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Bridgend County Borough Council

Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich dewis iaith.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please let us know if your language choice is Welsh.

Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:
Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Thursday, 30 October 2025

Dear Councillor,

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Equalities and Employee Relations will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB on **Wednesday, 5 November 2025** at **10:00**.

AGENDA

1   Apologies for Absence

    To receive apologies for absence from Members.

2   Declarations of Interest

    To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008.

3   Approval of Minutes

    3 - 10

    To receive for approval the Minutes of 03/09/2025

4   Workforce Data - Quarter 2

    11 - 16

By receiving this Agenda Pack electronically you will save the Authority approx. £1.92 in printing costs

5   Community Cohesion Annual Report

6   Urgent Items

To consider any other item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you would like to view this meeting live, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.

Yours faithfully
K Watson
Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:
A R Berrow
E L P Caparros
P Davies
M J Evans
N Farr
P Ford
J Gebbie
W R Goode
D M Hughes
M Jones
M Lewis
J Llewellyn-Hopkins
JC Spanswick
A Ulberini-Williams
A Wathan
AJ Williams
HM Williams
E D Winstanley

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor M J Evans – Chairperson

A R Berrow	P Davies	N Farr	J Gebbie
JC Spanswick	HM Williams		

Present Virtually

W R Goode	D M Hughes	M Jones	M Lewis
A Wathan	AJ Williams		

Officers:

Paul Miles	Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development
Neil Arbery	Lead Officer (Primary School Support)
Gayle Shenton	Head of Learning
Angela Granville	HR Business Development Manager
Michael Pitman	Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Oscar Roberts	Temporary Democratic Services Officer – Committees

69. Apologies for Absence

Decision Made	Apologies for absence were received from Cllr H Williams, Cllr E Caparros
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

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70. Declarations of Interest

Decision Made	Councillor J Spanswick declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 3, as a relative works within the Assia Domestic Abuse service. Councillor Spanswick left the meeting while this factor was being considered. Councillor R Goode declared a personal interest in Agenda item 5, as someone currently working with Cultures Wales.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

71. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 4 June 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record. Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:- • A member asked whether a planned further engagement with staff on the subject of welfare reform in relation to Personal Independence Payments and any impact this may have on BCBC's disabled work force had been undertaken. • The Deputy Leader noted that delays to pay awards for staff make large impacts on personal finances especially in regard to Universal Credit and staff had been in touch to outline the effects of these issues as well as the effect of changes to Personal Independence Payments on them. Thus, the effects of these changes and challenges should be fully understood. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to inform the Deputy Leader and Cabinet on the details of staff impacted by delayed payments as well as potential plans for addressing any issues in the next month. • A member asked about the progress on assessing the business case for addressing the Assia Domestic Abuse service's funding challenges, sharing a response from a BCBC officer in relation to alternatives raised at a previous meeting of the Committee.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

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Learning & Development

Decision Made	The purpose of this report, presented by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, was to provide information of the Council's grow your own schemes and staff training during 2024/2025, to include full-time and part-time apprenticeships, the organisation's Graduate Scheme as well as mandatory and optional staff training workshops and courses. HR briefings have also been given to staff and management as additional support to staff. Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:- • A member asked about the low completion rate of 63.58% on the Introduction to Equality and Diversity mandatory training, and what the Council are doing to encourage staff to undertake the course. • A member asked about the reminders given to employees to complete training modules that are on a renewal cycle to be completed either once annually or every three years. • The Deputy Leader requested that all members should receive a reminder when their training is due for renewal, in addition to notices already sent out by the Democratic Services team. • The Deputy Leader asked about whether the Apprenticeship Levy is considered as value for money and whether it is best-utilised for the needs of BCBC's workforce. • The Deputy Leader asked about additional arrangements that can be made for staff who are not digitally enabled and that correspond with the seven learning styles to ensure that staff are not disenfranchised, whether an Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted on this subject and how staff can be further supported through the training. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide an update on activity within the Learning and Development team around those topics within a month outside the meeting. • The Leader asked about apprenticeships, noting that only 10-12 apprentices are with the Council in an average year, and asking how to ensure that the right apprenticeships in the right places can be put in place going forward. He also asked whether there is a centralised policy on apprenticeship numbers and allowances to ensure that best practice is followed. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide an update on the categories of apprenticeship that the Council offers. • The Leader asked about any gaps within the offering of apprenticeships within the Council and whether any central guidance is given to teams wanting or needing additional support. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to go into further detail in future to promote the offering of apprenticeships across all services, to include a breakdown of apprenticeships

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| | | offered by level and sector. |
| | | • A member asked for a report on apprenticeships broken down by level of apprenticeships offered and the time taken to complete each. The member also asked about Council arrangements to raise awareness of apprenticeships and other training courses to schools and colleges across Bridgend.
• A member asked about current arrangements and training offered in the use of AI and how it can be used to help employees best utilise the tools available. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide information on the current training regarding AI as well as potential changes in the future to best utilise it within the next month.
• A member asked whether every school in Bridgend County is included in initiatives to promote the Council and alternative employment and development options prior to the choice of GCSE and A-Level subjects.
• A member asked about the in-house graduate scheme, noting that only 1 out of the 8 recruited so far is still with the Council and asking about specifically where those 7 graduates have gone, whether jobs were available for them to move onto and what their reasons were for leaving their posts. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide details on this information within the next month, pointing out that the Council's selective recruitment freeze and other financial challenges facing the local government sector have impacted the opportunities available within the Council for those coming to the end of apprenticeships or other training schemes.
• A member asked about the strategic ongoing needs for the Local Authority within the next 3, 5 and 10 years, asking about relationships with other colleges and schools as well as ongoing needs within the organisation to meet potential future needs. They asked that a Corporate Strategic Needs Assessment be completed to indicate these future needs and tailor guidance and education to help meet these challenges.
• A member asked about arrangements to manage AI use within coursework and support given to teachers to identify AI use within work submitted to school projects. The Head of Learning agreed to provide an update on current arrangements to prevent overuse of AI within school projects.

These questions were addressed by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, the Lead Officer (Primary School Support), the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Housing and the Head of Learning.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the information contained in this report and within the Appendix. |
| Date Decision Made | | 3 September 2025 |

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Health & Wellbeing

Decision Made	The purpose of this report, presented by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, was to provide an overview of health and wellbeing within Bridgend County Borough Council, with a focus on actions and support provided between April 2024 and March 2025. The Council continues to prioritise mental, physical and emotional wellbeing through a range of support and resources.
	The resources outlined by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development as part of the report included the Employee Assistance Programme provided by Vivup which provides a range of assistance, assessments, support and counselling free of charge to all Council employees; Occupational Health provided by Insight which provides advice and guidance on the subject of health advice in the workplace; Health Hub News which is a quarterly newsletter distributed to staff containing health tips and testimonials in order to build awareness and the Health And Wellbeing Group, which is an action group formed of employees who promote and roll out new initiatives as well as taking feedback.
	Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:-
	- A member asked about the referral process for the Occupational Health Service and whether it requires manager approval or support. The member further asked about occupational health needs that may involve a manager or senior member of staff, or otherwise may be deeply personal to an employee. - A member asked about the rate of referrals to services per month, enquired about any possible increases in figures and whether any trends had bene identified to explain potential rises. - The Leader asked about the cost and value for money provided by the Council's external contracts with Vivup and Insight as well as the length and review process of these contracts. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide information related to contracts with both organisations in regard to these factors of timescale and cost within the next month. The Leader further asked about potential internal options for providing a mental and physical health support service. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to consider the possibility of moving services to internal delivery upon the next contract review cycle. - A member asked about reminders given to staff about the Council's suite of support services and options when staff are facing difficulties or are considering taking stress-enforced leave. The member further asked about potential employee canvassing or surveying in order to assess broad-

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	spectrum needs and any areas of improvement to be made with current services. • The Deputy Leader presented a case study to emphasise that staff should be accessing the services provided while in work as opposed to while on stress-enforced leave, adding that especially in high-workload environments with potential trauma endured by staff that a comprehensive package of support should be pursued by the Council over a service focusing on value for money due to the duty of care that the Council has towards its staff. • A member asked about what referrals to the Council's support services mean in practical terms. • A member asked about Health Surveillance Checks performed on specific Council officers within certain roles, and what additional checks are performed above those needed for licensure. • A member asked about the low numbers of staff accessing the Employee Assistance Programme considering research on the proportion of people who experience mental health difficulties. The member further asked about the number of people currently experiencing stress-enforced leave, and whether they had considered using the Council's support services and reasons why they may have not done so. • A member asked about the review process for the Council's support services given the challenges and confidentiality in doing so. • The Leader asked about requirements for different roles in recruiting new staff to the Council. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to check with HR staff to ensure that job requirements are consistent and reasonable to the job role when recruiting for posts. These questions were addressed by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the information contained in this report. Cabinet further thanked the HR Business Development Manager and her team for their work in organizing events across the Council.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

74. Workforce Data - Quarter 1

Decision Made	The purpose of this report, presented by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, was to provide information of the Council's workforce, to assist workforce planning. The Council's headcount at

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| | the end of the reporting period was 5,921, and featured various breakdowns of the Council's workforce demographics and working patterns.

Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:-

• The Leader asked about the breakdown of appraisal figures across the Council, noting a low completion rate across multiple Directorates. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide a breakdown of figures in more detail in Q2 of year 2025/26.
• A member asked to confirm that all staff receive an appraisal, receive individual checks with managers about their performance, actional goals set for staff and potential opportunities to provide feedback from staff to managers.
• The Chair noted an increase in long-term sickness across the Council and asked about potential reasons behind this, as well as any procedures in place to manage this.
• The Chair asked about the low completion of Display Screen Equipment assessments completed across the Council and linked it to a large proportion of absence attributed to musculoskeletal disorders in the back and neck, and whether any correlation between low completion rates and high rates of absence had been identified.
• The Leader asked about policies in place to support employees taking absence due to close family bereavement, and the period of leave allowed for employees under those circumstances.

These questions were addressed by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the information contained in this report. |
| Date Decision Made | 3 September 2025 |

75. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

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To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this link

The meeting closed at 11:37.

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Meeting of:	**CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**
Date of Meeting:	**5 NOVEMBER 2025**
Report Title:	**WORKFORCE DATA – QUARTER 2**
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	**CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR & CORPORATE POLICY** **CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**
Responsible Officer:	**PAUL MILES, GROUP MANAGER – HUMAN RESOURCES & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	**THERE IS NO IMPACT ON THE POLICY FRAMEWORK OR PROCEDURE RULES**
Executive Summary:	**TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE PROFILE OF THE COUNCIL'S WORKFORCE**

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information for the Council's workforce, to assist workforce planning.

2. **Background**

2.1 The provision of relevant and accurate workforce information is a key component of workforce planning in terms of understanding the current workforce profile, trends and any relevant issues.

2.2 A workforce report is prepared for Cabinet Committee Equalities and Employee Relations on a quarterly basis and will include key information.

3. **Current situation/ proposal**

3.1 **Appendix 1** gives the overall Bridgend County Borough Council's position on 30 September 2025.

3.2 The total workforce headcount is 5,925 a reduction from the same period last year.

3.3 The split across the organisation of 79% female and 21% male is consistent with previous periods.

3.4   The working patterns across the Council illustrate the variety of working arrangements in place with 46% of staff full time, 48% part time and 6% working in casuals and relief positions.

3.5   The average age is 46, with 51% of employees aged 46 and over.

3.6   Appraisal completion for quarter 2 are included in **Appendix 1**, along with detail of the previous years' completions.

3.7   **Appendix 1** also shows the sickness detail, and the days lost per FTE for quarter 2 in 2025/2026 is 5.89. This is lower than the same period last year when it was 6.22. However, the percentage of absences that are categorised as long term remains at 81%.

4.   Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1   The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report; therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5.   Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1   The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of the well-being goals or objectives as a result of this report.

6.   Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1   There are no climate change or nature implications arising from this report.

7.   Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1   There are no safeguarding and corporate parenting implications arising from this report.

8.   Financial Implications

8.1   There are no financial implications arising from this report as it is an information report.

9.   Recommendation

9.1   It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Equalities and Employee Relations note the information contained in this report.
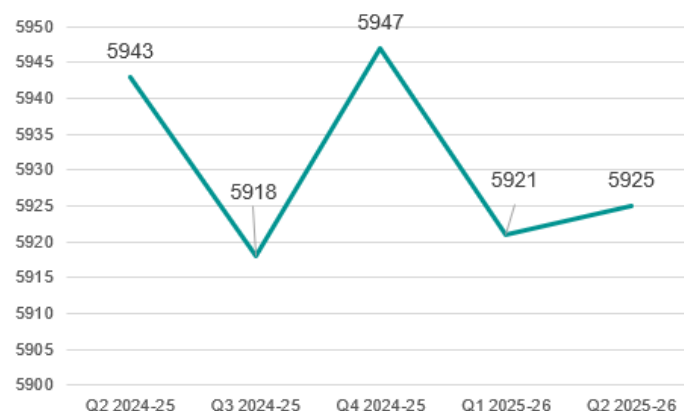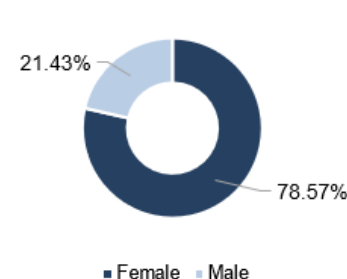
Background documents
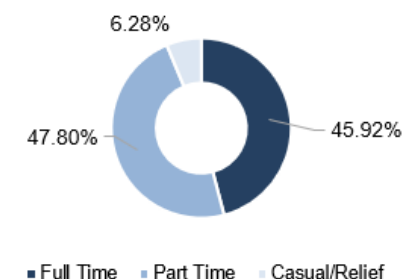
None

Appendix 1

BCBC – Workforce Q2 2025-2026

Headcount

Q2 2024-25: 5943
Q3 2024-25: 5918
Q4 2024-25: 5947
Q1 2025-26: 5921
Q2 2025-26: 5925

Sex

- Female: 78.57%
- Male: 21.43%

Working Patterns

- Full Time: 45.92%
- Part Time: 47.80%
- Casual/Relief: 6.28%

Age Profile

The average age of our workforce is 46 years.

Age Grouping	No. of Employees	Percentage in Age Grouping
16-20	62	1.05%
21-25	238	4.02%
26-30	445	7.51%
31-35	589	9.94%
36-40	782	13.20%
41-45	767	12.95%
46-50	778	13.13%
51-55	882	14.89%
56-60	707	11.93%
61-65	488	8.24%
66+	187	3.16%

Appraisal Completion

Directorate	Year 2024 / 2025	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year 2025 / 2026	Q1	Q2
Chief Executives Directorate		12.42%	55.98%	71.89%	81.57%		35.71%	64.24%
Communities Directorate		35.51%	47.14%	52.97%	55.48%		7.91%	35.98%
Education and Family Support Directorate		27.21%	60.80%	63.61%	76.36%		20.82%	49.12%
Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate		5.18%	24.81%	52.63%	65.03%		12.07%	59.07%
Total		**18.04%**	**42.96%**	**58.32%**	**68.42%**		**17.00%**	**52.82%**

BCBC – Appraisal Completion Q2 2025-2026

Chief Executives Directorate		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2
Finance, Housing & Change	Year 2024 / 2025	9.12%	49.26%	67.57%	78.25%	Year 2025 / 2026	32.34%	59.65%
Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy		21.93%	77.36%	86.14%	92.23%		47.42%	80.41%
Total		**12.42%**	**55.98%**	**71.89%**	**81.57%**		**35.71%**	**64.24%**

Communities Directorate		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2
Cleaner Streets & Waste Contract Management	Year 2024 / 2025	0.00%	0.00%	66.04%	78.43%	Year 2025 / 2026	0.00%	1.96%
Corporate Landlord		77.14%	80.49%	82.27%	78.43%		2.90%	70.05%
Economy, Natural Resources & Sustainability		44.94%	43.30%	41.84%	43.16%		49.32%	54.17%
Highways & Green Spaces		2.27%	36.61%	34.25%	37.02%		1.08%	5.46%
Operations - Communities Services		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%		25.00%	20.00%
Planning & Development Services		0.00%	7.89%	7.89%	19.44%		0.00%	16.67%
Strategic Regeneration		7.14%	21.43%	28.57%	57.14%		0.00%	15.38%
Total		**35.45%**	**47.14%**	**52.97%**	**55.48%**		**7.91%**	**35.98%**

Education and Family Support Directorate		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2
Early Years and Young People Group	Year 2024 / 2025	15.84%	56.57%	59.70%	65.13%	Year 2025 / 2026	6.45%	61.86%
Inclusion		2.11%	17.14%	25.36%	62.07%		1.31%	4.14%
School Improvement Team		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	100%
Schools Group		20.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%		0.00%	42.86%
Sustainable Communities for Learning Team		33.33%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%		0.00%	66.67%
Strategy, Performance and Support Group		44.50%	78.22%	78.65%	86.86%		35.50%	59.06%
Total		**27.21%**	**60.80%**	**63.61%**	**76.36%**		**20.25%**	**49.12%**

Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2
Adult Social Care	Year 2024 / 2025	1.84%	12.55%	48.98%	65.49%	Year 2025 / 2026	2.64%	47.28%
Business Support - SS&W		27.14%	84.85%	94.03%	87.01%		41.03%	93.24%
Children and Family Services		8.60%	32.96%	48.36%	56.58%		23.64%	70.54%
Commissioning		0.00%	70.00%	90.00%	100.00%		44.44%	100.00%
Prevention and Wellbeing		0.00%	64.52%	83.33%	93.33%		0.00%	89.66%
Total		**5.18%**	**24.81%**	**52.63%**	**65.03%**		**12.07%**	**59.07%**

BCBC – Absence Q2 2025-2026

Sickness Days Lost Per FTE (Cumulative)

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year	Q1	Q2
2024 / 2025	3.34	6.22	10.12	13.76	2025 / 2026	3.08	5.89

Short Term and Long Term Sickness Split
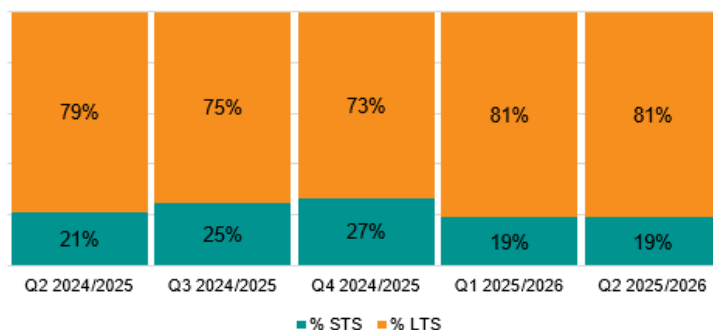
Absence Reasons

Absence Reason	% Of total days lost for Q2 2024/25	% Of total days lost for Q3 2024/25	% Of total days lost for Q4 2024/25	% Of total days lost for Q1 2025/26	% Of total days lost for Q2 2025/26
Stress/Anxiety/Depression not work related	28.01%	27.49%	22.82%	22.70%	23.11%
MSD including Back & Neck	16.69%	13.91%	12.25%	16.43%	19.44%
Stress/Anxiety/Depression work related	9.84%	9.05%	10.94%	12.37%	13.81%
Stomach / Liver / Kidney / Digestion	7.18%	8.52%	10.87%	9.45%	8.07%
Bereavement Related	6.88%	5.93%	5.15%	8.29%	6.67%
Infections	6.01%	10.61%	10.83%	7.22%	5.61%
Heart / Blood Pressure / Circulation	3.52%	1.77%	2.39%	3.31%	4.39%
Neurological	3.38%	3.94%	4.57%	5.17%	4.29%
Eye/Ear/Throat/Nose/Mouth/Dental	4.18%	5.02%	5.23%	4.71%	4.25%
Chest & Respiratory	5.98%	6.86%	8.74%	4.14%	3.74%
Cancer	3.78%	2.61%	2.34%	3.11%	2.91%
Genitourinary / Gynaecological	2.48%	2.32%	1.84%	1.85%	1.97%
Pregnancy related	1.40%	1.07%	1.35%	0.81%	0.98%
Other Mental illness	0.20%	0.92%	0.71%	0.45%	0.75%

Meeting of:	**CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYER RELATIONS**
Date of Meeting:	**5 NOVEMBER 2025**
Report Title:	**COMMUNITY COHESION ANNUAL REPORT**
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	**REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE** **CABINET MEMBER – REGENERATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING**
Responsible Officer:	**LARA ROWLANDS** **REGIONAL COMMUNITY COHESION CO-ORDINATOR** **KIRSTY WILLIAMS** **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER**
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	**THERE IS NO IMPACT ON POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PROCEDURE RULES**
Executive Summary:	• **The Annual Report outlines work undertaken in relation to community cohesion between October 2024 and September 2025.** • **Funding has been confirmed for the Community Cohesion Programme from March 2026 to March 2029, with the possibility of another three-year extension.** • **The Cohesion Officer role for Bridgend has been vacant following the previous role holder accepting a position as Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator.** • **The progress updates for this report are based on the National Community Cohesion Delivery Plan, noting that there has been a change in work plan since April 2025.** • **Hate Crime figures have been provided by South Wales Police and are included as Appendix i.** • **The Evaluation Report from training and awareness sessions carried out by Small Steps Organisation is included as Appendix ii.** • **An end of project evaluation report for the Western Bay Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund (2024-2025) is included as Appendix iii.**

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update to Cabinet Committee Equalities and Employer Relations on the work of the Welsh Government funded Western Bay Community Cohesion Team and the community cohesion work of Bridgend Community Safety Partnership.

2.   Background

2.1   In December 2018 Welsh Government issued their 'intention to fund' email to all Regional Community Cohesion Co-coordinators in Wales. Welsh Government indicated that each region would be allocated £140,000 to:
   - Identify and mitigate community tensions (hate crime, extremism, anxiety, anti-social behaviour) relating to Brexit.
   - Improve community cohesion communications.
   - Organise events / activities to promote social inclusion; and
   - Deliver non-Brexit activities as outlined in the National Community Cohesion Plan (2019)

2.2.   At that time Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), Swansea Council and Neath Port Talbot (NPT) County Borough Council made up the Western Bay Community Cohesion Region, led by a Regional Community Cohesion Co-ordinator (the Co-ordinator) based in Swansea Council. An application for £140,000 for the Western Bay Community Cohesion Region was submitted and accepted.

2.3   BCBC appointed a Community Cohesion Officer in September 2019. The post was originally funded until 31 March 2021, extended to 30 June 2021 closely aligned with the Brexit deadline towards the European Union (EU) settlement scheme.

2.4   Subsequent extensions extended the Officer role, with the latest confirmation setting out that the funding will being extended to March 2029, with the potential for another three years of funding. In addition, funding for each region has increased to £497,500 over the contracted period and at least £20,000 is awarded for a community small grant fund scheme.

2.5   The Community Cohesion workplan to March 2025 was delivered by Western Bay Community Cohesion team and covered the below outlined work:

Mainstreaming Cohesion
   - Mainstream community cohesion in public bodies and wider community through training and awareness raising, dovetailing with other Welsh Government legislation and policies, including Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Socio-Economic Duty, Cymraeg 2050, the Anti-Racist

Wales Action Plan, and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, and any others that are developed during the lifespan of the funding such as the Disability Rights Action Plan in development.

- Act as conduits between communities and public bodies to promote participation in policymaking and equality of opportunity for communities.
- Improve visibility and awareness of the Community Cohesion Programme.

Community Engagement

- Deliver accessible and inclusive outreach and engagement events, activities, and initiatives which foster good relations between groups through reducing segregation and increasing empathy and understanding. This should include intersectional and intergenerational experiences, involving individuals and communities in a co-productive way. Eliminate barriers to participation, taking into consideration the language, cultural and accessibility needs of communities, as well as other factors such as digital exclusion.
- Delivery of activities for schools and other educational setting, with a focus on celebrating diversity
- Support the inclusion of marginalised communities across Wales.

Building Resilient Communities

- Continually monitor emerging community tensions and work with key partners, including police and community members, as part of the response to mitigate them.
- Delivery of a small grant scheme which provide opportunities for grassroots community groups and those closest to the issues to deliver work to promote cohesion and address community tensions.
- Work with community-based organisations to identify and secure additional sources of funding to support community cohesion projects.

2.6 Western Bay Community Cohesion team have a workplan based on the new Delivery Plan, spanning April 2025 – March 2026. This includes:

- Advancing equality of opportunity between people with and without Protected Characteristics. Include a focus on the involvement of communities in policy making.
- Fostering good relations and cohesion between people with and without Protected Characteristics and being able to evidence the approach and impact.
- Tackling forms segregation and socio-economic disadvantage.
- Seeking to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment.
- Monitoring tensions and interventions to prevent harmful outcomes and victimisation.
- Building grassroots capacity to drive cohesion and mitigate tensions through delivery of a small grants third sector funding scheme.

- Promoting consistency and continuous learning in building cohesion across Wales through collaboration with other cohesion regions and Welsh Government.

2.7   The Community Cohesion role is based within the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The work of the CSP is embedded into that of the Public Services Board. The CSP brings together public, private and voluntary agencies to reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime. They do this by tackling the needs of both individuals and communities. More information on Bridgend CSP can be found at https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/community-safety-partnership/

2.8   In September 2022, the Community Cohesion Officer started a secondment to Swansea Council as the Community Cohesion Co-ordinator for the region. This secondment became permanent in spring 2024.

2.9   Attempts to fill the vacancy in Bridgend have been previously unsuccessful but the role is currently in the process of going out to advert again.

2.10   The workload is being managed by Bridgend CSP with support from the Cohesion Co-Ordinator. This avoids duplication and ensures collaboration across all aspects of community safety and cohesion.

3.   Current situation / proposal

3.1   Recent years have seen unprecedented changes locally, nationally and internationally due to the impacts of the Covid pandemic, cost of living crisis and global events.

3.2   This combination and uncertainty makes it difficult to identify the underlying root causes of community tensions.

3.3   The data included in Appendix i has been provided by South Wales Police based on reports made to them of hate crime. At a local and force level there has been an increase in the reports of hate crime, notably the racially motivated hate crime.

3.4   The information below provides an update on work undertaken between October 2024 and October 2025 to deliver the Objectives of the Community Cohesion Work Plan.
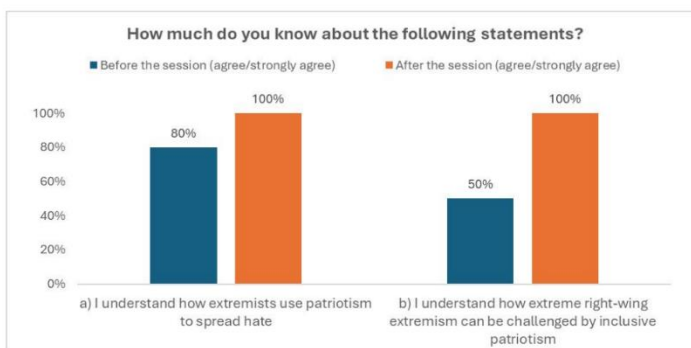
3.5   **Mainstream Community Cohesion**

The Community Cohesion Team organised PREVENT training and awareness-raising sessions, which were delivered by the Small Steps Organisation to Council staff and key partners across the Western Bay region on:

- Extreme Right-Wing Awareness
- Antisemitism and Islamophobia Awareness
- Patriotism and Identity
- Debate Not Hate
- Misogyny, Incels and the Manosphere and its connection to extremism
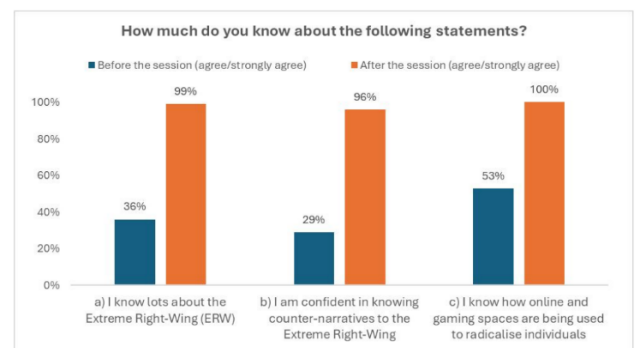
The purpose of these sessions was to raise awareness about the topics covered, explore why individuals may be drawn to extremism, and identify the vulnerabilities and signs of radicalisation. The sessions provided alternative viewpoints to empower those attending to challenge hate and extremism at both the local and national levels.

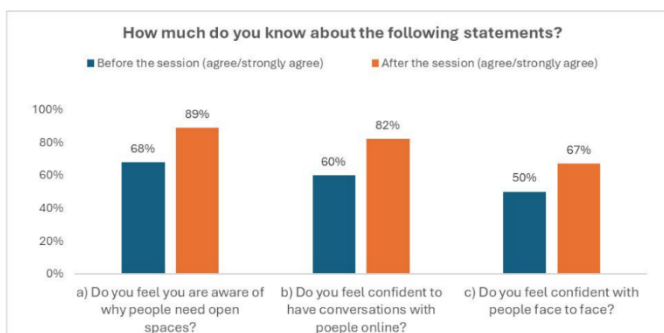Below is a sample of data from the Feedback Report from Small Steps (appendix ii).

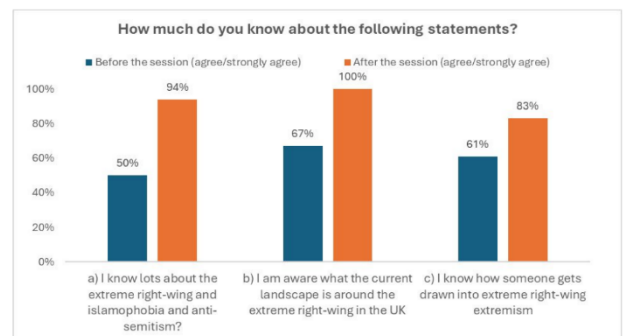**Identity and Patriotism Before x After Session Results**

How much do you know about the following statements?

Radicalisation Explained Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

Debate not Hate Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

Antisemitism and Islamophobia Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

A total of 181 staff members and key partners across the region received training on critical issues such as extremism, antisemitism and Islamophobia, misogyny and the manosphere. As shown above, feedback from all sessions showed improved levels of awareness and understanding of topics discussed.

All attendees were granted access to the Small Steps Support Hub (www.supporthub.uk) for ongoing support following the training, enabling continued education and assistance for attendees beyond the training sessions.

The Community Cohesion Team commissioned two training sessions for Council staff across the Western Bay region on 'Unconscious Bias' and 'Cultural Competence'.

- Cultural Competence: The purpose of this session was to enhance staff members' ability to communicate and interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. The training aimed to increase awareness of one's own cultural values and the impact these values may have on making respectful, reasoned decisions and choices. Cultural competence provides a framework for ensuring the needs of all individuals and communities are met in a responsive and respectful manner.
- Unconscious Bias: As communities become more diverse, it is crucial for organisations to explore various forms of unconscious bias and their impact on decision-making processes and organisational culture. The session encouraged professionals to reflect on their own biases and understand how they might affect their actions and decisions. Participants were prompted to identify actions that could help address barriers created by unconscious bias and commit to personal steps that would help mitigate its impact.

Sixty Council staff members participated in training and gained skills such as:

- Improved communication skills through the ability to interact more effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds, ensuring respectful and reasonable decisions are made.
- Increased awareness of unconscious bias, with participants reflecting on their own biases and identifying actionable steps to address them in their professional practice.
- Strengthened organisational culture, with staff better equipped to navigate cultural differences and contribute to a more inclusive environment for all community members.

3.6 Community Engagement

The Community Cohesion Team delivered three awareness sessions to staff during 2024 Hate Crime Awareness in collaboration with Victim Support's Wales Hate Support Centre, covering the following topics:
- Online Hate
- LGBTQIA+ Hate Crime
- 'It Starts with Us' Allyship Event – How to be an ally and safely intervene when witnessing a hateful incident or crime.

Forty staff members across the Western Bay region participated in these sessions, hearing about hate crime and its impact on communities, while equipping staff with knowledge and tools to address online hate, LGBTQIA+ hate crime, and how to safely intervene in hate incidents.

Additionally, Hate Crime Week drop-in session for Councillors and staff took place in Bridgend, providing an opportunity for communities to express concerns, raise awareness of hate crimes and incidents, and discuss the support services available.

As mentioned above, the small grants scheme was also launched during Hate Crime Awareness week.

The Community Cohesion Team collaborated with the Interfaith Network and Swansea University to launch a creative competition across the region, centered on the theme of 'Home' with the aim of fostering interfaith dialogue and cultural understanding through creative expression and experiential learning, while promoting inclusivity within the community.

Community Cohesion collaborated with Bridgend College Art and Design team, to support students in completing their module on 'Culture'. Students submitted artwork based on this theme, expressing what culture means to them as individuals. The artwork is displayed in Bridgend Town Centre, making use of vacant shop windows to showcase the work of the students and improve the vibrancy of the area.

The artwork is varied, inclusive and celebratory of local artists.

The Co-Ordinator continues to support Bridgend Equality Focus Group and Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Network.

3.7   Building Resilient Communities

StreetSnap continues to be used by frontline practitioners to support the recording and removal hateful graffiti and visual representations of hate throughout the county borough.
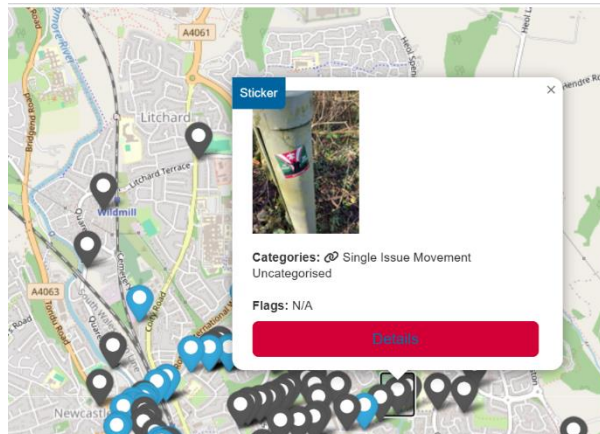
The image above shows how information is documented. This aids officers to build an understanding of patterns, trends and areas of concern and inform where interventions should be targeted.

The Co-Ordinator and Community Safety Manager are also involved in the newly established Community Cohesion structures established and chaired by South Wales Police. There is a Strategic Working Group with sub-groups covering communications, data and insight and operational delivery. This all feeds into a Chief Executive Tactical Meeting which meets every six weeks which receives a highlight product from the working groups that covers tensions across South Wales, escalations and a picture of current cohesion.

A tension monitoring form has been recently reviewed and re-developed. A previous version was issued on a weekly basis to the wider cohesion and staff network which played a key role in supporting South Wales Police's regional weekly Community Tension Indicator (CTI) report. The cohesion team are looking to replicate this across the Western Bay region. The form is intended solely for information gathering and not a mechanism for reporting crime, providing data, safeguarding issues, or Prevent-related concerns.

The Community Cohesion Team have developed a 2025 - 26 calendar of events to mark social and cultural times of year, to help inform and plan engagement work. Monthly tension monitoring reports are submitted to Welsh Government, providing updates on behalf of the region.

The Co-Ordinator attends a range of meetings and forums to understand and promote community cohesion. This includes:

- The Croeso Bridgend Network chaired and coordinated by Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) and recently delivered a presentation to member on the work of the Cohesion Team. The network initially started as a Ukraine Support Working Group but has now expanded to support all refugees and asylum seekers.
- The Forum for Tackling Anti-Asylum Activity.
- The Special Interest Group in Counter Emerging Threats (SIGCE) roundtables, including specific roundtables on community tensions arising

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from the Israel Gaza conflict, anti-asylum hotel activity and its impact on 'the extremism landscape'.

The Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund was launched during Hate Crime Awareness Week 2024 to support initiatives that revolve around activities related to supporting ethnic minority communities and activities that bring together people from diverse communities.

A total of £28,099.95 was awarded across 14 community groups, funding a range of projects that align with the specific objectives:

- To support initiatives that promote social integration, tackle community tensions, and foster a sense of belonging through activities that bring together diverse communities, with a focus on ethnic minorities, refugees, and marginalised groups.
- To deliver activities that support ethnic minority communities, including Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities, refugees and asylum seekers, and actions to address antisemitism and Islamophobia. These activities aim to address community tensions and build community cohesion.
- To organise events and activities that bring together people from diverse communities, fostering a broader sense of community and belonging. Proposals were required to consider how activities support integration, combat loneliness and isolation, identify common ground through shared interests and experiences, and celebrate the culture and heritage of the area.

The graph below shows the thematic distribution of the small grants.
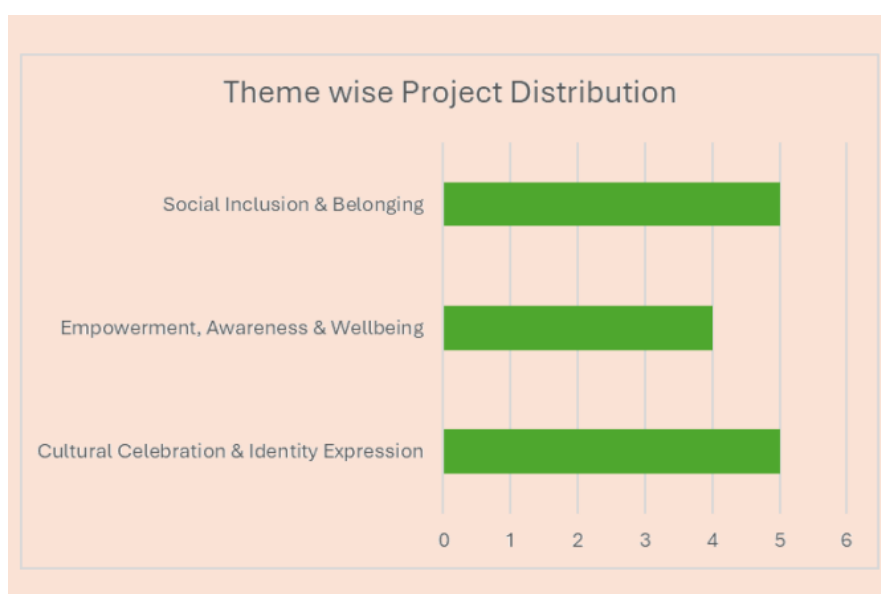
The funding directly benefitted ethnic minority communities, refugees, asylum seekers, and other marginalised groups. Activities increased community cohesion,

with activities fostering integration, shared experiences, and cultural celebration across diverse communities. Many projects focused on combating loneliness and creating opportunities for social engagement.

The October 2024 cycle was followed by two further rounds of funding in 2025. The priorities for the April 2025 round were to support community groups and third sector organisations to:

- Deliver events or activities which bring together those with minority Protected Characteristics and those from the majority, to increase social contact and foster good relations. Proposals should consider how projects can support integration, tackle loneliness and isolation, or tackle segregation. Projects should aim to identify commonality through shared interests, experiences, or values.
- Deliver activities which seek to mitigate or eliminate community tensions arising from misconceptions or stereotypes of minority communities.

The end of grant fund report will be available in the new year, following the completion of all funded projects.

4.   Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1   The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5.   Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1   The Community Cohesion project demonstrates the sustainable development principle by ensuring that by meeting the needs of the present we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is evidenced through the five ways of working:
- **Long term** – community cohesion work seeks to understand and mitigate the long-term implications on Bridgend residents and its diverse communities, as a result of ongoing changes to the social and political climate.
- **Prevention** – working with partners to map and understand community tensions will help prevent serious problems occurring and mitigate existing tensions.

- **Integration** – the project contributes to the national well-being goals: an Equal Wales, a Resilient Wales, and a Wales of Cohesive Communities and to the Well-being objectives of 'Protecting our most vulnerable', 'Creating thriving valleys communities', and 'Making people feel valued, heard and part of their community'.
- **Collaboration** – the success of the role of the Co-Ordinator relies on collaboration with partners across Bridgend County and the wider partnerships, such as Western Bay Community Cohesion and Bridgend Community Safety Partnership.
- **Involvement** – the consultation with partners, stakeholders, local residents, communities and elected members will inform the decision of whether to extend the PSPOs.

6.   Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1   There are no Climate Change and nature implications linked to this report.

7.   Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1   In considering how we support community cohesion, Bridgend County Borough Council is ensuring that all people living in the county borough are safe and protected.

8.   Financial Implications

8.1   There are no financial implications resulting from this information report.

9.   Recommendation

9.1   It is recommended that Cabinet Committee Equalities and Employee Relations note the content of this update report.

Background Documents

i: Hate Crime figures, supplied by South Wales Police
ii: Feedback report from Small Steps Organisation
iii: End of Project Evaluation Report for the 2024 Small Grant Fund

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Hate Crime Data, as reported to South Wales Police

The information below covers reports of hate crimes across Bridgend County Borough reported to South Wales Police for the period 1st October 2023 to 30 September 2025.

The information is broken down to show hate crime reports categorised as:

- Racial
- Religious
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Transgender

	Race	Sexual Orientation	Transgender	Religion	Disability	All
Oct 23-Sep 24	136	36	14	7	31	**224**
Oct 24 - Sept 25	127	37	5	14	32	**215**
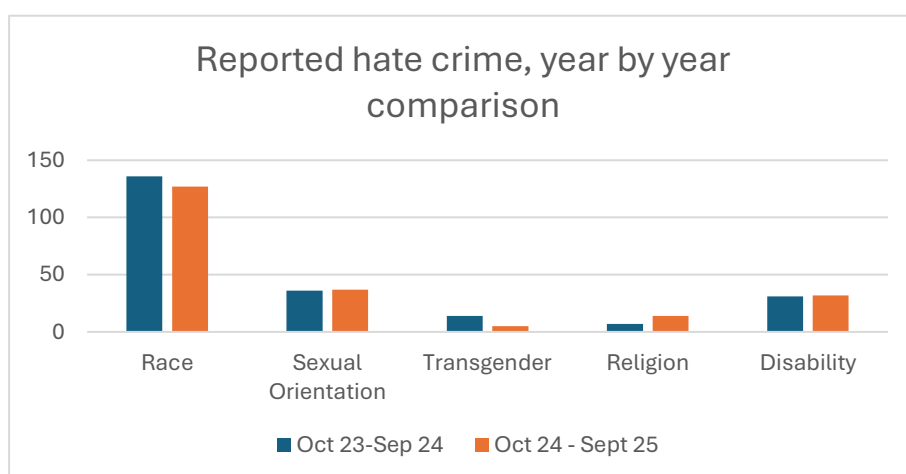
As shown above, the majority of hate crimes reported are due to racist incidents, followed by sexual orientation and disability for both reporting years covered.

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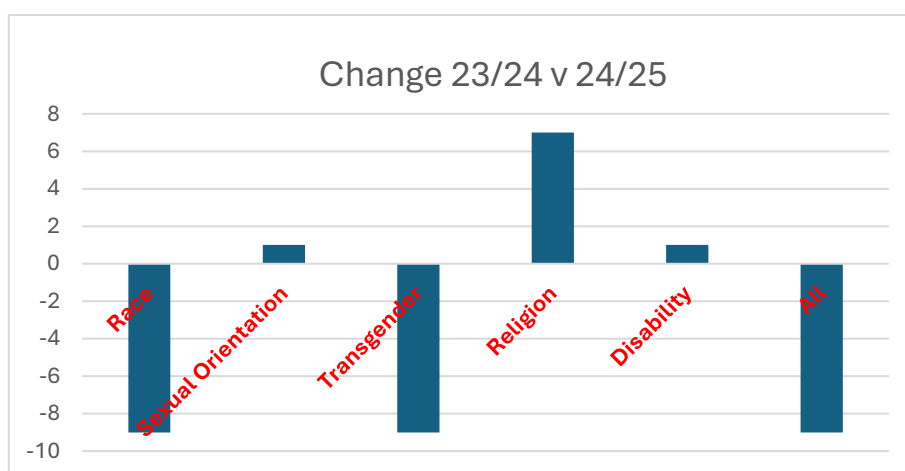
Although there have not been significant fluctuations in the number of hate crimes reported, points to note include:

- An overall reduction of nine in number hate crimes reported between 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- This is due to an increase in religious (seven), sexual orientation and disability (one each) but fewer reports of race hate crimes (nine) and transgender hate crime (nine).

The below table gives a breakdown of the incidents reported on a month-by-month basis.
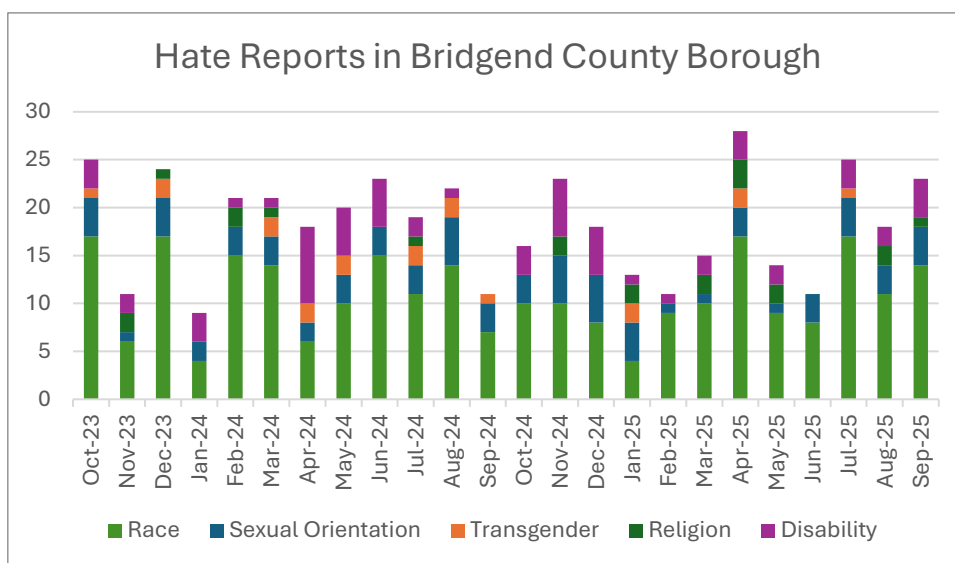
Small Steps Evaluation Report

Swansea,
Bridgend
and Neath Port
Talbot
2024/2025

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Contents

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Introduction

Extreme Right-Wing (ERW) extremism is growing in the UK. Seeking to reduce this, Small Steps is at the forefront of looking to use education, engagement, mentoring and grassroots activity to combat the ideology, activity, and influence of the ERW locally and nationally.

Operating since 2015 Small Steps is in a unique position of having staff members who are former extreme right-wing activists, organisers or even family members who have had a loved one involved. This gives us the benefit of having lived the experience which allows us to understand the attraction, chaos and even heartache of being involved. Using this knowledge, we can provide an inside view to counter the ERW's message of hate and division.

Offering 1 to 2 hour training sessions to young people, community, faith groups and professionals, Small Steps provides localised information detailing things like – wards the extreme right-wing are active in, groups operating and recruitment techniques. Empowering local people to combat this, attendees can then challenge low level extreme right-wing extremism locally.

Our Training Session Objectives are:

● Provide specialist training to young people, community/faith groups and professionals.

● Raise general awareness of the dangers of Extreme right-wing extremism, how people get involved, vulnerabilities and signs of radicalisation.

● Offer people alternative viewpoints to empower local people to challenge Extreme right-wing extremism at local and national level.

● Create grassroots initiatives which seek to reduce hatred and division, bringing communities together to develop alternatives to Extreme right-wing Ideology and activity.

Assisting people further, we also offer a Support Hub (www.supporthub.uk) where after individuals have attended our training they can register and continue to be upskilled and informed. Available to training attendees and professionals we work with, everyone joining is verified before they can join.

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Sessions and Evaluations

Small Steps was commissioned by Swansea, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot Prevent to deliver ten sessions in total. Six in person "Radicalisation Explained" sessions, and four virtual sessions: one "Identity and Patriotism", one "Debate not Hate", one "Antisemitism and Islamophobia", and one "Extreme Right-Wing (ERW) Explained"

All sessions have been successfully delivered between March and April 2025. In total, 295 attendees joined the sessions.

As our team did not have any previous knowledge of the attendees' background (who they were, age, gender, how much knowledge they had about Extreme right-wing extremism etc), evaluations were necessary to understand the effectiveness of each session delivered. Survey Monkey was the online platform chosen to host the questionnaires.

The whole evaluation was divided into pre and post session questions to be possible to analyse the impact of the training on the attendees' perception and confidence in regards to their knowledge of extreme right-wing extremism.

The questions were about the following topics:

- Knowledge about the extreme right-wing and its landscape in the UK

- Understanding of vulnerabilities and grooming tactics that might led into extreme right-wing involvement

- Identify radicalisation signs and knowing how to use counter narratives if ever faced with ERW arguments

- Specific knowledges about antisemitism and islamophobia, inclusive patriotism and how to promote community debates

- Online and gaming grooming, Incel movement, misogyny and manosphere, and how to identify deepfake, misinformation and disinformation.

Below you can find all the evaluation questions.

Socio-ethnic questions (all sessions)

Question 1: *What is your gender?*
Type of answer: Tick box.
Options: Male, Female, Other preferred

Question 2: *What is your age?*
Type of answer: Tick box.

Answer options: 18-29 years old, 30-39 years old, 40-49 years old, 50-59 years old, 60-69 years old, 70+ years old.

Question 3: *What is your ethnic group? Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background*

Type of answer: Tick box.
Answer options:
White:
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
White – Irish
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
White - Any other White background
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups:
 White and Black Caribbean
White and Black African
 White and Asian
Any other ethnic background
Asian/Asian British:
 Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Any other Asian background
Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British:
African
Caribbean
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background
Other ethnic group:
Arab
Any other ethnic group

Identity and Patriotism Questions

Question 4: *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

Type of answer: Rating system "Strongly Agree", "Agree, "Disagree", "Strongly

Disagree" and "Don't know" divided into BEFORE and AFTER session

Statements:

a) I understand how extremists use patriotism to spread hate
b) I understand how extreme right-wing extremism can be challenged by inclusive patriotism
c) Feel you would recommend this training to others in your role/position

Question 5: *Do you have any other comments?*
Type of answer: Comment box

Radicalisation Explained Questions

Question 4: *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

Type of answer: Rating system "Strongly Agree", "Agree, "Disagree", "Strongly Disagree" and "Don't know" divided into BEFORE and AFTER session.

Statements:

a) I know lots about the ERW
b) I am confident in knowing counter-narratives to the ERW
c) I know how online and gaming spaces are being used to radicalise individuals
d) I know how to identify deepfake, misinformation and disinformation online
e) I know what is the Incel movement, the manosphere and misogyny
 f) I know how to spot signs of radicalisation in individuals
g) Feel you would recommend this training to others in your role/position

Question 2: *Do you have any other comments?*
Type of answer: Comment box

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Debate not Hate Questions

Question 4: *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

Type of answer: Rating system "Strongly Agree", "Agree, "Disagree", "Strongly Disagree" and "Don't know" divided into BEFORE and AFTER session.

Statements:

a) I feel aware of why people need open spaces
b) I feel confident to have conversations with people online
c) I feel confident with people face to face
d) I am aware how to set up an online meeting
e) I am aware how to set up a community meeting
f) Would you recommend this training to others in your role/position?

Question 5: *Do you have any other comments?*
Type of answer: Comment box

Antisemitism and Islamophobia Questions

Type of answer: Rating system "Strongly Agree", "Agree, "Disagree", "Strongly Disagree" and "Don't know" divided into BEFORE and AFTER session.

a) I know lots about the ERW and islamophobia and anti-semitism
b) I am aware what the current landscape is around the ERW in the UK
c) I know how someone gets drawn into extreme right-wing extremism
d) I know what makes people vulnerable to the extreme right-wing
e) I know how to spot signs of radicalisation in individuals

f) I am confident in knowing counter-narratives to islamophobia and anti-semitism
g) I would recommend this training to my colleagues

Question 5: *Do you have any other comments?*
Type of answer: Comment box

ERW Explained questions

Question 1: *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

Type of answer: Rating system "Strongly Agree", "Agree, "Disagree", "Strongly Disagree" and "Don't know" divided into BEFORE and AFTER session.

Statements:
a) I know lots about the extreme right-wing
b) I am aware what the current landscape is around the extreme right-wing in the UK
c) I know how someone gets drawn into extreme right-wing extremism
d) I know the recruitment process the extreme right-wing use
e) I know what makes people vulnerable to the extreme right-wing
f) I know how to spot signs of radicalisation in individuals
g) I am confident in knowing counter-narratives to the extreme right-wing
h) Feel you would recommend this training to others in your role/position

Question 2: *Do you have any other comments?*
Type of answer: Comment box

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Results and Findings

Session	Date	Attendees	Evaluations Received	Type of Session
Session 1	24/03/2025	22	12	Identity and Patriotism Virtual
Session 2	31/03/2025	25	13	Radicalisation Explained in Person Swansea
Session 3	01/04/2025	24	22	Radicalisation Explained in Person Swansea
Session 4	02/04/2025	24	21	Radicalisation Explained in Person Swansea
Session 5	09/04/2025	24	20	Radicalisation Explained in Person Swansea
Session 6	10/04/2025	27	22	Radicalisation Explained in Person Bridgend
Session 7	11/04/2025	29	20	Radicalisation Explained in Person Neath Port Talbot
Session 8	14/04/2025	41	18	Debate not Hate Virtual
Session 9	15/04/2025	37	18	Antisemitism and Islamophobia Virtual
Session 10	16/04/2025	42	15	ERW Explained Virtual
	Total	**295**	**181**	

Socio-ethnic questions

What is your gender?

	Male	Female	Other preferred description
	25%	75%	0%

What is your age?

18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
10%	27%	31%	29%	3%	0%

What is your ethnic group?
(only selected options inlcuded)

White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	93%
White - Any other White background	2%
Asian/Asian British - Indian	1%
Other ethnic group - Any other ethnic group	1%
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	1%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	1%
White - Irish	1%

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Identity and Patriotism Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

- Before the session (agree/strongly agree)
- After the session (agree/strongly agree)

a) I understand how extremists use patriotism to spread hate — Before: 80%, After: 100%

b) I understand how extreme right-wing extremism can be challenged by inclusive patriotism — Before: 50%, After: 100%

I would recommend this training to other in your role/position

- Strongly Agree: 75%
- Agree: 25%
- Strongly Disagree/ Disagree: 0%
- Don't know: 0%

Comments

It was interesting to hear the origins of a number of 'symbols' that are held up as patriotic that are actually rooted in inclusive/diversity

Very well delivered, informal and inclusive

very interesting and informative, giving me useful advise to challenge young peoples views when they make comments.

A fantastic session which I would strongly recommend to others. Really insightful and thought provoking. Nigel was excellent!

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Radicalisation Explained Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

■ Before the session (agree/strongly agree)　　　■ After the session (agree/strongly agree)

- a) I know lots about the Extreme Right-Wing (ERW): Before 36%, After 99%
- b) I am confident in knowing counter-narratives to the Extreme Right-Wing: Before 29%, After 96%
- c) I know how online and gaming spaces are being used to radicalise individuals: Before 53%, After 100%

How much do you know about the following statements?

■ Before the session (agree/strongly agree)　　　■ After the session (agree/strongly agree)

- d) I know how to identify deepfake, misinformation and disinformation online: Before 46%, After 92%
- e) I know what is the Incel movement, the manosphere and misogyny: Before 53%, After 97%
- f) I know how to spot signs of radicalisation in individuals: Before 56%, After 97%

I would recommend this training to other in your role/position

- Strongly Agree: 92%
- Agree: 8%
- Strongly Disagree/ Disagree: 0%
- Don't know: 0%

Comments

I feel I still have a lot more to learn but really enjoyed the session, excellent session and speaker, thank you

Nigel was really informative and I'm so glad I was able to attend today, this has been really helpful training.

It's was really good I would encourage all mental health nurses to attend it's very current topic and important.

Very informative training, I learnt a lot of vital information and believe I have a much better understanding of the ERW movements.

Absolutely fantastic session. So informative and pitched perfectly. I feel I now have better understanding of the capability of the ERW, as well as a sense of how we can intervene, with compassion being a priority. I plan to share this with my wider team but wish they'd attended this training!

Amazing course, should be taught everywhere.

Excellent training. Thank you also for your bravery in sharing your own experience of involvement in extremism.

Quite shocking information - very hard to get my head around this actually happening, to this extent. Feel like needed more time/longer/follow up sessions particularly hearing peoples loved experiences of getting into & out of extemsism.

Good mix of engagement, reference to real experience and well timed.

Very informative. Trainer was very knowledgeable, approachable and showed a real passion for change.

I really enjoyed this training and found it very insightful. I will be sharing the information learned today with colleagues in my team. Thank you.

Eye opening. Had no idea how much was going on behind the scenes with recruitment Nigel was easy to listen to.

Nigel delivered an amazing, informative session that will be essential to my practice as a youth worker. I now feel more confident in spotting the signs of extremism, and what services are available to support vulnerable young people.

Excellent session and loads to take away. Generated ideas to use in my sessions with learners. Definitely checking out the website.

Excellent training, very apt for our job roles working with teens and struggling with issues including misogyny, extreme views…. Thanks Nigel!

Fantastic training, great content and delivery. Informative and hard hitting but so much covered in a three hour session. Thank you.

I felt I had some knowledge given my role in youth justice and working with PREVENT, this training has further aided my knowledge. Great training session.

Very well presented. It was very informative and interesting especially being delivered by someone with personal experience.

This is an intense teaching, should be slower pace with lots more breaks for processing and self care.

Very informative training, albeit terrifying. Awareness like this should be raised with all education settings and staff, not just safeguarding officers.

Fantastic training, with a really engaging trainer. Feel I have learnt a lot from this so thank you!

The venue isn't ideal due to lack of local parking, however the session was informative and interesting.

Essential, absolutely integral to anyone working with young people.

Excellent training session. Made me realise how wide the reach is.

Excellent training. Informative. Well presented.

A fascinating if extremely disturbing talk. I have recommended you to teachers I know.

Thank you so much very interesting and educated me alot more on the above.
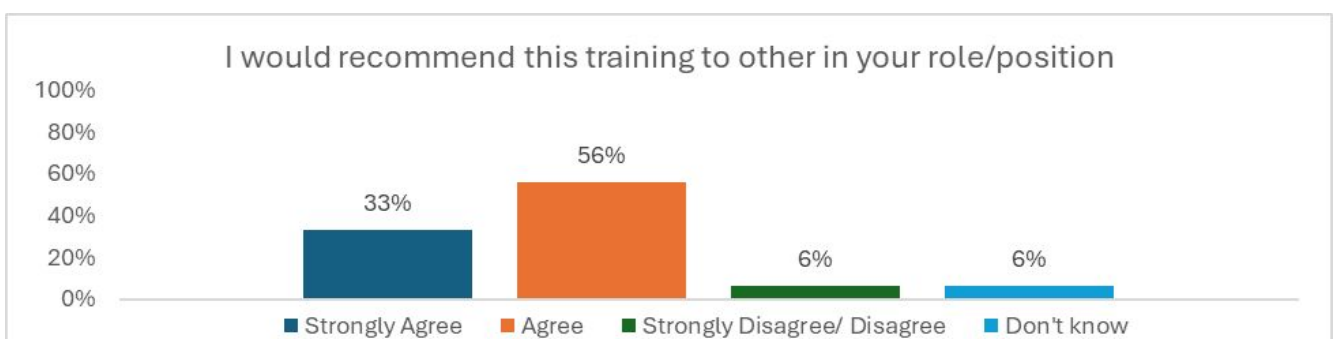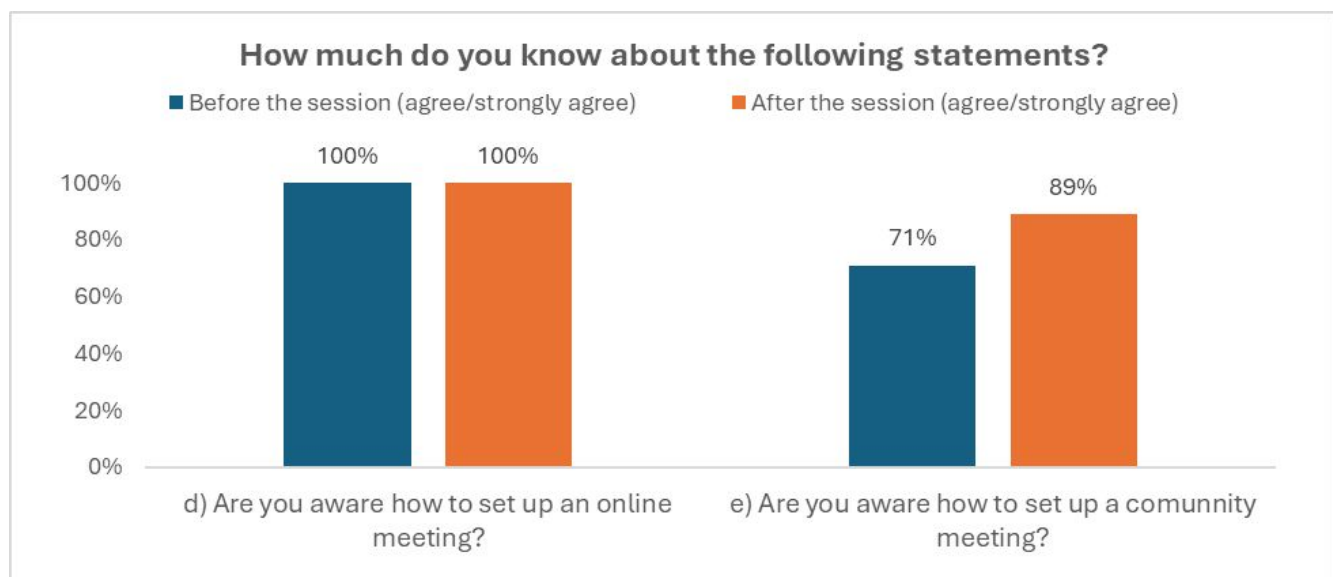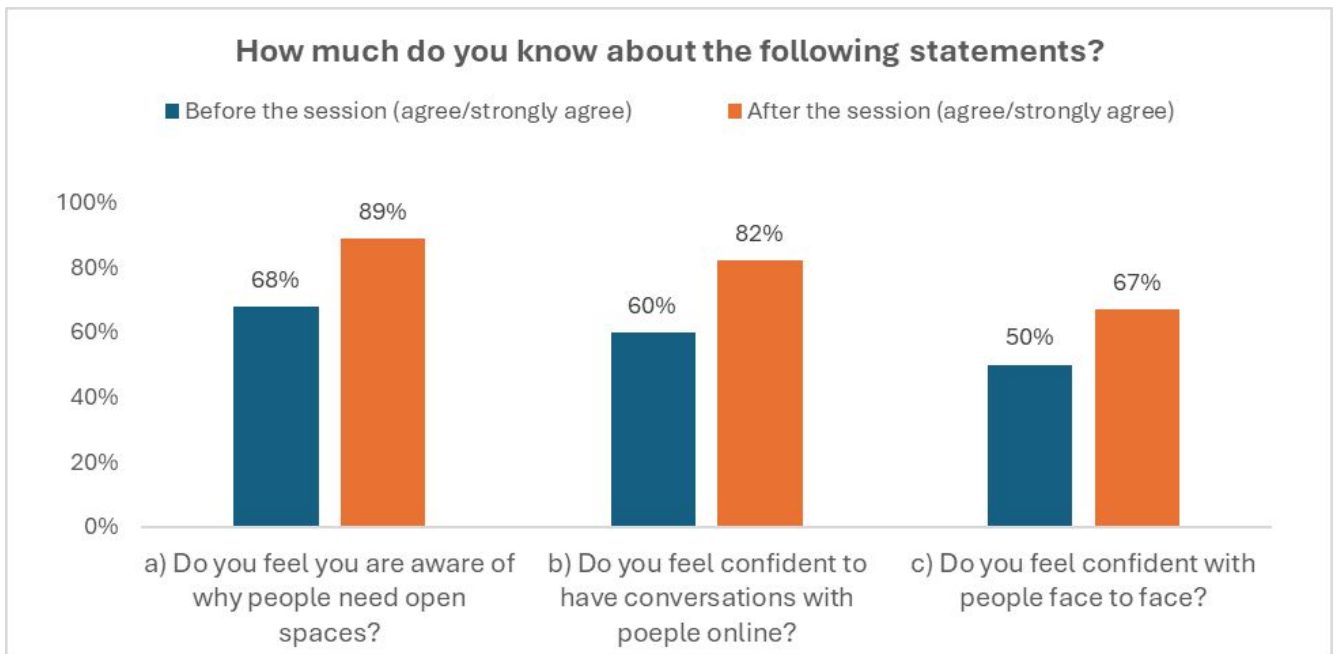
Thank you for a brilliant informative session.

Amazing training very insightful.

Excellent training, delivered in a very engaging manner.

Excellent training great visuals.

Good mix of engagement, reference to real experience and well timed.

Debate not Hate Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

■ Before the session (agree/strongly agree)   ■ After the session (agree/strongly agree)

	Before	After
a) Do you feel you are aware of why people need open spaces?	68%	89%
b) Do you feel confident to have conversations with poeple online?	60%	82%
c) Do you feel confident with people face to face?	50%	67%

How much do you know about the following statements?

■ Before the session (agree/strongly agree)   ■ After the session (agree/strongly agree)

	Before	After
d) Are you aware how to set up an online meeting?	100%	100%
e) Are you aware how to set up a comunnity meeting?	71%	89%

I would recommend this training to other in your role/position

Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Don't know
33%	56%	6%	6%

small steps

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Comments

Within the time parameters, very good, I would like more in depth into the issues, I think I will get some more of this in the trainings to follow this week

Brilliant session and great trainer, thank you Nigel

Clear and concise. Very useful especially in today's climate. Thank you.

I'm answering these questions in my interpretation of them as general questions rather than specifically with regard to the the extreme far right. I was pretty confident in all of these anyway. Nigel spoke well and there was some really interesting an useful content. keep up the good work.

Thinking about how to have difficult conversations was really useful for me.

Really interesting presentation. I think getting the accurate facts would be really useful so I'll be looking at your website.
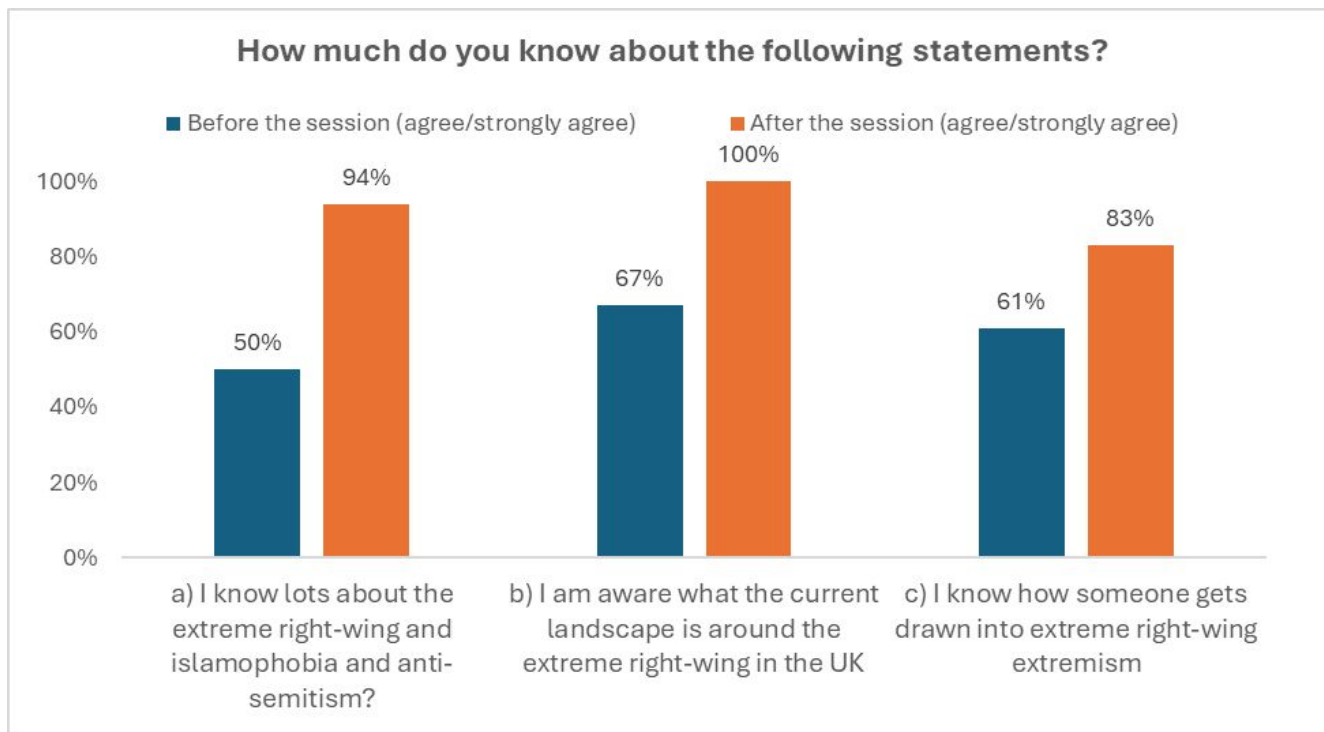
Excellent training in relation to having difficult conversations with people who have very fixed views
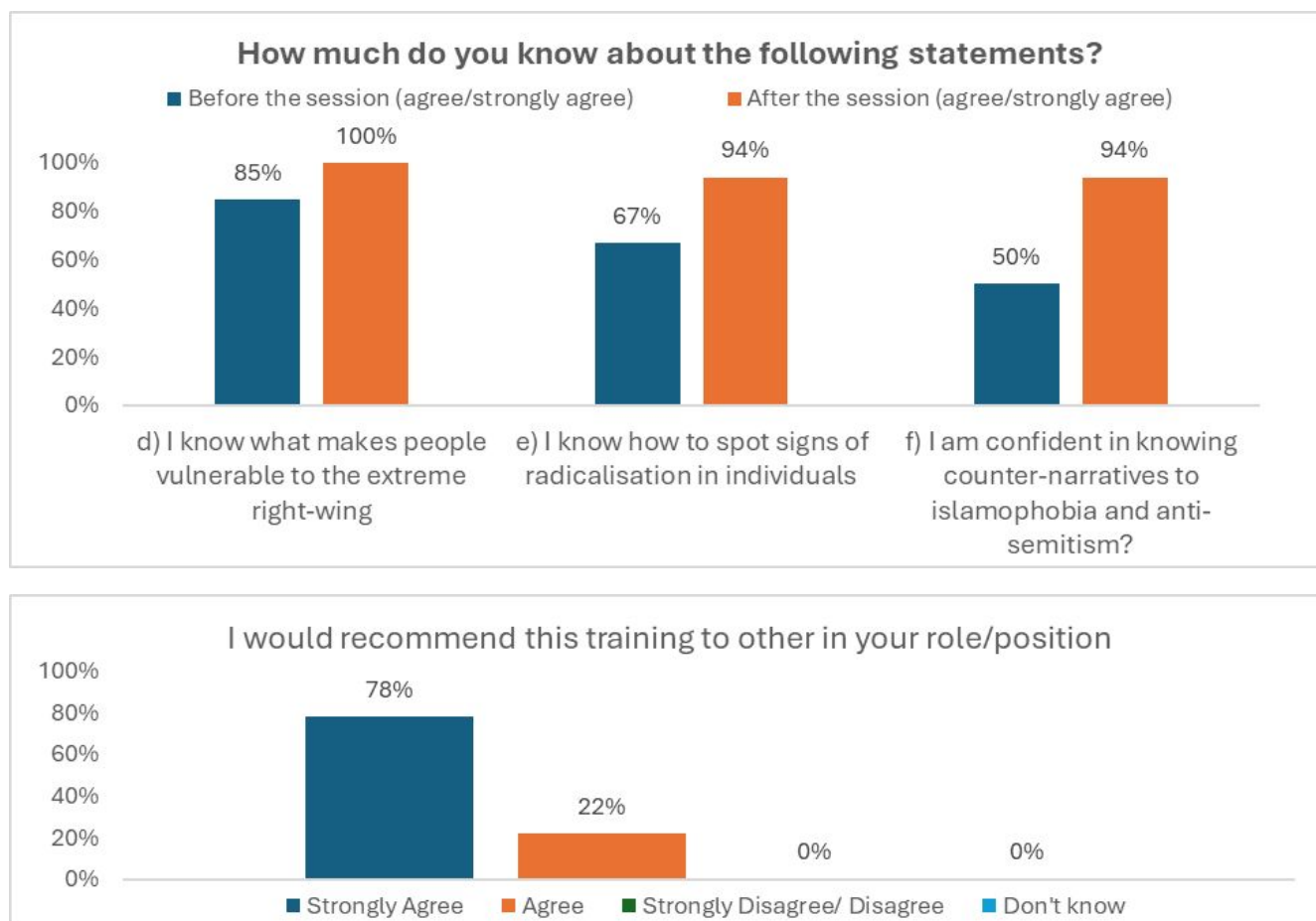
thank you, really interesting, and much needed in this climate

Good training, definitely gained information to share with others. This training should be aimed at people who work with community groups etc

thoroughly enjoyed the online information.

Antisemitism and Islamophobia Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

- Before the session (agree/strongly agree)
- After the session (agree/strongly agree)

a) I know lots about the extreme right-wing and islamophobia and anti-semitism? — Before: 50%, After: 94%

b) I am aware what the current landscape is around the extreme right-wing in the UK — Before: 67%, After: 100%

c) I know how someone gets drawn into extreme right-wing extremism — Before: 61%, After: 83%

How much do you know about the following statements?

■ Before the session (agree/strongly agree) ■ After the session (agree/strongly agree)

	d) I know what makes people vulnerable to the extreme right-wing	e) I know how to spot signs of radicalisation in individuals	f) I am confident in knowing counter-narratives to islamophobia and anti-semitism?
Before	85%	67%	50%
After	100%	94%	94%

I would recommend this training to other in your role/position

Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Don't know
78%	22%	0%	0%

Comments

Very good and due to John's experiences, very real examples, in his own words, showing people can be de-radicalised. Any more like this would be great. I am the DSL for our Work Based Learning provision across Wales and England and would really like to tap into some more free training, for at least my DSO team, but ideally our learner facing team members as they often tell me they lack confidence to discuss anything Prevent. Thanks again John.
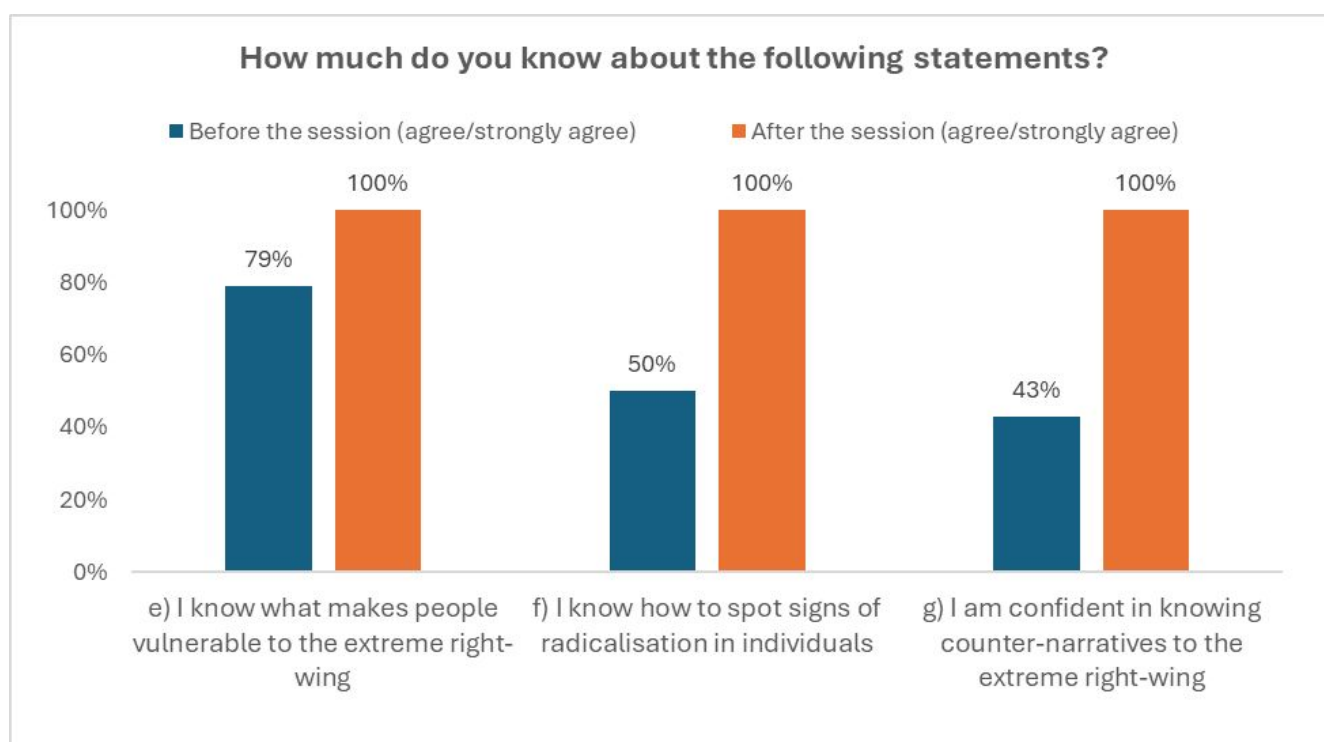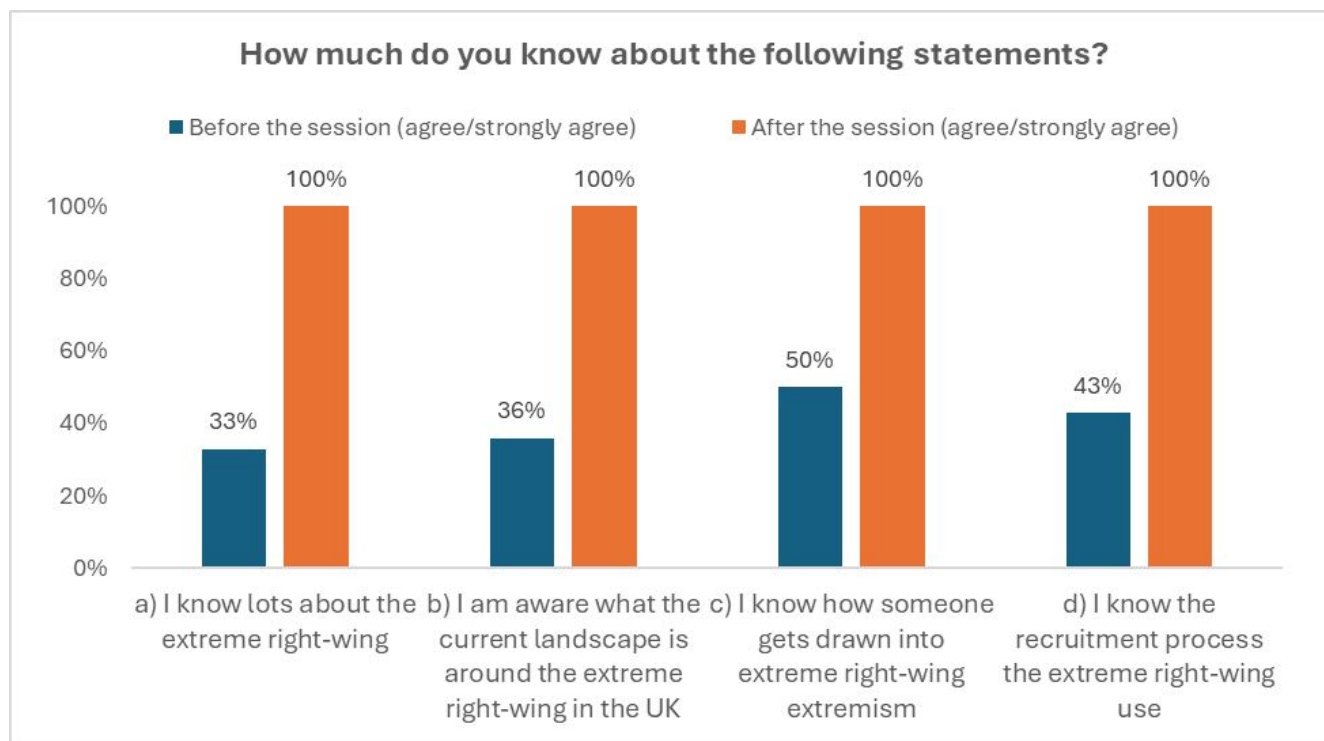
really enjoyed this, I work in the prison service managing TACT offenders, so would welcome further conversations about working together.
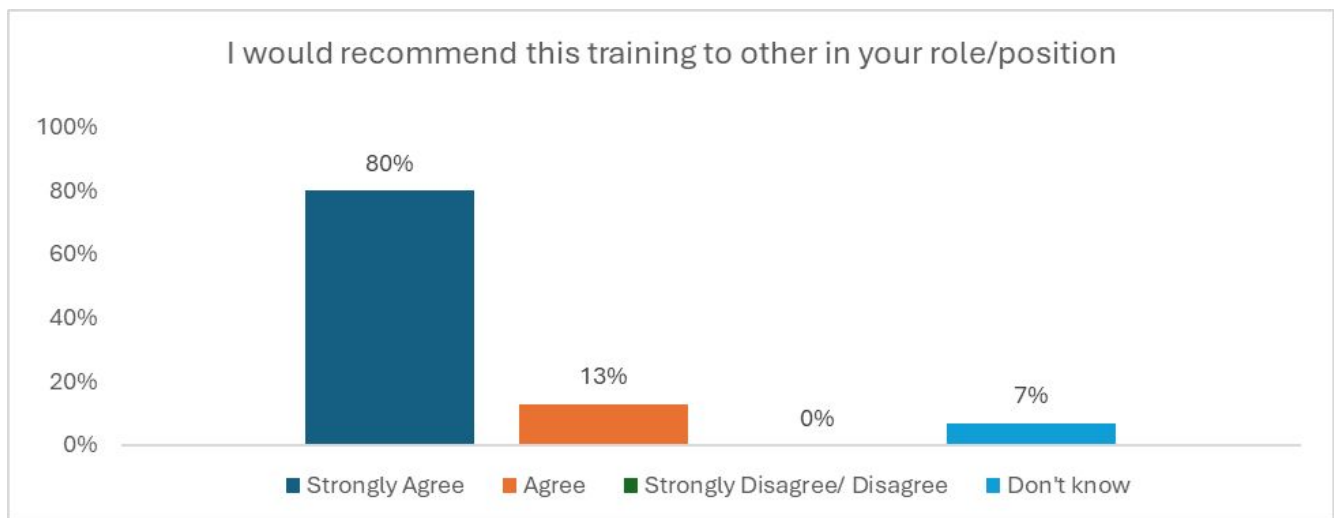
Very difficult but important session to sit through. I have some awareness of this topic through work but today's session has broadened that awareness. The facilitator's first hand experience/knowledge of the ERW also added something - it's reassuring that people can find a way back and use their experience for good. Diolch.

Counter narratives are a difficult thing to push forward when people have been given so much false and out of context information and believe it all so strongly. More discussion about how to do this may have been helpful.

Very informative. Especially from somebody who has lived through some of the issues. Really brave to move away from Far Rights and doing good from your experences.

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Extreme Right-Wing Explained Before x After Session Results

How much do you know about the following statements?

■ Before the session (agree/strongly agree) ■ After the session (agree/strongly agree)

- a) I know lots about the extreme right-wing — 33% / 100%
- b) I am aware what the current landscape is around the extreme right-wing in the UK — 36% / 100%
- c) I know how someone gets drawn into extreme right-wing extremism — 50% / 100%
- d) I know the recruitment process the extreme right-wing use — 43% / 100%

How much do you know about the following statements?

■ Before the session (agree/strongly agree) ■ After the session (agree/strongly agree)

- e) I know what makes people vulnerable to the extreme right-wing — 79% / 100%
- f) I know how to spot signs of radicalisation in individuals — 50% / 100%
- g) I am confident in knowing counter-narratives to the extreme right-wing — 43% / 100%

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I would recommend this training to other in your role/position

Strongly Agree 80%　　**Agree** 13%　　**Strongly Disagree/ Disagree** 0%　　**Don't know** 7%

Comments

Very informative training. Very personable trainer. Very good of him to share his own experiences of right-wing extremism. Was also very interesting to hear the more "long game" methods of recruitments that extremists use e.g. opening local businesses such as corner shops. Thank you!

Very informative and definitely worthwhile attending.

An excellent session from John. Really interesting content and he is a fantastic presenter - really engaging.

Really enlightening and worrying course content.

John was knowledgeable and approachable. He was able to tailor the training to suit the needs of the group. His authentic story shone through and made his messages all the more powerful.

Really informative for a brief session.

John is so knowledgeable. It means so much more coming from somebody who has background knowledge. It is great he is using his background to support others.

This session was very valuable, to learn from someone how has experience being radicalised is really valuable and inspiring. John was an excellent trainer, engaging and easy to listen to. Thank you! Keep up the amazing work you are all doing.

Thank you for the session was interesting to learn about new techniques being used along with services to reach out to for support.

Excellent training. Thank you.

Small Steps Evaluation Report

Swansea, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot
2024/2025

small
steps

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Western Bay Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund

2024 REPORT

Western Bay
Community Cohesion Team
Tîm Cydlyniant Cymunedol
Bae Gorllewin

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Introduction

The Western Bay Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund 2024 was launched during Hate Crime Awareness Week 2024 as part of our commitment to building stronger, safer, and more inclusive communities across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, and Bridgend.

The fund supported grassroots initiatives that promoted social integration, addressed community tensions, and fostered a sense of belonging. With a particular focus on ethnic minority communities, refugees, asylum seekers, Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities, and other marginalized groups, the fund encouraged creative and inclusive projects that brought diverse communities together.

Through the Community Cohesion Programme, a wide range of culturally sensitive and accessible activities were delivered across the region, including workshops, cultural events, social gatherings, training sessions, and awareness campaigns. These initiatives helped reduce isolation, build trust between communities, and increase awareness of hate crime and discrimination, while also empowering marginalized voices and creating safe spaces for dialogue and collaboration.

In total, £20,984.95 was awarded to 14 community-led projects, which directly engaged 5,369 residents across the three local authority areas. Collectively, these projects delivered 152 activities with the support of 50 volunteers, demonstrating the power of community-led action in fostering unity and resilience. The programme not only contributed to the region's wider cohesion strategy but also made a tangible impact on wellbeing, intercultural understanding, and community connection.

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Projects' Overview

Over the past year, the Community Cohesion Programme supported a diverse spectrum of grassroots initiatives across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, and Bridgend. These projects were designed to strengthen community bonds, celebrate cultural diversity, and support underrepresented groups—reflecting the vibrant tapestry of our communities and a shared commitment to fostering unity, wellbeing, and belonging.

A total of 14 community-led projects received funding, with grants ranging from £200 to £2,000. This flexible funding model enabled organisations to tailor their delivery to local needs—supporting both short-term, high-impact events and longer-term programmes that continue to foster engagement beyond the initial funding period.

Projects varied significantly in duration. The longest fixed-duration initiative, ran for 171 days, while the shortest were impactful one-day events. Most projects spanned between two to four months, with durations ranging from 89 to 151 days.
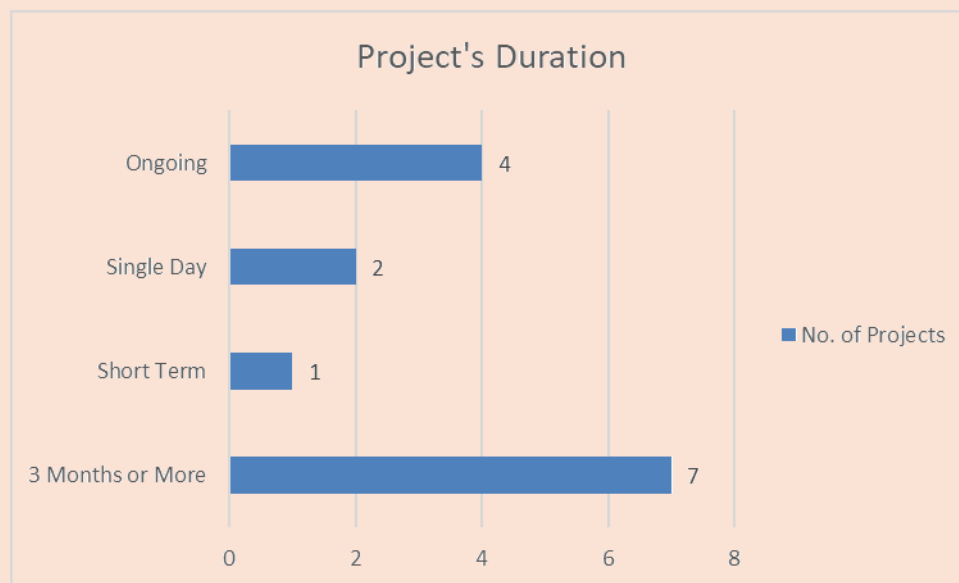

In total, £20,984.95 was distributed, enabling a wide range of organisations to deliver inclusive, culturally relevant, and community-driven activities. On average, each project received £1,498.92, engaged 383.5 participants, and delivered 7.6 activities, highlighting the programme's broad reach and tangible impact.

Amount Allocated Per Theme
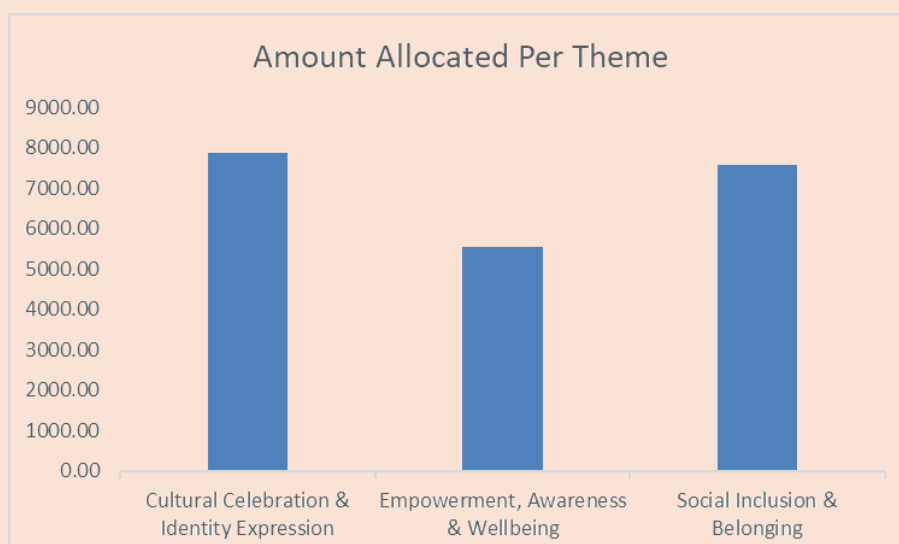
Key Themes

The projects were observed to be in at least one of below three themes identified as shown below:

- **Social Inclusion & Belonging** – Creating safe, welcoming spaces for individuals to connect and feel part of their community.

- **Cultural Celebration & Identity Expression** – Honouring diverse cultural heritages and promoting mutual respect through shared experiences.

- **Empowerment, Awareness & Wellbeing** – Supporting mental health, personal growth, and community resilience through education and engagement.

Theme wise Project Distribution

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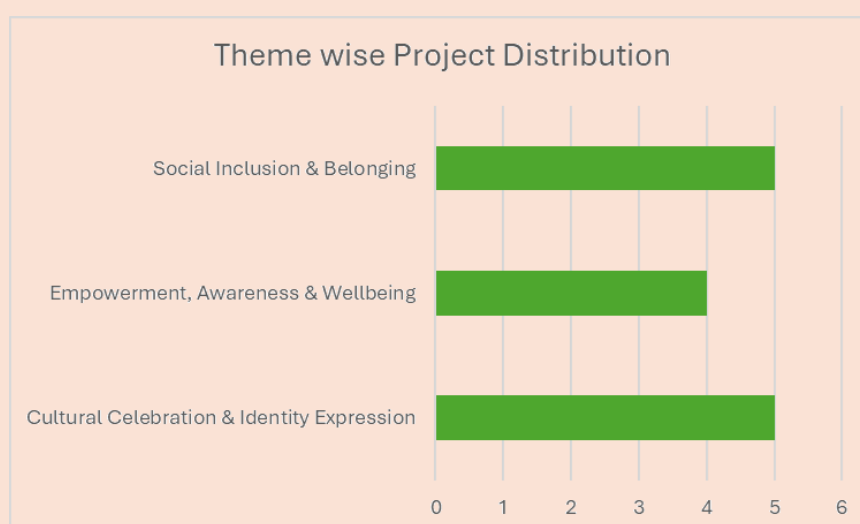
Project Delivery and Participation

Across the funded projects, a total of 152 events and activities were delivered, engaging a wide range of participants through diverse formats and themes. Delivery spans cultural festivals, arts workshops, sports sessions, exhibitions, dialogue events, and regular social gatherings. Collectively, projects engaged the region through inclusive, grassroots activities aligned with the fund's aims of integration, reducing tensions, and fostering belonging.

Projects offered a rich mix of engagement formats tailored to community needs:
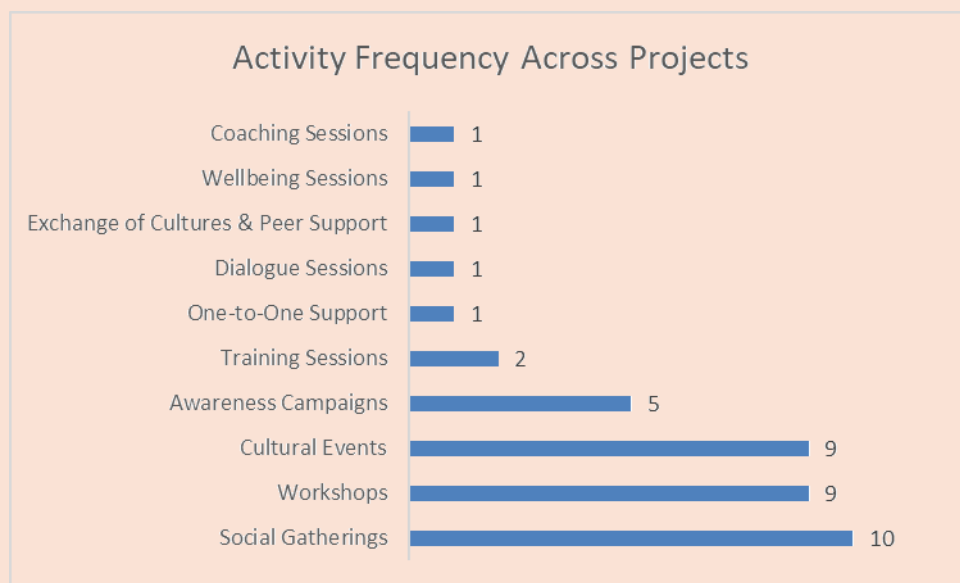
Participant Characteristics

The funded projects successfully engaged a wide spectrum of community members, reflecting the programme's commitment to inclusion and diversity.

The participant base included carers, LGBTQ+ individuals, children and young people with disabilities, older women, and refugees and asylum seekers, reflecting the programme's commitment to building cohesive communities through representation, respect, and shared experiences.
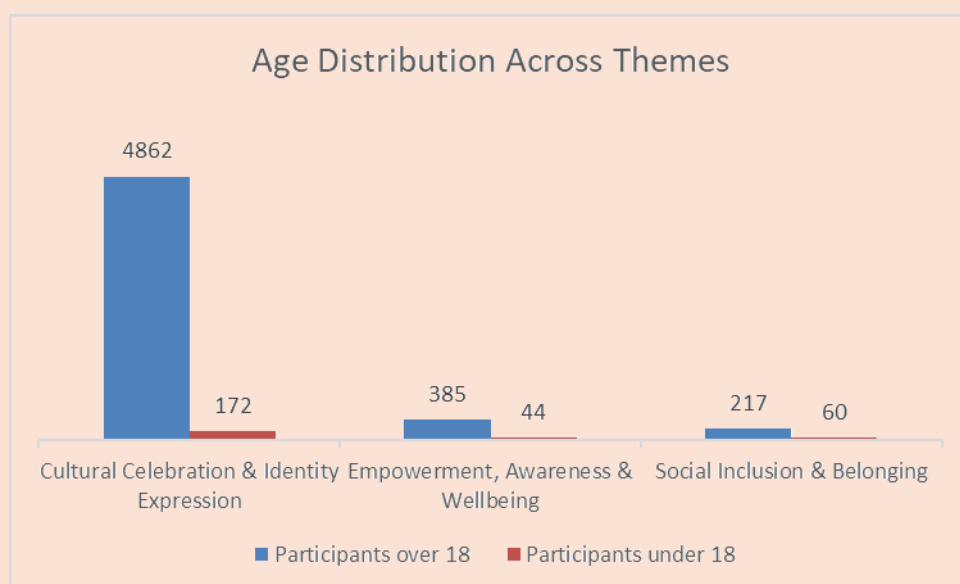
Projects engaged a diverse range of participants, including:

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- Carers

- LGBTQ+ and LGBTQIA+ community members

- Individuals with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and disabilities

- Widows and single older women

- Various genders

- Chinese community

- General public

Inclusivity was a core principle, with some organisations choosing not to collect sensitive personal data to maintain a safe and respectful environment.

Intergenerational Reach

Activities were designed to be intergenerational, welcoming participants across age groups—from children and young people to older adults. This approach fostered shared experiences, mutual understanding, and stronger community ties across generations.

Age Distribution Across Themes

Theme	Participants over 18	Participants under 18
Cultural Celebration & Identity Expression	4862	172
Empowerment, Awareness & Wellbeing	385	44
Social Inclusion & Belonging	217	60

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Ethnic Backgrounds

Participants came from a rich mix of ethnic backgrounds, including:

- Pakistani

- Bangladeshi

- Somali

- Kurdish

- Nigerian

- Syrian, Indian, Libyan, Iraqi, Egyptian, Yemeni, Sri Lankan, Jordanian, Afghan, Jamaican, Moroccan, Arab, Eritrean, South Sudanese, Sudanese, Kuwaiti, Persian-Iranian, Chinese, and others

- Mixed, Asian, African, Eastern European, Latin-American, British, White British, Welsh, English

Faith or Belief Groups

Projects were inclusive of multiple faiths and specifically:

- Muslim

- Christian

Disabilities & Additional Needs

Projects supported individuals with:

- Mental health needs

- Mobility impairments and wheelchair users

- Vision impairment

- Sensory sensitivities

- Children Looked After / Leaving Care

Refugee, Asylum Seeker & Immigration Status

Participants included:

- Refugees

- Asylum seekers

- British citizens

- International students

- Settled migrants

- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC x 7)

- Mixed-status groups

Primary Languages Spoken

Projects supported multilingual communities, with materials and sessions delivered in:

- English

- Arabic

- Bengali & Urdu

- Kurdish •   Welsh

- Tigrinya

- Chinese

- Plus: French, Lingala, Hindi, Turkish, Tshiluba, Swahili, Amharic, Oshiwambo, Punjabi, Sudanese, Tamil, Persian Farsi
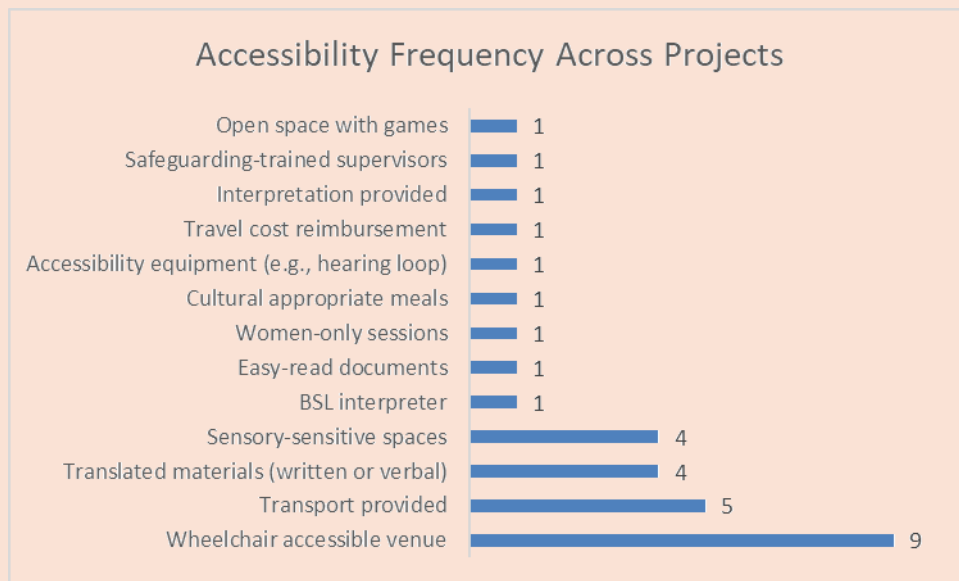
Some projects also provided trilingual materials and translation services to ensure accessibility.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Accessibility was a core priority across all funded initiatives. Events were designed to be inclusive of diverse ethnic backgrounds, faith groups, and individuals with additional needs.

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Many projects offered wheelchair-accessible venues, translated materials, sensory-sensitive spaces, and transport support to ensure full participation.

Projects demonstrated a strong commitment to accessibility, implementing a wide range of inclusive practices. These measures ensured that events were inclusive and welcoming to individuals with mobility needs, sensory sensitivities, language barriers, and cultural considerations.

Accessibility Frequency Across Projects

Category	Count
Open space with games	1
Safeguarding-trained supervisors	1
Interpretation provided	1
Travel cost reimbursement	1
Accessibility equipment (e.g., hearing loop)	1
Cultural appropriate meals	1
Women-only sessions	1
Easy-read documents	1
BSL interpreter	1
Sensory-sensitive spaces	4
Translated materials (written or verbal)	4
Transport provided	5
Wheelchair accessible venue	9

Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers played a vital role in project delivery. They supported with logistics, facilitation, coaching, safeguarding, and community outreach—demonstrating strong community ownership and engagement.

Volunteers played a vital role in supporting logistics, facilitation, and outreach— contributing hundreds of hours to ensure successful delivery.

A total of 50 volunteers were involved and an estimated total number of volunteer hours spent is 329.

Projects' Evaluation

The success of projects was evaluated based on three factors

• Number of Cohesion Workplan Objectives addressed.

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- Number of Cohesion Indicators addressed
- Partners' Self-Assessment
- Community Feedback

Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Workplan 2024

The Small Grant Scheme delivered measurable outcomes that align directly with the Welsh Government's *Community Cohesion Programme Workplan 2024*, with all 14 funded projects contributing meaningfully to its strategic themes and objectives.

While,

- **Theme 2: Community Engagement**

was the dominant focus—through inclusive outreach, cultural celebration, and support for marginalized groups—many initiatives also addressed

- **Theme 3: Building Resilient Communities** by tackling local tensions and empowering grassroots voices. Additionally,

- **Theme 1: Mainstreaming Cohesion** was reflected in collaborative practices with public bodies and inclusive design approaches.
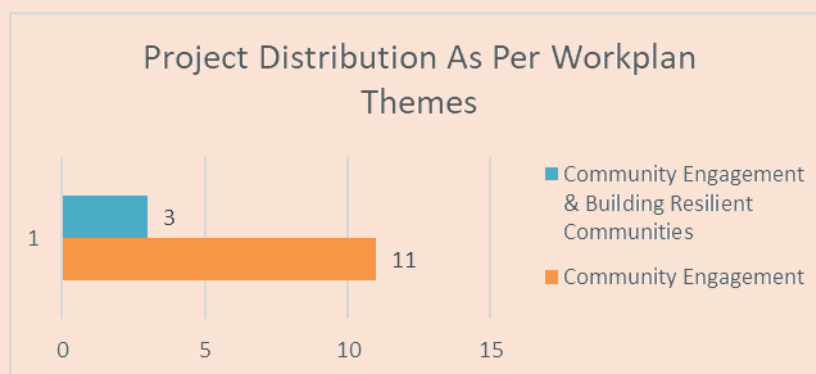
Key objectives addressed across the portfolio included:

- Objective 2.1: Delivering inclusive events and activities that foster good relations and reduce segregation.

- Objective 2.3: Supporting the inclusion of marginalised communities, including refugees, asylum seekers, and disabled individuals.

- Objective 3.1: Monitoring and responding to community tensions through dialogue and awareness.

- Objective 3.2: Empowering grassroots groups to lead cohesion work through tailored initiatives.

Projects demonstrated inclusive design through translated materials, accessible venues, and culturally sensitive programming. Activities engaged diverse demographics, creating safe spaces that fostered empathy, reduced prejudice, and celebrated cultural identity. Several initiatives also addressed community tensions and promoted crosscultural dialogue, strengthening local resilience.

Cohesion Indicators

The funded projects under the Small Grant Fund Programme have contributed meaningfully to several key cohesion indicators. While formal measurement tools were not consistently applied across all initiatives, qualitative evidence and participant feedback strongly suggest improvements in the following areas:

Trust Across Communities

Projects such as multicultural festivals, inclusive workshops, and interfaith dialogues fostered positive interactions between individuals from different ethnic, faith, and cultural backgrounds. These engagements helped build empathy, reduce prejudice, and promote mutual respect.

> *"I came here not knowing anyone. Now I feel like I have a community I belong to."*

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Perception of Inclusion

Participants consistently reported feeling welcomed, accepted, and valued. The diversity of representation—across age, ethnicity, gender identity, and ability—created environments where individuals felt seen and heard.

> *"QT has definitely been a positive impact on my mental health... I feel much more visible and settled in Swansea."*

Participation Diversity

Projects attracted a wide range of participants, including elders, youth, refugees, asylum seekers, disabled individuals, and LGBTQ+ community members. Activities were designed to be accessible and culturally sensitive, ensuring broad engagement.

> *"Trying a demonstration made a lot of difference to my circulation... I give 10/10 for this activity."*

Safety in Expressing Identity

Creative platforms, storytelling sessions, and safe spaces enabled individuals to express their identities without fear of judgment. Participants shared personal journeys, cultural heritage, and lived experiences in supportive settings.

> *"You do need these spaces... where you can just drop the armour and be surrounded by warmth."*

Shared Local Identity

Through collaborative events and community-led initiatives, participants developed a stronger sense of belonging to their local area. Whether newly arrived or long-term residents, individuals connected through shared experiences and collective goals.

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"Some arrived over 40 years ago, others just months ago reflecting a shared local identity and a strong sense of inclusion."

Partners' Self-Assessment

Funded projects under the Small Grant Scheme were consistently rated highly by delivery partners for their effectiveness in fostering inclusion, reducing isolation, and strengthening community bonds. With an average success rating of **8.7/10**, the programme demonstrated strong outcomes across wellbeing, engagement, and representation.

Community Feedback

All funded projects employed a range of feedback collection methods to assess impact and participant experience. These included both formal tools and informal conversations, allowing for a rich understanding of outcomes across wellbeing, inclusion, and social connection.

Feedback Collection Methods

Projects used a multi-method approach to gather insights:

- Surveys, including wellbeing assessments and soft skills self-evaluations

- Focus groups and interviews

- Informal discussions, including WhatsApp group exchanges

- Observation, comment boxes, and coach forums

- Committee feedback from delivery teams

While some projects lacked formal pre/post scoring tools, the combination of high engagement and qualitative depth provided strong evidence of positive impact. To strengthen future evaluations, delivery partners suggested:

- Standardised wellbeing and inclusion surveys

- Structured feedback forms with scaled questions

- Thematic coding of qualitative responses

These enhancements would support more consistent measurement and continuous improvement across projects.

Evaluation Gaps & Future Improvements

While the Small Grant Programme demonstrated strong community impact, several evaluation gaps were identified that could be addressed in future iterations. Many projects relied on anecdotal and qualitative feedback, which—though rich and insightful—limited the ability to systematically measure change over time. Current Limitations

- Lack of structured tools: Some projects did not use formal pre/post surveys, making it difficult to quantify progress in areas such as wellbeing, inclusion, and social connection.

- Early-stage delivery: A few projects rated themselves lower (e.g., 3/10) due to limited reach or being in pilot phases.

- Capacity constraints: Smaller, volunteer-led groups faced challenges in collecting and analysing feedback consistently.

- Venue and representation gaps: Feedback highlighted the need for larger, more accessible venues and broader cultural representation to meet growing demand.

Recommendations for Future Evaluation

To strengthen future monitoring and learning, the following improvements are recommended:

- Introduce structured evaluation tools such as:

  o Likert-scale surveys o Wellbeing and inclusion assessments o Open-ended qualitative questions

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- Use mixed-method approaches combining surveys, focus groups, and interviews to capture both measurable and narrative outcomes.

- Develop tailored feedback templates to support consistency across projects.

- Collaborate with local authorities and community safety teams to assess impact on social cohesion and tension reduction.

- Include follow-up activities to track long-term outcomes and sustain engagement.

Strategic Support Needs

To enable these improvements, future programme design should consider:

- Expanded funding to support evaluation capacity and infrastructure.

- Training for delivery partners on data collection and impact reporting.

- Resources for inclusive outreach, including translation services and culturally appropriate engagement tools.

By addressing these gaps, future evaluations will be better equipped to demonstrate impact, inform strategic decisions, and support continuous improvement across community cohesion initiatives.

Community Impact

Delivery partners observed a range of positive outcomes across the funded projects, particularly in areas of emotional wellbeing, social connection, and personal development. Participants reported feeling happier, more confident, and less isolated, with many forming new friendships and peer networks. These inclusive environments enabled individuals,

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especially those from marginalized backgrounds, to express themselves freely and feel a sense of belonging.

Cultural pride and awareness were also strengthened through shared experiences and intercultural engagement. Notably, youth leadership emerged through volunteering, contributing to local capacity and helping sustain cohesion activities. Informal support networks developed organically, further reinforcing the emotional and social growth fostered by the programme.

The impact of the project are as follows:

Inclusive Environments for Marginalized Groups

Projects created safe, welcoming spaces for ethnic minority women, LGBTQ+ individuals, asylum seekers, disabled youth, and others. These environments enabled participants to express their identities, build friendships, and feel a sense of belonging.

> *"Despite limited funding, the project successfully built a supportive, inclusive environment for marginalised women."*

Strong Community Engagement & Attendance

Events like the Unity Through Food Festival and Chinese New Year celebration exceeded participation targets, attracting hundreds of attendees from varied backgrounds.

> *"Over 242 diverse participants… fostering understanding and new friendships."*

Tangible Outcomes Across Cohesion Indicators

Projects reported improvements in wellbeing, cultural awareness, confidence, and social connection. Youth volunteers emerged, informal support networks formed, and participants expressed emotional growth.

> *"Participants are building friendships and social networks that extend beyond our sessions."*

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Accessibility & Representation

Many projects prioritised accessibility through multilingual support, BSL interpretation, and free entry. Representation across age, ability, and cultural identity was a key strength.

> *"Representative of a wide spectrum of the queer community including disabled and neurodiverse."*

Collaborative & Cross-Community Impact

Initiatives brought together people from different communities, promoting trust and shared identity through storytelling, food, arts, and dialogue.

> *"We engaged with many community groups of different social status, ethnicities, cultural identities and religions."*

Quantitative Outcomes

- 88% of participants in one project reported feeling less isolated after attending sessions

- 80% made new friendships; 75% felt more connected to the wider community

- In another initiative, 85% reported improved mood and increased willingness to engage in future events

- A project working with asylum seekers saw a shift from 52% feeling isolated before to 78% feeling more connected or valued after

Estimated reach of the impact are as follows:

Impact Area	Estimated Reach	Description

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Improved Wellbeing	200+ participants	Attendees experienced emotional uplift, joy, and improved mental health through engaging activities and supportive environments.
Reduced Loneliness	150+ participants	Many individuals, especially elders and isolated community members, felt less lonely after participating in regular sessions and events.
New Friendships	80+ participants	Projects facilitated meaningful connections across diverse backgrounds, helping individuals build new social networks.
Increased Cultural Awareness	220+ participants	Cultural festivals, food sharing, and performances (e.g., Kurdish dances) enhanced understanding and appreciation of different cultures.
Impact Area	Estimated Reach	Description
Greater Sense of Belonging	180+ participants	Participants, including teens and newly arrived immigrants, expressed feeling more accepted and integrated into their communities.
Confidence or Skills Developed	100+ participants	Attendees gained new skills (e.g., photography, tam-tam drumming, creative writing) and increased confidence through workshops and volunteering.
Digital Inclusion	60+ participants	Access to digital tools and training helped bridge the digital divide, especially for marginalised groups.

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Intergenerational Connections	135+ participants	Events promoted dialogue and learning across age groups, strengthening family and community bonds.
Educational Impact	Noted qualitatively	Events like Menstrual Hygiene Day and food sustainability workshops raised awareness and reduced stigma around key social issues.

Participant Reflections

Participants across the funded projects consistently reported meaningful improvements in mental and emotional wellbeing, social connection, confidence, cultural pride, and a stronger sense of belonging. These outcomes were captured through surveys, interviews, informal conversations, and direct testimonials, offering compelling evidence of the programme's emotional and social value.

One project reported a significant shift in participant experience:

"Before: 52% felt isolated or unconnected. After: 78% felt more connected or valued."

Many individuals highlighted the importance of culturally sensitive and inclusive spaces:

"This was the first time I felt like my culture and my mental health were seen and valued."

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"I felt comfortable attending something just for women. It's helped my mental health so much."

"These sessions gave me the chance to leave the house, meet other women, and feel like I belong somewhere."

"I came here not knowing anyone. Now I feel like I have a community I belong to."

Events such as the *Chinese New Year celebration* and *Unity Through Food Festival* were praised for their ability to bring people together:

"It's the first time since I moved here that I've truly felt a sense of belonging."

"The festival brought people together who would never normally meet."

"This event made me feel truly welcomed and connected to my new community."

Youth participants expressed enthusiasm for more hands-on activities and outings: *"We'd like to start preparing and making our own snacks and food."*

"More activities in the house, more places to be taken out."

"I love this place, it's really good and fun."

"I get a break from my little brother… the grown-ups make me feel happy."

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Another project stood out for its transformative impact on LGBTQ+ individuals, offering a safe and expressive space:

> "QT has definitely been a positive impact on my mental health… I feel much more visible and settled in Swansea."

> "You do need these spaces… where you can just drop the armour and be surrounded by warmth."

> "This has opened a platform for creative/productive people within the LGBTQ community."

> "A beautiful sense of community, very safe and inclusive space."

> "This event promoted social cohesion… I joined the WhatsApp group and now feel part of the community."

Older participants also shared reflections that highlighted the programme's reach across life stages:

> "I made my first friend in ten years."

> "Now I know how to call the council and HMRC by myself."

Projects additionally reported increased confidence among youth, with several becoming volunteers to support their peers. Wellness activities such as yoga and hand massage

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contributed to emotional and physical wellbeing, while digital inclusion efforts helped bridge access gaps for marginalised groups.

Overall, participant feedback reflected increased trust, stronger perceptions of inclusion, and the creation of safer spaces for identity expression—contributing to a more cohesive and connected community.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis revealed several recurring outcomes:

Theme	Description
Improved Wellbeing	Participants reported feeling happier, more relaxed, and emotionally supported.
Reduced Loneliness	Many expressed feeling less isolated and more socially connected.
New Friendships	Events facilitated meaningful interpersonal connections.
Cultural Understanding	Increased appreciation for diverse traditions and identities.
Confidence & Skill Development	Participants gained self-esteem and learned new skills (e.g., cooking, photography, creative writing).
Sense of Belonging	Individuals felt accepted and valued within their communities.
Desire for Continuation	Many requested more frequent sessions and similar future events.

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These reflections and feedback highlight the emotional depth and social value of the programme, reinforcing its role in fostering inclusive, supportive, and connected communities.

Concerns or Complaints

Most projects reported no formal complaints. Where concerns did arise, they were minor and addressed promptly:

- One participant struggled to understand event programming.
  A debrief with the team resolved the issue and improved clarity.

- A participant noted the room was cold; heating was adjusted accordingly.

- Informal feedback led to adjustments in seating and timing to better suit attendees.

- Any issues were handled via the club's safeguarding and inclusion protocols.

These responses demonstrate a commitment to participant wellbeing, responsiveness, and continuous improvement.

Community Tension

The Small Grant Fund Programme supported several projects that directly addressed existing or emerging community tensions. These tensions ranged from social isolation and cultural misunderstanding to broader societal divides exacerbated by political rhetoric and civil unrest. Projects also addressed divides such as exclusion of ethnic minority women, isolation of asylum seeker children, and barriers for LGBTQIA+ participation safe space.

Projects employed a variety of strategies to reduce these tensions and foster mutual understanding, empathy, and inclusion.

Tensions Identification

Projects reported addressing the following types of community tensions:

- **Social Isolation**: Particularly among ethnic minority women, disabled youth, and families with additional needs.

- **Cultural Misunderstanding & Stereotyping**: Including lack of representation of Chinese culture and limited interaction between local and refugee communities.

- **Inter-Community Mistrust**: Heightened by national civil unrest and right-wing rhetoric targeting asylum seekers and refugees.

- **Exclusion from Mainstream Services**: Families with children who have additional needs felt excluded from typical youth programmes and community activities.

These tensions were identified through:

- Community feedback and consultations

- Social media discussions

- Partner input (e.g., police, local authorities)

- Internal knowledge and lived experience

- Observations of social dynamics and participation gaps

Strategies for Tension Reduction

Projects implemented a range of inclusive and proactive strategies to address these tensions:

Strategy	Description
Cultural Exchange	Events and workshops celebrating diverse cultures through food, art, music, and storytelling helped break down stereotypes and foster appreciation.
Facilitated Dialogue	Safe spaces for open conversation enabled participants to share experiences, build empathy, and challenge misconceptions.

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Inclusive Programming	Tailored activities for disabled youth, asylum seekers, and ethnic minorities ensured equitable access and representation.
Joint Community Actions	Collaborative events involving multiple communities promoted unity and shared purpose.
Training & Awareness Campaigns	Anti-racism and bias awareness sessions helped address underlying prejudices and promote inclusive attitudes.
Accessible Environments	Use of multilingual support, BSL interpretation, and free entry ensured broad participation and reduced barriers.

Examples of Impact

Several projects demonstrated tangible outcomes in reducing tensions:

- A project created a safe, inclusive space for children with additional needs, directly responding to parental concerns about exclusion and isolation.

- A project addressed post-unrest tensions by fostering dialogue and cultural exchange among BAME communities, asylum seekers, and local residents.

- A project facilitated interaction between local youth and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, breaking down social barriers and preventing future tensions.

- A project increased visibility and understanding of Chinese culture, reducing stereotypes and promoting intercultural engagement.

- A project brought together elderly individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering trust and inclusion through regular interaction.

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Strengthening Future Evaluation

While many projects successfully addressed community tensions, most relied on qualitative feedback rather than structured conflict assessment tools. Future evaluations could benefit from:

- Pre/post tension monitoring surveys

- Focus groups and interviews

- Collaboration with local authorities and community safety teams

These approaches would provide more robust evidence of impact and help refine strategies for conflict prevention and resolution.

Delivery Challenges & Solutions

The delivery of community cohesion projects surfaced a range of operational, logistical, and engagement-related challenges. Despite these barriers, project teams demonstrated resilience, creativity, and adaptability—ensuring successful outcomes and meaningful community impact.

Key Challenges Encountered

Projects faced several common obstacles during implementation:

Challenge	Description
Limited Budget	Funding constraints led to scaled-back plans and reduced activity scope.
Language Barriers	Limited English proficiency affected participant confidence and engagement.
Low Initial Attendance	Early sessions required additional outreach and trust-building to increase turnout.

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Logistical Issues	Events like food festivals faced transport and equipment challenges.
Venue Limitations	Restricted access or small spaces led to crowding and accessibility concerns.
Volunteer Coordination	Matching availability and ensuring gender representation proved complex.
Stigma & Hesitancy	Cultural stigma and unfamiliarity with community events created reluctance to participate.
Challenge	**Description**
Inclusive Representation	Designing activities for diverse cultural, physical, and age-related needs required careful planning.
Staffing Constraints	Some projects were delivered by a single staff member, creating pressure on time and resources.
Team Dynamics	Managing varied skill levels and perspectives required ongoing communication and support.

Adaptations and Solutions

Project teams responded with practical and inclusive strategies:

- **Prioritising High-Impact Activities** to maximise community benefit within budget limits.

- **Multilingual Support** through bilingual volunteers and translation services.

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- **Community Outreach** via social media, word-of-mouth, and partnerships with schools and faith groups.

- **Flexible Programming** tailored to different needs, including gentle exercise, crafts, and storytelling.

- **Volunteer Engagement** through recruitment, training, and role diversification.

- **Inclusive Design** with gender-specific sessions, BSL interpretation, and accessible venues.

- **Crowd Management** using signage and designated areas to ensure safety and flow.

- **Team Support** via coaching, peer mentoring, and regular check-ins to strengthen delivery capacity.

Lessons Learned

Insights from delivery partners will inform future planning:

- Early trust-building is essential for engaging marginalised or hesitant participants.

- Flexible, inclusive environments foster sustained engagement.

- Community partnerships enhance outreach and credibility.

- Volunteer networks significantly boost delivery capacity.

- Logistics and accessibility must be prioritised in event design.

- Continuous feedback loops help refine delivery and respond to emerging needs.

Ongoing Challenges to Address

Looking ahead, projects identified persistent challenges that require attention:

- Reaching hidden or isolated communities

- Sustaining engagement beyond short-term funding

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- Managing capacity limits in volunteer-led groups

Sustainability & Legacy

The Community Cohesion Programme has delivered immediate benefits while laying a strong foundation for long-term community development. Many funded projects have demonstrated clear potential for sustainability, with several already extending their work beyond the original funding period through new collaborations, volunteer mobilisation, and integration into existing services.

Project Continuation and Sustainability Strategies

A majority of projects reported plans to continue their activities post-funding. Sustainability is being achieved through:

- Ongoing programming supported by new funding applications.

- Community-led support, with local mosques, centres, and volunteers offering space, time, and resources.

- Participant contributions, such as voluntary donations to cover material costs, fostering shared ownership.

- Integration into existing services, as seen in one projects *Culture Connect*, now embedded into monthly community sessions.

Emerging Initiatives and Collaborations

The success of the programme has sparked innovation and new partnerships across the region. Examples include:

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Project	New Initiatives & Collaborations
A	Youth-led Cultural Exchange Hub, "Unity Through Art/Music/Dance" series, Cultural Connector mentorship, Local Cultural Passport programme
B	Collaborations with Raspberry Pi, Gig Buddies, and Forest School to expand youth engagement
C	Extended programming and a new wellbeing-focused project with Progress Cymru
D	Sustained bi-weekly gatherings supported by mosque and participant contributions
E	Monthly Culture Connect events and collaboration with university volunteers
F	Development of exhibition into a handbook and expansion of "Speak Up for Sanctuary" training
G	Plans for more frequent cultural celebrations and partnerships with artists and community groups
H	Continued work with Women 4 Resources and future outreach events
I	Participation in Women's Walking Football League, national trials, and expansion of outreach
J	Exploring new collaborations and maintaining participant engagement

Project	New Initiatives & Collaborations
Other Projects	Ongoing work with South Wales Police, universities, and community hubs for intergenerational storytelling and seasonal programming (e.g., Ramadan, Winter Warm Hubs)

Legacy and Long-Term Impact

The legacy of the programme is reflected in:

- Strengthened community networks

- Empowered grassroots leadership

- Ongoing cultural exchange and visibility

- Expanded access to inclusive spaces

- Sustained momentum for future cohesion initiatives

These developments highlight the programme's success not only in delivering short-term outcomes but in planting seeds for lasting change.

Recommendations

The success of the Small Grant Programme has underscored the value of continued investment—not only through funding but also through strategic support. Delivery partners identified several areas where targeted assistance could enhance the sustainability, reach, and impact of future initiatives.

Sustain and Expand Grant Funding

- Continue the Small Grant Fund as a flexible tool for grassroots delivery.

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- Explore multi-year micro-grants to support long-term planning and stability.

Build Capacity Through Training and Resources

- Offer training for staff and volunteers in areas such as event management, creative facilitation, safeguarding, and inclusive practice.
- Provide mentoring opportunities and workshops on creative techniques to strengthen delivery quality.

Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation

- Develop standardised templates and guidance for collecting feedback, measuring impact, and reporting outcomes.
- Support continuous improvement through accessible evaluation tools.

Improve Access to Venues and Resources

- Assist projects in securing free or low-cost venues, equipment, and materials.
- Provide support for community transport, translation services, and promotional outreach.

Enhance Visibility and Promotion • Promote funded projects through local authority newsletters, community calendars, and council platforms.

- Increase visibility to support participant engagement and future funding opportunities.

Embed Youth and Community Voice

- Ensure ongoing engagement with children, young people, and community members to shape future programming.

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- Use lived experience and feedback to maintain relevance and responsiveness.

Foster Strategic Partnerships

- Support connections with schools, universities, health services, and cultural organisations.
- Encourage integration of cohesion work into mainstream services and community infrastructure.

Supporting Emerging and Grassroots Organisations

Many grassroots groups—especially newer or less established ones—lack the infrastructure, experience, or confidence to navigate funding processes, deliver complex projects, or evaluate impact effectively. To support these organisations:

- Offer tailored capacity-building support, including training in project planning, safeguarding, inclusive facilitation, and monitoring and evaluation.

- Simplify application and reporting processes to reduce administrative burden and make funding more accessible.

- Provide mentoring or peer support from more experienced organisations to help build confidence and delivery capability.

- Create flexible funding models that allow for experimentation, learning, and adaptation during early-stage delivery.

Sustaining Impact for Established Groups

Established organisations often have proven delivery models and strong community relationships. To help them sustain and scale their impact:

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- Enable continuity funding to build on successful pilots and deepen long-term engagement.

- Support innovation within existing programmes, allowing groups to test new formats or reach new audiences.

- Encourage knowledge-sharing between experienced and emerging groups to build sector-wide resilience.

Fostering Partnerships and Cross-Community Collaboration

Cross-sector and cross-community collaboration is key to building resilient, inclusive communities. To strengthen this:

- Facilitate networking platforms where funded groups can connect, share learning, and co-design initiatives.

- Encourage joint applications or collaborative delivery models that bring together organisations from different cultural, geographic, or thematic backgrounds.

- Support shared events and campaigns that promote unity, mutual understanding, and collective action.

- Invest in partnership development, including time and resources for relationship building across sectors (e.g. schools, health services, cultural organisations).

Emerging Opportunities

Delivery partners expressed enthusiasm for:

- Youth-led cultural hubs, mentorship programmes, and creative outreach events.
- Expansion of existing initiatives such as walking football leagues, intergenerational storytelling, and cultural exhibitions.

- Embedding cohesion work into mainstream services through collaboration with local authorities and education providers.

- These recommendations reflect a strong appetite for growth, innovation, and deeper community impact—provided the right support structures are in place.

Conclusion

The 2024 Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund successfully enabled 14 diverse projects to deliver meaningful and measurable impact. It improved wellbeing, reduced isolation, celebrated diversity, and fostered belonging across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, and Bridgend. The scheme demonstrates the value of small-scale investment in grassroots cohesion activities, directly aligned with Welsh Government objectives.

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Supporting Evidence (Annexes)

Table of Figures

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