

Western Bay Community Cohesion Small Grant Fund

2024 REPORT



Western Bay
Community Cohesion Team
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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.

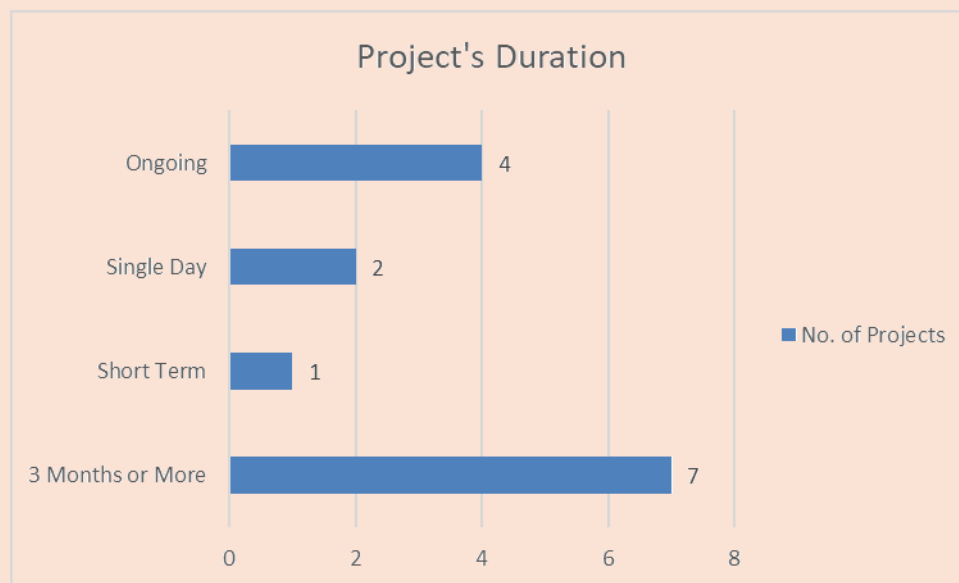
In total, £20,984.95 was awarded to 14 community-led projects, which directly engaged 5,369 residents across the three local authority areas. Collectively, these projects delivered 152 activities with the support of 50 volunteers, demonstrating the power of community-led action in fostering unity and 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.

Projects' Overview

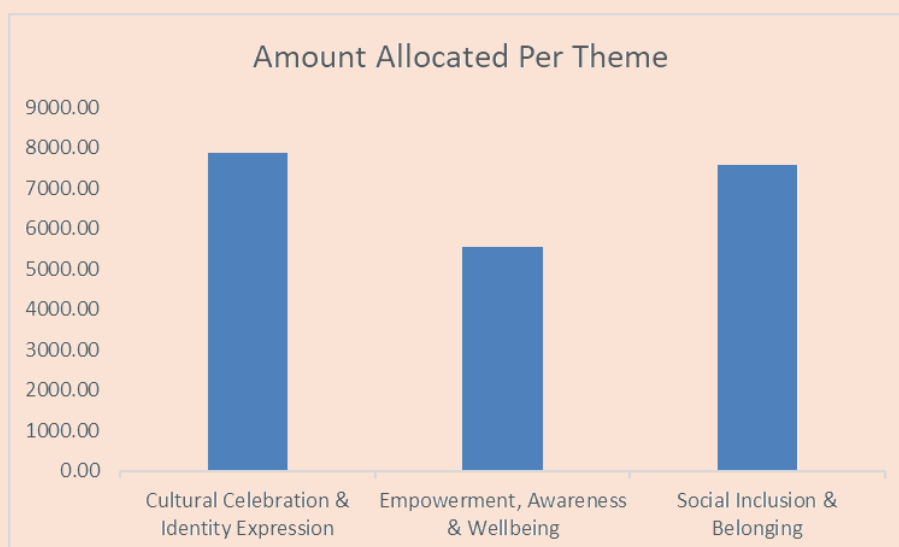
Over the past year, the Community Cohesion Programme supported a diverse spectrum of grassroots initiatives across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, and Bridgend. These projects were designed to strengthen community bonds, celebrate cultural diversity, and support underrepresented groups—reflecting the vibrant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



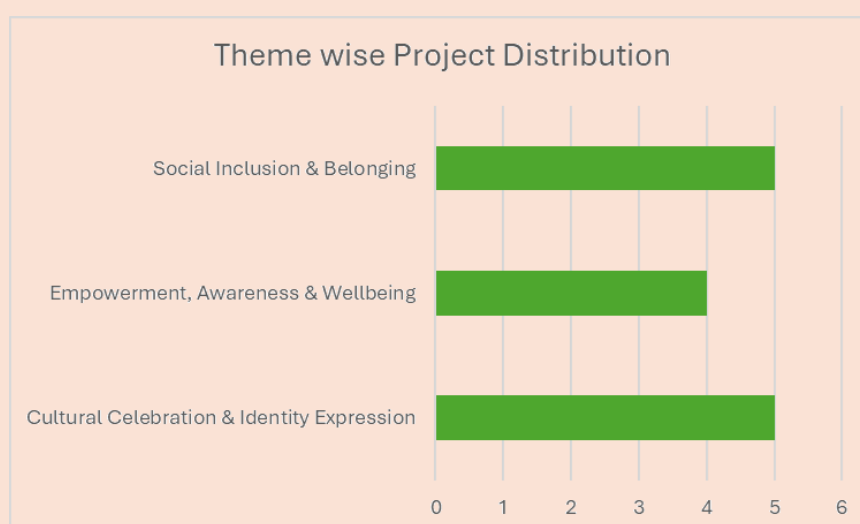
In total, £20,984.95 was distributed, enabling a wide range of organisations to deliver inclusive, culturally relevant, and community-driven activities. On average, each project received £1,498.92, engaged 383.5 participants, and delivered 7.6 activities, highlighting the programme's broad reach and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



Key Themes

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

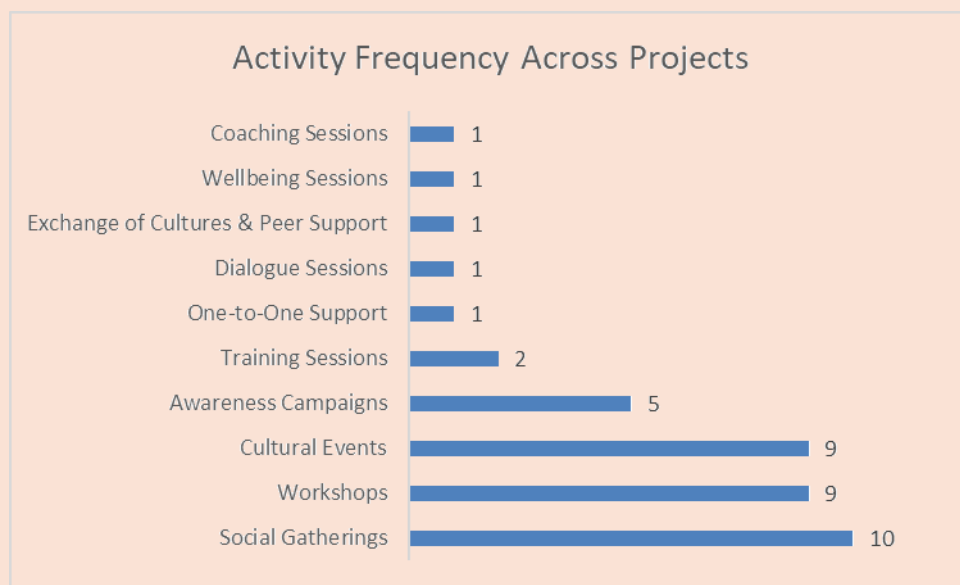
- **Social Inclusion & Belonging** – Creating safe, welcoming spaces for individuals to connect and feel part of their community.
- **Cultural Celebration & Identity Expression** – Honouring diverse cultural heritages and promoting mutual respect through shared experiences.
- **Empowerment, Awareness & Wellbeing** – Supporting mental health, personal growth, and community resilience through education and engagement.



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.

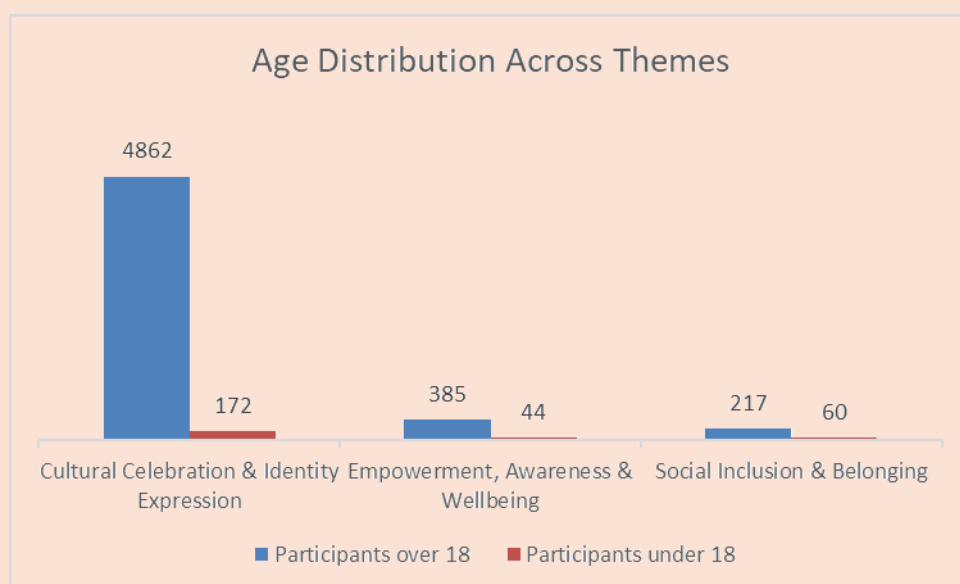
Projects engaged a diverse range of participants, including:

- 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.





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

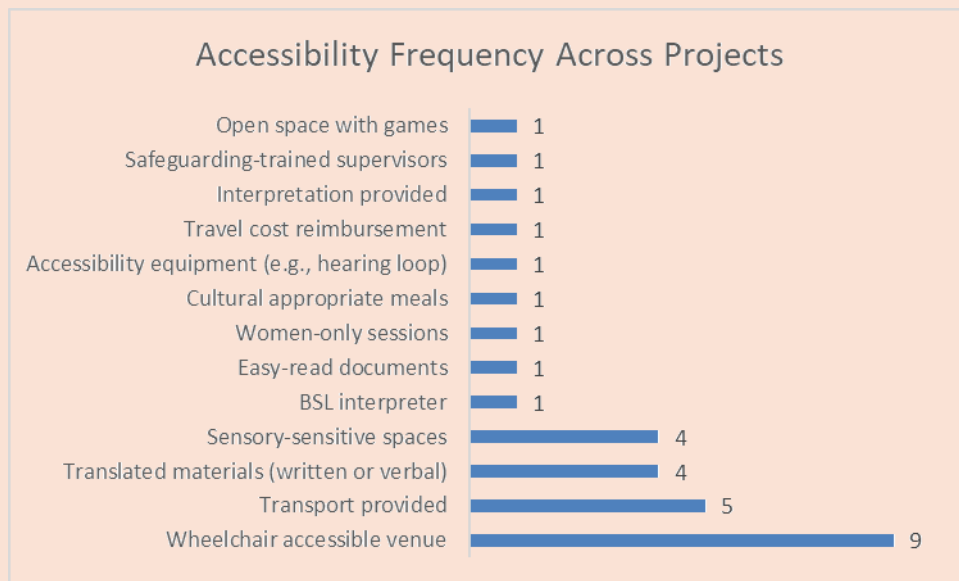
Some projects also provided trilingual materials and translation services to ensure accessibility.

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.

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.



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.

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

Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Workplan 2024

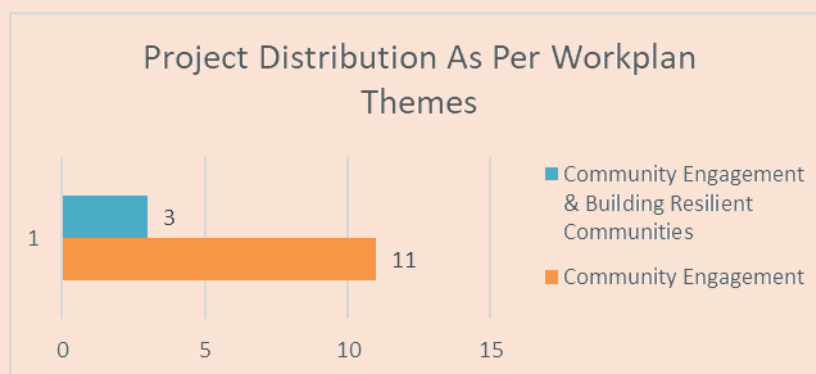
The Small Grant Scheme delivered measurable outcomes that align directly with the Welsh Government's *Community Cohesion Programme Workplan 2024*, with all 14 funded projects contributing meaningfully to its strategic themes and objectives.

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.”

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.

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

- 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,

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.”

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

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.

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.”



"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."

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

- **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

- 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:

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.

- 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.

- 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:

- 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.



Supporting Evidence (Annexes)

Table of Figures