Phoenix, 64% moved into a job-search outcome.

Phoenix came into the partnership slightly later than the other 12 partners, after one of the original partners was unable to deliver. As a result, almost half of Phoenix's participants have been carried forward for continued support next year, so outcomes for these people are expected in Year-2.

Case Studies

Grant

Grant was referred to Phoenix through his Career Connect Adviser. He had been on a Bricklaying course at Southport College, which was highly stressful for him due to the nature of his learning disabilities and the anxiety he felt from being in a large group. Grant is now moving forward again with his basic skills at Phoenix. He told me *"I don't really know a lot of people outside of here. I've made some good friends here and I'm feeling a lot more confident"*. Accessing TPP has enabled Grant to begin forming a real social network and to feel part of his community.

Charlie

Charlie was also referred to TPP by her Career Connect Adviser. She lives in a local residential care home and began working with Phoenix after leaving her course at Southport College in January. She told me that *"the thing that appealed to me the most was the small classroom size and the support in the classroom"*. She went on to say that *"The difference the support has made for me is that I enjoy coming in, which has not always been easy for me. I am not currently at the point of applying for jobs, but this has helped me gain more confidence for when I am"*. Charlie also told me about the bigger picture impact on her life, *"I feel that all aspects of my life have been impacted for the better as I now feel more confident and find it easier to talk to people"*.

Ethan

Ethan engaged with Phoenix following a period of inactivity after leaving his job as an audio-visual engineer following a disagreement with his boss. He was referred by his Career Connect Adviser. Ethan left school without any qualifications, having always struggled in the classroom environment. He is now working towards L2 qualifications in maths and English, which will open up more opportunities for him. Ethan told me that *"My Key Worker is great, he's helped me realise that I'm not doing this for him, I'm doing it for myself"*. He went on to say that *"I like being around here, meeting new people"*. Ethan's Key Worker, Ray told me, *"Ethan is maturing now in his attitude and personal development. Improving basic skills is opening more doors and he's now applying for apprenticeships, including one with Audi"*.

Rotunda

Overview

Rotunda College & Community Hub is an anchor charity based within five Grade II listed Georgian terrace houses located in Kirkdale, North Liverpool. They have been serving the local community for over 30 years, leading on social regeneration. Rotunda stands as a beacon of warmth and community spirit in Liverpool

Rotunda is accessible and inclusive, offering skills and qualifications to help people progress in life. Their focus is on empowering residents, fostering growth and meeting the demands of the dynamic local economy. The college also supports the local community through seasonal community events, skills workshops, food banks and volunteering opportunities in their bistro, nursery, community garden and heritage centre.

More than 1 in 3 of Rotunda's 34 TPP participants gained a qualification. 82% completed the programme, of which 64% progressed to active job-search, with above average improvements in all Indicators of Change themes.

Case Studies

Tia

Tia is a single parent with a teenage son. She struggles with anxiety and depression and had been out of work for many years before she decided to join up. Her Key Worker signed Tia up for the programme after meeting her at Rotunda's Food Shed. Rotunda were able to support Tia with vouchers for energy and food as well as providing some extra help at Christmas. This helped to stabilise her situation to the point where she was ready to begin volunteering in the Rotunda Bistro. She started off preparing food in the kitchen and now does front of house serving customers as well. She now volunteers 5 days a week, 10am to 2pm. She also completed her Level 3 food hygiene training whilst on the project. Tia fed back that, *"Everyone in Rotunda is very supportive and interested in how I am and how I am coming on. I have gained confidence."*

Steven

Steven began on TPP looking for employment, but with unrealistic expectations. This was a consequence of both of his brothers doing well in highly paid jobs and the family's expectations of him as a result. In reality, Steven lacked in confidence and did not have the level of qualifications required for the types of careers he was interested in. After developing a good relationship with his Key Worker, he began engaging in activities to help him move closer to employment. He completed his Level 2 in maths and is now working on his Level 3 functional skills qualification.

Becoming a valued member of the Men's Shed group also had a positive impact for him. Having the opportunity to talk to and spend time with other men from the local community has given Steven fresh perspectives on life and more confidence in himself. He recently found out that he has been successful with his application to work at a kids' Summer Camp in America this year!

Speke Training and Education Centre & Employability Solutions

Overview

Speke Training and Education Centre (STEC) is a Community Anchor organisation and learning provider based in Speke, South Liverpool. They offer a wide range of free courses in wellbeing, employability and digital inclusion. STEC is also home to other key community organisations, including local charities Merseyside Dementia Friendly Radio, Liverpool Talking Newspaper and The Orchard Foodbank.

STEC works in partnership with award winning social enterprise Employability Solutions to deliver TPP. Based in Garston, South Liverpool, Employability Solutions transform young lives and build resilient communities through unique education & employability programmes that are individually developed to meet the needs of the young people they care for, helping to make them happy, healthy & resilient.

STEC also work closely with other partners such as Liverpool in Work and Households into Work to get people into employment. They are highly skilled and experienced at supporting refugees and asylum seekers to stabilise and then improve their circumstances. All ethnic minority participants stayed on programme through to 'completion', engaging for significantly longer than the partnership ethnic minority average. From this group 38% progressed to employment, 46% to education/training, 46% to active job-search, with 31% achieving basic skills qualifications.

Case Studies

Dawid

Dawid is from Poland and due to an ongoing health condition, had to have part of his foot amputated last year. He engaged with TPP at STEC through his sister, who had previously completed an ESOL course there. Dawid was living with his sister following his operation, which was becoming increasingly challenging for everyone involved. His sister has 3 autistic children, her husband had recently been made redundant, whilst Dawid had extremely limited mobility and so required a lot of support.

Engaging in the programme helped Dawid with housing, health and education. With advocacy support from STEC, he has now moved into his own home in Garston with South Liverpool Homes. Locally based company Algeos have provided him with customised foot orthotics that have dramatically eased the pain of getting about and he is also developing his computer skills through the Include-IT Mersey project. He told me *"STEC has been such a blessing!"*

Nara

Nara worked as a nutritionist before she moved to England from Brazil. She engaged in TPP to get support with the multiple barriers that she was facing in four areas of her life - family, financial, housing, employment.

STEC referred Nara to the South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service who have helped her put legal protections in place to safeguard herself and her children from her abusive husband. The ending of Nara's relationship left her with a mortgage that she was unable to pay and threats of eviction. With support from STEC this has now been averted.

Working around her childcare commitments, Nara has completed short courses and improved her English through an ESOL course. Her increased confidence is reflected in the fact that she has now started a cleaning job at a local school. Nara told me that *"because of what has happened before, I was very closed but now, step by step, I get my power back."*

The Brain Charity

Overview

Neurological conditions can present a range of challenges, impacting everything from memory and focus to confidence, emotional regulation and physical abilities. These challenges can lower self-confidence, making it harder to adapt, communicate, and stay independent.

As a specialist provider 97% of TBC's participants declared a disability or long-term health condition (mainly neurological and neurodivergent conditions, e.g. stroke, brain injury, ADHD, autism). This was significantly higher than the partnership average of 47%, which in itself is high.

Based in Liverpool city centre, The Brain Charity offers emotional support, practical help and social activities to anyone with a neurological condition and to their family, friends and carers. All of the people in the stories below have a neurological condition. 81% of programme completers reported improvements in their health & wellbeing, 85% in aspiration & motivation, 78% in confidence and 78% in social skills. 37% of completers progressed to education/ training and 22% to active job-search, with 2 people finding paid employment.

Case Studies

Connor

Everyone who took part in TPP at The Brain Charity considered themselves to be socially excluded. 81% of this group had also been economically inactive for over a year, including Connor.

Two years ago, Connor was diagnosed with ADHD which is a common challenge faced by many people with neurological conditions. He said: *"When I first arrived at The Brain Charity, I had issues with confidence. I knew I had skills, but I had been overwhelmed for so long by thoughts that maybe there's something wrong, or maybe I won't be able to do it, or maybe I'll burn out."*

Through TPP, he accessed confidence coaching, which helped him to regain confidence and develop practical strategies for overcoming his doubts. As a result, he has now reignited his career aspirations and after two recent job offers, he decided to take up a position at the Civil Service's Liverpool office. He told me that *"The coaching hasn't just helped me get a job; it's motivated me to build a long-term career and aim for bigger things. I feel like I have the tools now to keep moving forward."*

Nina

Nina is one of many TBC beneficiaries who reported that The Progress Partnership has improved their motivation and aspiration (85% in total). Nina was referred to TPP by her support worker at Imagine Independence. She felt low on confidence and found it extremely hard to say no to others. This led to her being taken advantage of by friends, family and neighbours and she was unable to prioritise her own needs.

Through the support she received, Nina has improved her digital skills, completed first aid and safeguarding training, and also self-referred for counselling support. Having previously worked in Social Services as a support worker, she is now looking forward to learning and studying again, as she explores her options for the future. Her confidence has increased massively as a result of learning to put herself first. She told me *"I'm being kinder to myself now and I know that I can do things. Everyone here has a story and everyone is accepted. The emotional support is brilliant! I know that I'm part of something."*

Transform Lives Company

Overview

Transform Lives Company (TLC) is an established social enterprise working across the Liverpool City Region. The organisation has over 12 years' experience of supporting people through community led employment and wellbeing programmes, with a team of qualified coaches and IAG professionals.

TLC provides tailored support based on the needs of the individual with an available in-house menu of 1-1 coaching, *Workology* and *Lifeology* group sessions, wellbeing workshops, volunteering, job search support and digital skills development. Kindness is the ethos that drives the organisation and a recognition that everyone is uniquely gifted and deserving of support.

This is reflected in project data, with TLC performing particularly well in relation to improved health & wellbeing, aspiration/motivation, and workplace/ social skills, with 72%, 80% and 76% of completers reporting improvements, compared to partnership averages of 57%, 67% and 68% respectively. Participants involved in this evaluation all fed back that being part of group sessions had been a vital element of these improvements. 24% of completers entered employment, 40% education/training and 40% active job-search.

Case Studies

Samantha

Samantha is a single mum with 2 children. She was working as a Personal Assistant until a breakdown in the relationship with her employer. This left her feeling stressed, depressed and vulnerable. It simply felt too risky to get another job, for fear of the same thing happening again.

Support from her Key Worker, Mo, helped Samantha to reassess her options, rebuild her confidence and work on what she is passionate about. She established a women's networking group, putting on some big events, and also accessed business mentoring advice from TLC's directors. Samantha is now working again as a freelance PA and, with a friend, has also set up Ladies that Journey, *"for women to connect & meet other women who understand what you're going through, share your stories, build a support network and hear from inspiring speakers who have faced challenges and come out stronger."*

Robert

Robert signed up for TPP after hearing about it at the Job Centre. Within the space of a few days his partner had sadly passed away and he had heart failure which was almost fatal. The fallout from this left him living downstairs in the 3-bedroom home that he had previously shared with his partner, no longer able to cope with managing the property.

Emotionally, Robert was experiencing survivor's guilt which was preventing him from being able to focus on his own needs. He accessed the Lifeology programme with Transform Lives which helped him to start opening up and feel some hope for the future. He told me that there was *"no pressure, I moved at my own pace, getting back out was the main thing as I didn't think that I could."*

With advocacy support from TLC he has now moved into a one-bedroom bungalow to give him the fresh start he needs. He enjoys gardening and his new home has a small back yard where he is growing some plants and herbs. LIVV Housing supported him to the pay off arrears and get a quick move. Robert also just joined the Evolving Mindset men's wellbeing group, as well as Knowsley Family and Community Education service to improve his skills.

Torus Foundation

Overview

Torus Foundation is the charitable arm of the Torus Group, the North West's largest affordable homes provider. They work with a wide range of partners, investing group profits in health and wellbeing, education, social and economic initiatives that improve the lives of local people and help to grow stronger communities.

Key Workers worked with the St Helens Borough Community Food Providers Alliance to meet and engage with potential TPP participants at weekly drop-ins at different community venues.

This embeddedness within the St Helens community and the strength of their local knowledge is emphasised by the fact that 84% of all Torus' TPP participants were referred to other local organisations for additional support, including Rebuild for Hope Foundation, Start Up SIPS, Realise Training, Citizens Advice and The Growth Company. 23 of their 95 participants entered employment, 16 moved into active job-search and 20 into education/ training.

Case Studies

Maria

When she began on TPP Maria was unsure how to get started as she had been out of work for a number of years after having her daughter. She looked at different career options that would give her flexibility around her home life, feeling that a role in a school could give her that flexibility. She was also referred to Start Up Sips, a relaxed local network for aspiring and established business owners, to explore the possibility of self-employment as a face painter and children's entertainer.

Maria worked closely with her Key Worker to develop her CV, cover letter writing and job search techniques. After working things through and considering her current level of experience, she decided that her top priority was to begin by finding a part-time job; and with her Key Worker's support, successfully applied for a midday assistant job at a local primary school. Maria is enjoying work and is settling into her new role really well. She is also already thinking about her next steps in training, including the possibility of a Teaching Assistant course with Realise Training.

Lucy

Lucy is from Wargrave and was keen to learn more about self-employment after being out of work for an extended period due to ill health. She felt self-employment would be her best option as it would give her flexibility around managing her health and being a mum.

After registering with TPP Lucy attended Start Up Sips in St Helens for support around starting her own business, including creating a business plan, advertising, and building up customer base. She created an Instagram account and other social media accounts to grow her business and set up a Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) number. Lucy began gaining traction on her social media and through word of mouth, an opening came up in a local salon for her to rent a space as a nail technician.

Torus were able to provide her with some financial support so that she could purchase the supplies she needed to get started. Lucy has had a busy month with clients and is continuing to build up her client base and social media following. She is loving her new life!

Voice of Nations

Overview

Voice of Nations is an award-winning non-profit Community Interest Company based in Liverpool and Sefton, who educate, empower, mentor, inspire, motivate, and boost the confidence of less privileged and disadvantaged girls and women. The VON ethos is that that all humans are born equal, and every individual is unique, regardless of their background or the circumstances surrounding them.

VON specialise in supporting women, recognising that women are at the heart of every family but are often vulnerable and in need of support. All of VON's work is designed to support women to start a journey of growth and self-discovery to unlock their full potential.

95% of participants identified as being socially excluded, with 63% from minority ethnic backgrounds. A third of those who completed the programme progressed to work and 22% moved into active job-search, with higher than average improvements reported across all project Indicators of Change.

Case Studies

Emma

When Emma, single mum of three, joined the programme she faced multiple barriers including isolation, stress, family breakdown, low self-esteem and mental health challenges. She spoke very little English and lacked any IT skills, which added to her sense of vulnerability and disconnection.

Through tailored support, Emma engaged in wellbeing and resilience-building sessions, as well as confidence workshops that completely transformed her mindset and life. She actively took part in group sessions, where she read personal development books and interacted with other participants—greatly improving her confidence, English and communication skills, while reducing her isolation.

With intensive 1-2-1 coaching and mock interviews, Emma eventually secured employment, significantly boosting her confidence and mental wellbeing. Despite ongoing family challenges, she now has the tools to manage stress, enhance her emotional intelligence, and value her self-worth. Reflecting on her progress, Emma shared: *“I walked in feeling invisible and broken. Now, I walk out confident, with clarity and purpose, and a voice I never thought I had.”*

Hadya

On signing up, Hadya was battling deep isolation, health challenges, and a lack of confidence. Despite holding a Master's degree and with a teaching background from her home country, she had never worked since arriving in the UK. Repeated job rejections left her feeling defeated and she eventually stopped applying altogether, believing she had little to offer.

Joining up with Voice of Nations marked a huge turning point in her life. Through intensive business start-up coaching, confidence-building workshops and ongoing mentoring, Hadya gained the clarity, knowledge, and self-belief she needed to pursue a dream she once thought impossible; successfully registering her own Community Interest Company and delivering her first community project. Today, Hadya is actively applying for funding to expand her work, empowering disadvantaged women, families, and children to realise their full potential.

Reflecting on her transformation, she said: *“I once thought I was worthless, unemployable & unproductive. Now I am a leader in my community, a changemaker, a voice of hope for others like me.”*

Wirral Change

Overview

Established in 2006, Wirral Change is dedicated to supporting ethnic minority and European residents in the Wirral area. Providing information, advisory services, advocacy and guidance to marginalised communities, they empower disadvantaged groups, ensuring equal access to opportunities and much-needed support.

94% of 154 participants considered themselves to be socially excluded, with 77% from diverse ethnic backgrounds. A high number were refugees or asylum seekers who required help to stabilise their living and family situations through support with housing, finances, understanding the benefits system and establishing the right to work in the UK; all areas in which Wirral Change excels.

68% of ethnic minority completers reported improvements in the 'Stable Foundations' Indicator of Change (vs 49% partnership average).

31 people have been retained on programme for continued support into year-2. Of those that exited in year-1, 27 progressed to employment, 12 to education/ training and 19 to active job-search.

Case Studies

Adhira

Born and raised in India, Adhira moved to the UK with her parents on a skilled worker visa. After their arrival, the family faced significant challenges, including financial and emotional strain following the loss of her mother's job due to issues with her employer. These difficulties deeply affected Adhira, who struggled silently while wanting to continue her education. Unable to share her concerns with her family, as they were already overwhelmed, she felt isolated.

During this difficult time, Shibi, Key Worker at Wirral Change, became involved with the family, taking the time to understand and help address their situation. With his support, one by one, each of their concerns were resolved. Having regained a sense of stability and happiness in her life, Adhira felt ready to resume her education and is now enrolled at Wirral Met College.

Habte

Habte arrived in the UK from Ethiopia just over a year ago. He was seeking asylum, having been persecuted by the Ethiopian government. The fallout from this continued to create issues for Habte as he sought work in the UK.

He completed an SIA security training course but was unable to begin work without a sworn oath and character reference. Wirral Change helped Habte to navigate through this complex process and as a result, he now has the required permission to work in the UK.

Whilst at Wirral Change, Habte has made new connections and improved his confidence at the weekly men's social group and also by playing football every Thursday with the Wirral Change football team, who are in a league with other community groups from across the city region. Habte completed a Master's degree in Ethiopia and now that his situation is settled, he has applied to continue his studies at Manchester University, hopefully beginning in September this year.

Section 6: Conclusions, Key Success Factors and Recommendations

1. Conclusions

Year-1 of TPP has been delivered within budget and has largely achieved its target outputs and outcomes, significantly exceeding required recruitment volumes, reaching the right kinds of people it set out to engage and improving the lives of hundreds of economically inactive people across the Liverpool City Region.

153 people are in employment or self-employment following the support they received, exceeding target. Just as importantly, hundreds more are now moving closer to the labour market, with 160 progressing to education/training, 172 moving into active job-search and others reporting marked improvements in their aspiration & motivation, health & wellbeing and employability.

As the stories in Section 5 highlight, everyone's situation is unique and different, with individuals having different starting points. Whilst some are more ready for work or training, others are not yet at that point, but have still taken significant steps forward in their life journeys.

Delivery Partners successfully engaged with vulnerable and socially isolated people who were the primary target group for this project. There is an incredible breadth of skills, experience and kindness evident across the partnership.

People are now tapping into their enormous potential through interest groups, training, volunteering, employment and self-employment, making a powerful contribution to Community Wealth Building in the city region.

2. Success Factors

The partnership has developed a delivery model that is highly successful in supporting economically inactive people to overcome personal barriers and challenges to move closer to employment. Its achievements have been made possible through several key success factors.

- In terms of participant experience, the number 1 key success factor mentioned commonly was **having the opportunity to develop trust with their Key Worker as a reliable, consistent point of contact**, this being the core element that made the real difference for them. The relationship between Key Worker and participant provides the gateway through which people have been able to build new connections, friendships and networks.
- The project benefits from **strong leadership** and central **project management**, with effective and **productive relationships between VOLA and delivery partners**, who highly value the guidance and support they receive from the project management team.
- **Partnership composition** – the extensive network of credible, trusted and caring community-based organisations ensures wide geographical coverage, localised delivery and thematic expertise in supporting priority inactive groups. Long-term local presence, with hard-earned reputations amongst local communities clearly **supports the ability to engage disadvantaged individuals** that other service providers often find difficult to.

- A **welcoming and caring team of Key Workers**, with high levels of **expertise, local knowledge and understanding** of the target group supports engagement of the kinds of people the project set out to target, as demonstrated by the figures in Sections 4 and 5.
- **Effective delivery model design**, with its personalised approach and holistic focus gives Key Workers full autonomy to do what they consider best for each individual participant.
- The availability of a flexible participant support fund to cover expenses, incentives and other incidental costs has been a key enabler in supporting people’s ongoing engagement and onward progression. Beyond the basics such as travel expenses, some participants have been provided with computer equipment, financial support for interview or work clothes, equipment, translation of overseas qualifications, or general support to help relieve poverty.
- Availability of complementary **‘in-house’ activities and services** provides easy access to other things delivered on-site, supporting ongoing engagement with Key Worker support and the organisation in general. Effective links with other organisations ensures access to other services where not delivered in-house. **Proactive referral to complementary provision** is clearly a strength, supporting people’s personal and social development.

3. Recommendations

- By providing holistic, local and individually tailored support, TPP is opening doors for some of the most excluded and vulnerable people in society. In the absence of this project this crucial work would not be happening at a hyper-local level. It is vital that this project continues and if possible, is expanded.
- The quality and impact of delivery is evident in that many beneficiaries have become advocates for the project, spreading the word to others in their community. The momentum generated by this organic, word of mouth promotion can be further capitalised on to reach more economically inactive people who need this type of support.
- As noted in the Success Factors section above, the Key Worker/participant relationship is the key foundation of the project. This foundation is threatened by the current one-year funding cycle. The second year of funding was not confirmed until late in Year-1, presenting significant risks to staff retention and ongoing participant engagement, which will inevitably happen again next year in the absence of earlier confirmation. A longer, 3 or even 5-year funding cycle would ensure that this brilliant project has stable foundations that will improve outcomes in the longer-term.
- The effectiveness of this project highlights the necessity of retaining hyper-localised community-based delivery in the post UKSPF funding landscape. The skills, experience and knowledge evident across the delivery partnership (and wider VOLA Consortium) is a unique resource that should be woven into wider mainstream employability programmes, such as Connect to Work, which would provide the stability needed to enable it to flourish to its full potential over a longer term
- Increased strategic collaboration between VOLA and LCRCA Employment & Skills and investment teams should be developed to help the sharing of innovative approaches and good practice to shape the design of future employment support programmes, harnessing the extensive knowledge, skills and experience of the partnership.

- It is recommended that this evaluative process continues through year-2 of the project in order draw comparisons to year-1, particularly in light of the reduction in funding, to see if this has any noticeable impact on its impact.
- This project is creating untold savings to local services as people move closer to, or back into the labour market. An in-depth appraisal of the wider Social Value generated by the project will help to discover and bring to light the real extent of these savings.

At an operational level:

- The Delivery Partnership should explore targeted approaches to the engagement of people aged 50 and over.
- VOLA should work with Delivery Partners to ensure accurate recording of job-search and basic skills outcomes, which appear to have been under-reported in year1, including review/ and revision of participant paperwork, where necessary.
- The LCRCA is asked to consider the inclusion of digital skills achievements in the basic skills outcome count.

Matt Ball
Make A Change
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Annex 1: Further Participant Case Studies

To respect confidentiality and protect anonymity, participant names in the following case studies have been changed.

Margaret and Cathy (*Alt Valley Community Trust*)

Margaret, a 63-year-old widow was referred to the project by her family as they felt she was becoming increasingly socially isolated after losing her employment in the hospitality sector. She was encouraged to enrol on a sewing course, as in the past she had worked as a seamstress and soon made a friend, Cathy, on the course.

Cathy had self-referred to AVCT as she was in a similar position to Margaret, she had mentioned that all she did was stay in the house all day apart from shopping once a week. Both enjoyed the sewing course, particularly the social side.

They also enrolled on a business start-up course and as a result, were instrumental in forming a 'social sewing group'. They meet each Thursday on a regular basis with other members and enjoy a cuppa, a chat and engage in some sewing. They also support each other through their WhatsApp group. Although they have not started work, their engagement in TPP has clearly transformed their lives for the better.

Hume (*Blackburne House*)

Before beginning at Blackburne House, Hume had been economically inactive for over a year (as were 91% of all the women who took part at BH). She was forced to leave her country in order to save herself, giving up everything she knew and leaving her family behind. She enrolled onto TPP, after meeting TPP Key Worker Nahima at a Refugee Women Connect event.

Hume has a medical degree and is keen to transfer her qualifications so that she is able to work in the UK healthcare system. Nahima recognised that Hume is fluent in many different languages and dialects. Hume began using these skills to volunteer, providing translation for other women seeking support. She has also completed the Level 1 Interpreting course and is already working on Level 2, as well as improving her basic skills.

Her Key Worker told me, *"Hume has come a very long way. When she first came, there was a lot of prompting from me required. I have seen her grow so much and the power of her lived experience inspires other women. Knowing the challenges she has overcome, when Hume says to you 'come on, you can do it', it has a lot of power!"*

Hume is hoping to begin the process of transferring her skills by starting at University in September this year.

Graham (*Everton in the Community*)

Before beginning on TPP, Graham had been economically inactive for over 15 years. He is open about his previous struggles with substance misuse and the anxiety and depression that he experiences. He

has previously worked as a gym Instructor, IT Engineer, Driver for People's Ford, as well as volunteering for Woodlands Hospice and at Alder Hey Hospital.

Reflecting on his experience of the programme Graham said, *"I did not think that I would get a job as I did not know where to start looking for opportunities and had no confidence, especially with IT and digital"*. He received a tablet and 6-month SIM card to support with this. He went on *"when the 6 months ended, I was given a further six-month sim card to help me as you need apps for all of these jobs I am applying for"*.

Graham initially got a job as a Kitchen Porter, which turned out to be too fast paced and overwhelming but this has not stopped his progress, *"I have been offered a job as a Cleaner with OCS"* (through an event hosted at Goodison) and he has also attended a recruitment day at The Titanic Hotel for a stewarding job with EFC. *"I have developed reliability, communication, motivation, teamwork and determination which has improved my confidence and general health and wellbeing. I have been more active than ever and less isolated and have made more connections with loads of new people and organisations. I am more willing to try new things and not to give up if I come across any barriers. Signing up with TPP has helped me to turn my life around and I can see a light at the end of the tunnel."*

Sasha (Granby Toxteth Development Trust)

TPP has provided Sasha with the support that she needed to get her new food business off and running. Similar to many other people starting from economic inactivity, self-employment provided the best way forward for Sasha, giving her the flexibility to manage all the other demands and challenges in her life. Through GTDT, Sasha completed her Level 2 qualification in food hygiene and also worked closely with Liverpool City Council Ways to Work team for additional support. Her business is now open on Park Road, with a mixed menu of British and Caribbean food.

Tim (Knowsley Disability Concern)

Tim wanted to gain employment but wasn't sure how to go about it. His time on the project has given him the skills and tools to start moving towards his aspirations. From the start he joined in everything with enthusiasm and a positive attitude and he enjoyed learning new skills, including putting together a CV and searching for jobs. After looking at the current options available to him, Tim decided that he wanted to take up a voluntary role in order to get some experience. He has now agreed to do this at the Arriva bus depot, which he is really looking forward to. He is also working with the BIG job club to look for paid vacancies.

Paul (Knowsley Disability Concern)

Paul used to live with his parents until they both passed away. He now lives on his own and without the help of his Day Centre and the intervention of the TPP project, would have become extremely isolated.

Paul is an affable individual and very interested in learning new things, although he seemed a little lost when his Key Worker, Jo, first met him. He is now practically unrecognisable from that person, is full of confidence and full of life. Paul took everything in his stride and helped to support others in his group, that peer support being massively beneficial to others. He is working towards hopefully volunteering

at some point and has also gone on to foster a love of swimming and raised £500 for KDC by swimming 30 lengths.

"I am so grateful for everything I have learnt with Jo, especially learning some sign language, understanding about visiting the doctor and eating healthily. I feel like I have a sense of purpose again!"

Mira (Phoenix Community & Youth Project)

Mira lives in Southport with her parents and sister. She told me *"I have epilepsy, so I have problems with learning and remembering things. I wanted to gain qualifications, but I am from Poland, and I didn't get a chance to take GCSEs"*. On the support she has received, Mira fed back that *"Ray is very kind and much better than schoolteachers. He allows me to learn at my own pace. He cares about me and not just my education. I'm not at the stage to seek work yet, but my maths and English qualifications will help with my employability skills"*. She also told me *"this has improved my confidence and I have made new friends. Before the course I felt I had no life. I now have a spark in my life!"*

Chloe (Rotunda)

Chloe was keen to pursue a career in education in her early years but she struggled to have belief in her own capabilities and also lacking confidence in social situations. After joining up to TPP Chloe engaged in confidence workshops and progressed on to volunteering in the Rotunda nursery. TPP has helped her to get back on to her career path.

Chloe fed back that, *"I have now received an email from admissions at Edge Hill University, to let me know that I have a place on the course. Taking part in TPP gave me the opportunity to improve my social anxiety and qualification levels so that I am now able to move on to higher education. I wouldn't have had this opportunity if it wasn't for all your brilliant support and motivation, I can't thank you enough."*

Joseph (Speke Training and Education Centre)

Joseph, his wife and their 5 children arrived in England from Ghana in 2024. He was referred to STEC by his GP. He was experiencing extreme anxiety and stress. Due to a lack of official paperwork, he was being threatened with removal from the UK, with his children to be placed into the UK care system. STEC provided advocacy support for Joseph, which included productive meetings with local MP, Maria Eagle. This meant that his removal from the country was delayed, hopefully providing time to properly resolve the situation.

Joseph has accessed the foodbank at STEC, the *Swap Shop* for clothes for the kids, and has also begun an English class with the WEA. STEC has also signposted him to the local Children's Centre to access childcare support for his youngest, who is not yet school age.

Kabirah (The Brain Charity)

All of TBC participants face multiple day-to-day challenges, whilst also living with a neurological condition. For this reason, the average length of time on programme at The Brain Charity was 150

days, compared to a partnership average of 102 days. Kabirah's story provides one example of why a longer period of support was essential.

Kabirah got involved with TPP through a word-of-mouth recommendation from one of the other participants. She is a single mum of two; her son has severe autism and her daughter also has a neurological condition. They live together in a single room apartment. On starting with TPP, Kabirah was quiet and reserved, lacking belief in herself as a result of previous traumatic relationships.

Through The Brain Charity, Kabirah has accessed the Carer's Advocacy Service, counselling and the onsite Neuro Gym. She has gone on to access confidence workshops as well as advice and guidance to begin exploring potential work and training opportunities.

Kabirah told me, *"Since coming here I have learnt how to create and put in place good boundaries in my relationships with others and as a parent with my children as well. The difference this has made to me has been amazing!"* Kabirah fed back that her health and wellbeing has improved (as did 81% of TBC participants), as well as her social skills (78% of TBC participants said the same).

Reece (Transform Lives Company)

Reece has OCD and anxiety, which means it can often take him up to an hour to leave his house. His dad is receiving treatment for a brain tumour and his mum is bipolar. He had accessed employability support previously with a large Welfare to Work provider, but he told me that *"the pressure they put on me to find work just made everything worse."*

Reece accessed the Lifeology programme with TLC, which helped him to make new connections locally, *"it was great to meet up and have a chat, spend time together and listen to each other."* He told me that he hates maths but that he has pushed himself to improve his skills, as he knows it's a barrier to progression and so he is working with Knowsley FACE in Prescot to get his Level 2 qualification. He also attends the Evolving Mindset men's group in Prescot each week.

Reece is very social and creative and later in the year he is looking forward to getting involved in some creative workshops at the Shakespeare Theatre in Prescot. He recognises that weekends can feel lonely, so he is now looking for a weekend voluntary job to fill this gap. His Key Worker, Jo told me that *"his independence has really developed, more often than not he is now able to overcome his anxiety to ask for what he needs"*.

Jason (Torus Foundation)

Jason started on TPP with Torus Foundation after being referred by his Housing Officer due to rent arrears. He worked with his Key Worker to apply for support through the Tenant Support Fund and was successful in being awarded a payment to clear his arrears. This ended a major source of stress for Jason.

He was also referred to Citizens Advice for support with ongoing discretionary housing payments and making a claim for Personal Independence Payments due to his health condition. Jason has since been awarded both payments, which has helped to stabilise him financially. He has now also enrolled onto a 10-day CSCS course and is enjoying this, having previously worked in construction. With things looking up, Jason is now looking and actively applying for jobs in construction and is feeling optimistic about the future!

Lillie (*Voice of Nations*)

When Lillie joined the programme at Voice of Nations she carried the weight of multiple challenges. Isolated, dyslexic, a single mother of three with grandchildren, and having been out of work for nearly two decades, she struggled with low self-esteem and a deeply pessimistic outlook. With no IT skills and limited confidence, she felt disconnected and uncertain about her future.

Through tailored 1-to-1 mentoring/coaching, wellbeing sessions and confidence-building support, Lillie experienced a profound transformation. Group activities, reading personal development books, and engaging with others helped improve her communication, reduce isolation, and rediscover her voice. Despite believing she could never read properly - let alone write - Lillie, in her 60s and living with dyslexia, defied expectations by becoming a published author.

Now writing her second and third books, Lillie is working towards launching an association to empower elderly dyslexic women to overcome societal limitations and celebrate their potential.

Reflecting on her journey, she said: *“I used to believe I was too old, too broken and too dyslexic to achieve anything. Voice of Nations, and particularly Dr Sylvia, made me believe I could achieve anything. Now I know - I was just getting started and have so much to offer the world.”*

Isabelle (*Wirral Change*)

Isabelle was born in Brazil but made an asylum claim to the UK with her 3 children to escape persecution. In Brazil, Isabelle worked in the educational sector as an Education Director and teacher. She received a degree in Education and a Master’s in School Management in Brazil, but she had not been able to transfer her skills to their English equivalent. Whilst on TPP, Isabelle was supported with this process and has now received UK equivalents for her overseas qualifications.

She also completed level 2 and 3 Counselling Skills courses. She went on to successfully apply for work in a school where she had already been volunteering and has taken up the role of school counsellor for migrant children.

Raafi (*Wirral Change*)

Raafi came to the UK with his family under an asylum claim and had little knowledge of UK systems or procedures. With the support of his TPP Key Worker, he learned how to register with a GP and dentist, book appointments, create a CV and apply for college courses.

Raafi attended the Men’s Social Group at Wirral Change whilst also taking ESOL and maths courses. Through completion of these courses and the development of his understanding of national and local procedures, Raafi progressed into the role of Community Translator, supporting other people in need to access services.

Annex 2: List of Consultees

In addition to conversations with over 70 project participants (who remain anonymous to protect confidentiality), the following people were also interviewed in-depth.

Project Partner	Individual Consulted	Role
Alt Valley Community Trust	Joe Donnelly	Key Worker
	Dave Westhead	Key Worker
Blackburne House	Nahima Begum	Key Worker
	Tracy Ryan	Key Worker
	Andrea Rushton	CEO
Everton in the Community	Yolande Walsh	Key Worker
	Maxine Roberts	Adult Enrichment Manager
	Jonathan Jones	Director of Adult Services
	Zac Taylor	Insight, Impact and Evaluation
Granby Toxteth Development Trust	Darren Guy	Key Worker
	Lindsey Guy	CEO
	Jordan Hutchinson	Operations Manager
	Chris Starkey	Company Secretary
KDC North West	Jo Talbot	Key Worker & Company Director
Phoenix	Ray Moore	Key Worker
Rotunda	Claire Inglesby	Key Worker & Compliance Manager
	Laura Heneghan	Key Worker
	Maxine Ennis	CEO
STEC	Mark Ord	Key Worker & CEO
The Brain Charity	Amanda Morrow	Key Worker
	Karen Kaufman	Key Worker
	Debbie Pickering	Head of Finance
Torus Foundation	Annie Slater	Key Worker
	Louise Waterson	Key Worker
	Daniel Bamford	Employment and Skills Manager
	Karen Mackie	Team Leader – Employment & Skills
Transform Lives Company	Sophie Chaoul	Key Worker/ Engagement & Compliance Manager
	Mo Keegan	Key Worker
	Jo Hallmark	Key Worker
Voice of Nations	Sylvia Forchap-Likambi	Key Worker & CEO
Wirral Change	Aleksandra Zachara	Key Worker & Social Inclusion Team Leader
	Isaac Stewart	Key Worker
	Shibi Arikadan Lonappan	Key Worker
	Sabra Ahmed	Deputy CEO
VOLA	Stuart McGrory	Consortium Manager
	Joe McNulty	Project Manager
	Pete Templeton	Quality & Compliance Officer
	Jack Shields	Senior Finance & Admin Officer
	Patrick Nicholls	Admin Officer