



C-Care Final Project Report

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Prepared By: The Insight Works Ltd

For: Interreg France (Channel Manche) England

The COVID – Channel Area Response Exchange Project



EUROPEAN UNION

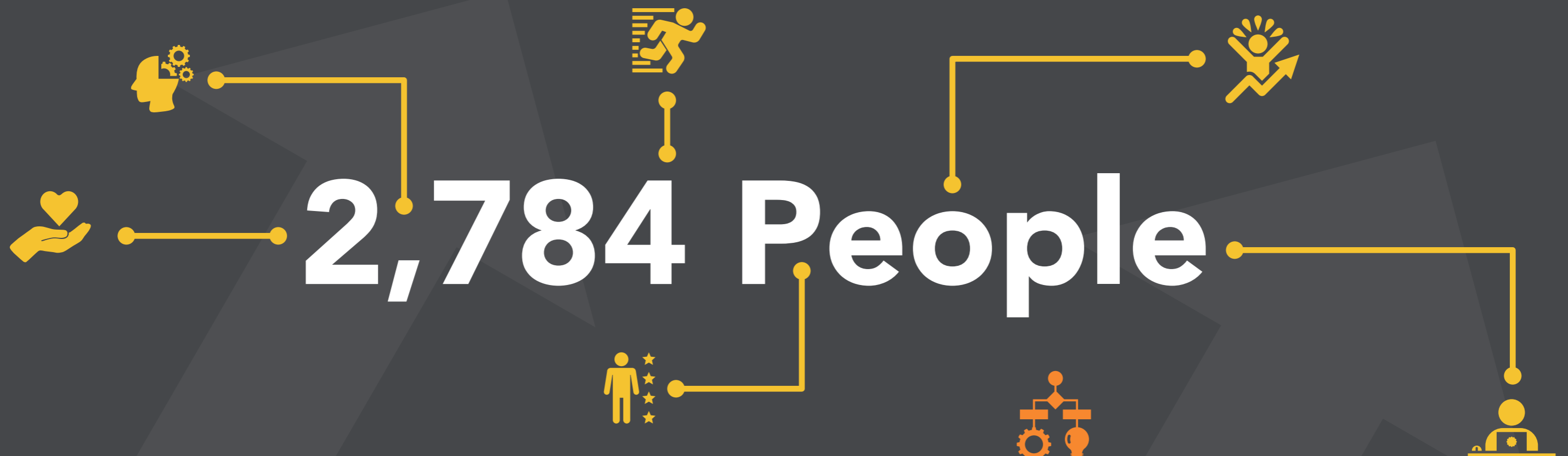


This project has been financed through the
France-Channel-England Interreg Programme
and the European Regional Development Fund

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Assisted.

Introduction

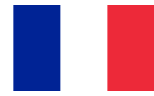
Following a Request for Quotation by Plymouth City Council in December 2021 the Insight Works team were appointed as project evaluators in early January 2022, and we introduced ourselves to the project partners on 20 January.

Project Overview

- Forecast Project Costs: £5.8m ERDF /Interreg
- Project Duration: 1 April 2021- 30 March 2023

The Projects

C-Care set out to deliver a large volume of quite different projects in both France and England:



France

1. Finistère – A training programmes in area to help individuals gain new knowledge and skills with a view to transitioning into self-employment or starting a business.
2. Finistère – A training programme in to help people to gain new digital skills.
3. Finistere – A new coordinated approach to tackling food poverty - CANCELLED
4. Pas de Calais - A training programme aimed at people seeking a career in the hospitality sector in Northern France to develop the necessary skills for employment.
5. Pas de Calais - A promotional campaign to boost the hospitality and leisure sector
6. Normandy CESI - Developing a new model for business resilience support and testing it with businesses on both sides of the Channel.
7. Normandy CESI - Developing a toolkit for business resilience support and testing it with businesses on both sides of the Channel.



England

8. Norfolk/ New Anglia - A training programme to help individuals gain new knowledge and skills with a view to transitioning into self-employment or starting a business.
9. Norfolk – A project providing people with the equipment needed to undertake an apprenticeship and providing businesses with additional ICT equipment to enable them to host an apprenticeship placement.
10. Norfolk – Digital Voucher scheme in Norfolk to enable small businesses to enhance their digital capabilities and find new ways to connect to customers.
11. Norfolk – A feasibility study and blueprints to plan for future business and community activity in town centres in the France Channel England area.
12. Kent - A 'green recovery' voucher scheme to help small businesses adopt more sustainable practices as they seek to recover and grow.
13. Kent - A Covid-secure accredited training module for the home improvement and maintenance sector.
14. Kent – A Digital Voucher scheme to enable small businesses to enhance their digital capabilities and find new ways to connect to customers.
15. Plymouth - Creating a community hub
16. Plymouth - A new business support programme to enable companies to adapt their business models to the needs of the changing business environment.
17. Plymouth – A Blueprint for Future City Centres
18. Plymouth – 5 Business support projects

Social Inclusion

- 6 socially inclusive services
- 4,547 individuals at risk of unemployment support
- 20 disadvantaged groups supported

Self-Employment

- 2 new self-employment programmes
- 1 review of self-employment support

Outputs

- 2,627 people participating in training activities (start up, employment, hospitality sector)
- 620 people participating in training

Results

- 1,000 people back into full employment
- 300 people starting a business and 60 gaining alternative employment

Future Works Skills

- 4 new future work skills programmes
- 1 review of future work skills support
- 500 people helped to develop a skills action plan
- 100 people with new digital access to essential service
- 300 vouchers awarded to young people
- 50-100 people trains for a future in hospitality

Results

- 500 apprenticeships
- 60% of hospitality trainees securing employment

Support for Business Recovery

- 1,747 businesses supported
- 20 Institutions engaged in delivering future vision activity
- 3 Socially innovative services designed and delivered

Sustainable Recovery

- 2 new business support programmes
- 1 review of green recovery support

Outputs

- 100 green vouchers awarded to businesses
- 200 companies supported through new business programmes

Results

- 10% CO2 Savings made by beneficiary businesses

Business Resilience

- 4 new business support programmes
- 1 review of business resilience support

Outputs

- 50 businesses supported
- 297 technology vouchers for business
- 600 businesses receiving digital consultancy
- 500 traders participating in 'covid-secure' training

Results

- 40 businesses with new processes, products or services
- 150 new processes in business receiving vouchers

Support for Business Recovery

- 20 Institutions engaged in delivering future vision activity
- 3 Socially innovative services designed and delivered

Future Urban Blueprint

- 2 feasibility studies produced
- 1 blueprint plan produced
- 1 marketing plan delivered

Results

- 15 case studies

C Care Together

- 6 workshops
- 1 web-based recovery toolkit
- 10 case studies

Outputs

- 1 marketing campaign
- 1 food co-ordination service launched

C Care Future Business

Outputs

- 35 businesses testing the sustainability toolkit
- 35 businesses testing the resilience toolkit

Results

- 25 business adopting new processes, products or services

Our Work

Since our appointment we have produced:

Regional Reviews

Our contract required us to quickly examine the Regional Reviews which had been produced in the first few weeks of project delivery and we did so on 2 February 2022. These were designed to help the partners understand the range of pandemic responses which occurred in each of the participating regions. We examined the five regional responses available at the time. Not all reports provided lessons learned. Our Review Report is supplied at Annex 1.

In terms of best practice in the early stages of the pandemic, French partners provided the best numbers. There also appeared to be more synergy between central and local Government in France. On the other hand, the connections with businesses appear to be much stronger on the English side.

We fully understood the pressure there had been to act but drew attention to the (understandable) inconsistent reporting processes that had been put in place and the lack of a focus impact. We recommend that similar future projects invest effort in providing/ agreeing a common template for reporting at an early stage. There has been valuable learning, but no doubt some learning has been lost because there was no systematic approach to learning capture.

The Regional Review for Plymouth City Council was not received until after we had delivered our review report and we were therefore unable to include its findings.

As a part of this phase of the work we also provided partners with an introduction to Best Practice Transfer at a partner workshop on 10 February 2022 and introduced the **Nature and Scale Framework** for examining project interventions:



What are the key objectives, description of the end state, baselines or benchmarks?

Or what are the bottlenecks, knock-on effects, barriers, obstacles, challenges?



A rich description of the help provided – knowledge transfer, research process adding metrics / measures (set out the hours, days, cost/value, volumes involved)



Detail the Short, medium and long-term impacts – one-off or enduring – first year, 3 years, 10 years. Any cost or time savings, reduced time to market, process time saved seconds, minutes, hours, days and cost equivalents, unexpected positive consequences expressed in monetary terms. Personal – knowledge transfer, increased confidence, new skills. Before and after photos? Before and after flowcharts? Record of cost benefit conversation.

A Project Assessment Toolkit

We were asked to create a project assessment toolkit recommending the best way to assess complex recovery actions in order to assist similar organisations to respond to future pandemics or other emergencies. Following wide consultations, we reached two conclusions:

1. Partners should become more familiar with the existing standing arrangement related to emergency responses – which are professional and extensive in both countries. We learned from experts in the arena that whatever the crisis (terrorist incident, oil spill, plane crash, natural disaster, major transport accident, scandal or hacking) the response always needs to be the same:

- Establish the facts, assess how many people will be severely affected, agree a strategy and action plan and prepare the first response.

2. In terms of an approach to “get under the skin” of interventions we decided to “bottle” our own approach to evaluating any kind of publicly funded project – which we regard as good, if not best practice. Our Assessment Toolkit – which cover the process in detail - is at Annex 2.

A Model Workshop Methodology

We were asked to produce a model workshop methodology to help similar organisations with pandemic, other emergency, and recovery actions in the future. Given that all emergency situations demand speedy responses we decided to share a proven approach for rapid project design developed in the Enterprise Company at Coventry University. Our Rapid Project Design Toolkit was presented at a partner workshop on 6 September 2022 demonstrating how project concepts can be speedily created and still be well designed. The Slide Deck used on that occasion is at Annex X.

A Data Collection and Assessment Methodology

The level of diversity / complexity across 17 projects limited the scope for an entirely uniform approach to impact assessment and created significant challenges in the design of the Data Collection and Assessment Methodology, but we worked hard with all partners over a period of months to agree a common approach to assessment wherever it was possible. We would draw attention to the fact that it is not unusual for data to be unavailable in sufficient detail to enable useful comparisons to be made even within countries and this is exacerbated in a trans-national context. Our Data Collection and Assessment Methodology is at Annex X.

Thematic Factsheets

In line with our obligations, we will be producing bi-lingual worksheets on the following themes:

- Direct support, vouchers, and grants for businesses
- Skills and employment support for individuals

- Impact on City and town centres and employment premises
- Digital skills and infrastructures
- Access to community services

No projects proceeded in relation to the fight against food poverty or access to community services, however, following discussions with the project team we have agreed to produce a fifth factsheet addressing access to community services.

The emphasis from the C Care team has always been on providing practical and implementable recommendations for delivery and we hope our work (which is currently in progress) will meet this requirement.

Strategic Results

Working through the complex project documentation we have identified 13 beneficiary level impact measures, 3 applying to both individuals and businesses, 5 to businesses only, 4 to individuals alone and 1 to environmental. Aggregated, the C Care Project contracted outputs and results were:

Beneficiary Level

Number of:

- Individuals / businesses receiving grants/vouchers
- Individuals / businesses receiving support
- Individual businesses receiving adviser support and grants/vouchers
- People trained
- Beneficiaries in thematic areas (for example digital, hospitality, start-ups)
- Action plans (for individuals or businesses)
- CO2 savings
- New business products and services introduced
- New business processes introduced
- Individuals entering employment
- Individuals entering alternative employment
- Start-ups assisted
- Apprenticeships created

Project Level

Accepting that some projects were set up to deliver specific outputs, for example, the actions around Pas de Calais’s marketing campaign and City and Town Centres (Future Focus and Growth of Town Centres - 1 blueprint and 15 case studies) we have identified 6 project level measurements:

Number of:

- Case studies
- Food coordination methods launched
- Feasibility studies
- Urban blueprints
- Marketing campaigns
- Businesses testing the resilience toolkit

Strategic Conclusions



Care projects have shared themes in groups and between project activities. As might be expected, there have been significant differences in the scale, strategic objectives, target audiences, outputs, outcomes, stakeholders, and the organisations involved in the delivery of individual projects.



Actions were almost entirely designed based on previous experience, conventional wisdom, custom and practice, established operating assumptions, creative stealing from other projects, knowledge of what had worked and not worked, and were driven by intangible personal and team drivers such as levels of ambition, appetite for risk, values and management culture. Hardly any projects were specifically designed as direct responses to COVID being adaptations of processes which were already operational or tested.



There have been a few projects which have no counterparts for comparison across or within countries (Pas de Calais's Tourism campaign, New Anglia's apprenticeships). On the other hand, some projects that are thematically separate, have involved comparable elements (CESI's Resilience support and toolkit and Kent's Technology Resilience actions).



We observed in our Assessment Methodology that the emphasis on urgent action often led to less of a focus on the impacts being sought by projects and how they might be measured. There has been a propensity for partners to adhere to custom and practice and conventional wisdom in relation to impact measurement - not actively looking beyond contracted outputs. This is normal behaviour and probably even more understandable in an emergency, but we think this approach regularly means that the chance to create persuasive cases for public support are often missed and the data often fails to fully reflect the full range of impacts being achieved. This failure to measure the right things and the lack of numbers in the process undermines the assessment of value for money.



Almost all projects were based on previously successful delivery prior models, exploiting partner's previous experience, tools, activities, and processes – enhancing the potential for success, but limiting the room for innovation.



Business Recovery

Sustainable Recovery

Projects: Sustainable Recovery Kent and Resurgum Plymouth

- The world is already full of toolkits – find out what is on offer and learn from the most effective. If possible, broker businesses to the best existing – perhaps by using Case Studies which are passive peer to peer actions
- Look to see what the public offer and the market already have to offer when you are designing new actions. Talking to the private sector can also help with better partnership building
- Green Plans are valuable - the conversation stimulates more people to think strategically before they take action
- Sustainability is a slippery concept – the same label is used for very different ideas and it is good to be clear about the project definition at the outset – sustainable = enduring sustainable = viable sustainable = environment
- Vouchers are worth exploring as an intervention approach - particularly because they relieve beneficiaries of the necessity to cash flow purchases
- Beware of creating labyrinthine administrative procedures to manage very small amounts of public money
- Procurement frameworks can be extremely challenging and still be unsuccessful. They are difficult to manage, tough to explain to clients and limit beneficiaries' flexibility around purchasing. At the same time, they are a good mechanism for triggering action.
- Administrative procedures need to be proportionate to the public investment involved..
- Business recovery plans – like all strategic conversations with SME managers – have led to fairer employment policies and more sustainable behaviours
- On-line events are good for time pressured SME managers, but peer to peer interactions are probably more influential

- Business focus groups can be dangerous – individual businesses have had individual experiences and that can make their contributions very partial, focus groups can descend into group think. Use the Insight Works Business Model
- Involve beneficiaries in project design, but maintain your objectivity

Business Resilience

Projects: CESI Resilience Toolkit in Normandy, Technology Resilience and Consumer Confidence in Kent and Digital consultancy in Norfolk

- If vouchers are involved, aim for same day decision making
- Push against slow and painful public procurement practices – refuse to accept the status quo. Start by asking what the best service standards would look like. Consider:
 - How poor suppliers will be managed / removed
 - Having rules around supplier standards – “one complaint and you will be removed”
- Many suppliers will be completely unfamiliar with the process – they will need support
- Push for more people development around procurement – the more understanding the better the public service
- Strategic support is always healthy – for both individuals and businesses
- Research the toolkit competition to inform your development
- Toolkits are popular because they raise self and organisational awareness, putting the strategic position on paper clarifies thinking and aids better decisions
- Always consider the Deming loop when designing and delivering actions – Plan Do Review Act – remember to keep a focus on action

- All beneficiaries are not equal - A £500 voucher is a low risk, and it can facilitate a range of useful purchases for both individuals and businesses – bikes, laptops. On the other hand it will almost certainly be insufficient for a more sophisticated businesses and purchases – for example in manufacturing or for software.
- There is some very powerful low-cost software on the market – small monthly subscriptions give access to live data and can be used to significantly improve administrative processes
- Podcasts can be an extremely useful tool for businesspeople – they can be viewed any time of day
- Engaging residents, businesses and specialist Council officers at the project design stage can help improve impact by bringing different perspectives – example: businesses in Kent were not interested in building confidence around COVID, but they were interested in building confidence in other ways
- The COVID confidence podcasts will be a useful legacy of the project – available in both English and French
- When designing projects consider who the key influencers might be and engage with them to increase the likelihood of project success
- Don't rely on passive marketing techniques to deliver results – real traction comes from a passionately articulated offer made face to face



Reset & Redesign

Future Business

Projects: CESI Resilience Toolkit Normandy and Sustainable Business Kent

- Actively supporting connections to new partners bring new perspectives and enhanced impact
- Councils need to invest more effort in managing information around local businesses
- When designing projects be more open to learning from elsewhere – it's not difficult, consider who might know, decide what it would be valuable to know, call them, email them and video meet them. Actively manage the learning

C-Care Together

Projects: Food Poverty in Finisterre and Visitor Economy promotional campaign in Pas de Calais

- The food poverty project was cancelled.

Future Urban Blueprints

Projects: Feasibility studies in New Anglia and Plymouths City Centre actions

- Community ownership offers massive potential for city and town centre transformation



Social Inclusion

Self Employment

Projects: Assisting benefit recipients with business building in Finisterre and in-depth training for the self-employed and would be self-employed in New Anglia

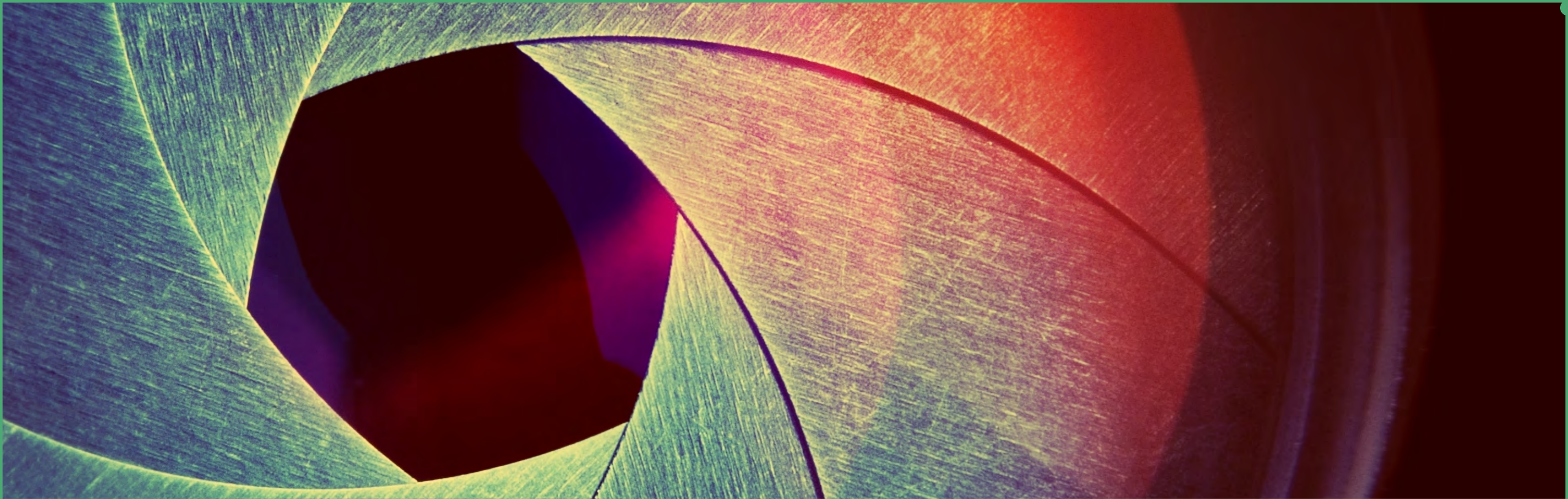
- UK policy makers could learn from the model in Finisterre – obligating those who are on benefits, but running a business to take advantage of support “this business is not working but with your transferrable skills you could.” “this business has potential; we can help you build it”
- Regular contact with the hard to reach has emotional benefits – beneficiaries recognise someone cares – check ins are valuable
- Workshops which involve collaborative problem solving can be extremely valuable – learning from others around commercial issues can be transformational
- Online access can be vital for those in rural areas

Future Work Skills

Projects: Digital skills in Finisterre, a community hub in Plymouth, Apprenticeships in Norfolk and support to the hospitality sector in Pas de Calais

- The quality of advisors is pivotal to the impact achieved
- Consider the composition of advisor cohorts - male and female advisors can often bring different perspectives
- Is there a case for creating a working group of partners in the sector? Social and informal contact can help considerably in building relationships across organisations and advisors. These initiatives always need a first mover
- Even when follow up practice is scheduled to be as regular as 3, 6 and 9 months, it remains very difficult to establish where beneficiaries have travelled to next...

- Emails don't work – you have to engage with routes to market personally
- We need more help for employers to recognise the benefits of developing their people – changing mindsets, obtaining loyalty, increasing productivity
- Remember the barriers to individual business success are numerous
- Norfolk's innovation was to address the barriers to apprenticeships for both businesses and individuals, with apprentices allowed to keep the assets purchased – they felt more cared for, they took more care of “their” tools and they learned more quickly
- Recognise that however good you believe your project to be, there is always room for improvement
- There is some very useful software available to aid decision making and it can increase administrative control
- Well managed messaging aids recruitment
- Timing of launches is always important – scan the horizon
- Forms are painful – always provide hand holding support
- Aim for the minimum burden on applicants
- It's all in the processes. Do you know them intimately? Could any element be made simpler?
- Recognise the world has changed – post pandemic people are much more conscious of their work life balance – support needs to adjust to take account



Project Snapshots

Social Inclusion

Conseil départemental du Finistère **T.2.1.1: Support for Self-employment**

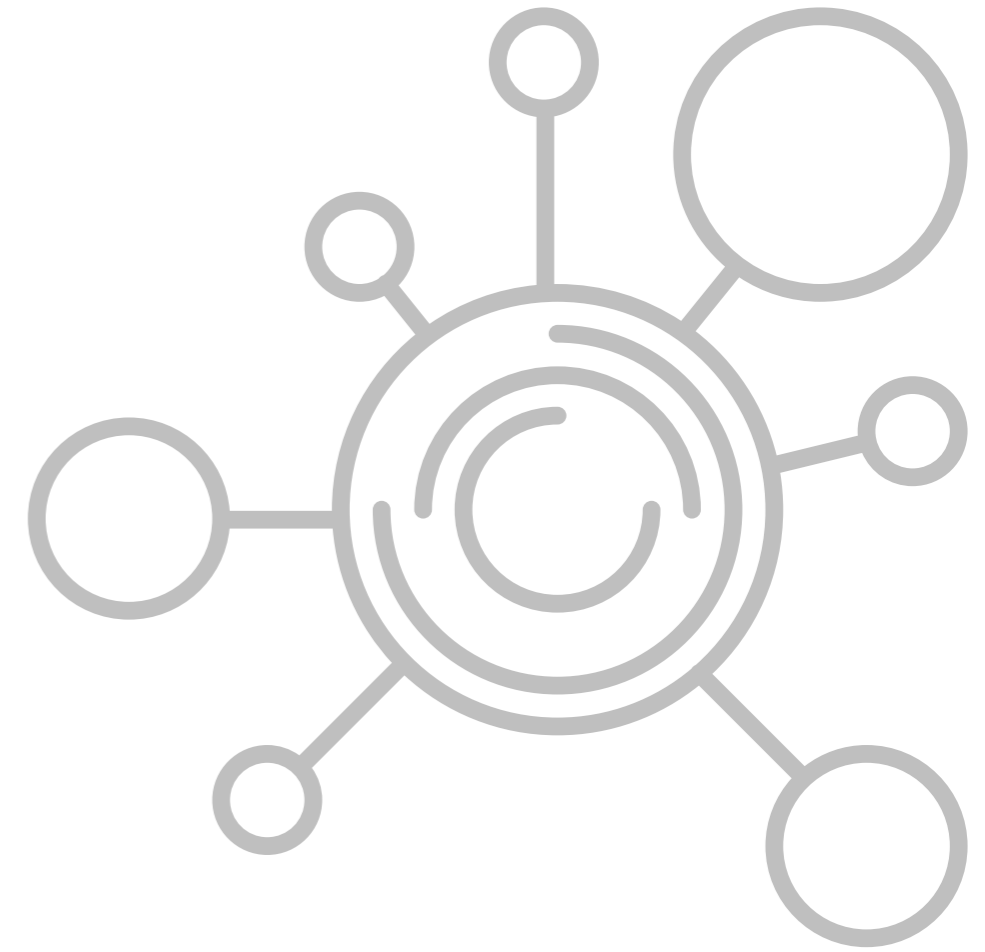
New Anglia LEP **T.2.1.2: Support for Self-employment**

Plymouth City Council **T.2.2.3: Community Hubs (Upskill)**

Conseil départemental du Finistère **T.2.2.4: Digital Inclusion**

Norfolk Council Council **T.2.2.5: Support Apprenticeships**

Pas-de-Calais Tourisme **T.2.2.6: Training in the Hospitality Sector**





C-Care Theme: Social Inclusion
Sub Theme: Self-employment

T.2.1.1: Support for Self-employment (Finistere)

Conseil départemental du Finistère

Support for entrepreneurs in Finistère was delivered by the Conseil départemental du Finistère. Its aim was for an advisor to work with entrepreneurs who were also drawing benefits to help them build up their skill sets to be able to grow their business and become less reliant on public subsidy. Where a business was failing, the advisor would support the individual to understand where they had transferable skills which could support them in employment. Participants would also receive access to workshops which supported various skills such as accounting and marketing. There are over 1,000 entrepreneurs on benefits in Finistère. To date the programme has supported 150 individuals.

What worked?



The Conseil has the data on which entrepreneurs were also drawing benefits, which allowed them to directly target this group. Having this data available made it much easier to connect.



The support itself was well delivered, and the workshops had a real impact on many of the entrepreneurs. For example, the accounting workshop helped a decorator gain a better understanding of her cost base, and as a result was able to factor that into her pricing and charge more for her service.



A real benefit for the entrepreneurs was the feeling of being supported. In feedback, that many participants stated that the support made them feel like they have a link to support and didn't feel so alone. Having access to external support is a real benefit – self-employment can be a lonely endeavour, and having an advisor help people get out of their own head, listen to objective advice and understand their own strengths and weaknesses can be very empowering.



The workshops also gave entrepreneurs the chance to meet other like-minded people, share problems, compare approaches and support each other. Finistère is a very rural part of France, and building this connectivity felt very important.

What didn't work?



This group of entrepreneurs aren't always receptive to support, and many are happy with the balance of work and benefits. Whilst benefits are available to subsidise their income, there is limited motivation for them to grow their business.



Social Mobility was a key barrier. The rurality of Finistère meant the support was delivered in the 4 major cities. Some individuals had no transport so couldn't travel to workshops; others had other issues which needed addressing – such as childcare.



The project would have benefited from having more advisors delivering support. There is a however a shortage of business support advisors across Finistère.

Lessons Learned



Whilst having access to data on all entrepreneurs on benefits, looking at creative ways to engage people would be an improvement. Online delivery, delivering where people are based and recruiting a broader set of advisors across the area could all help. Taking some time to ask those entrepreneurs who did engage what the barriers were and how we could increase engagement would be beneficial.



Establish strong processes to manage the paperwork or find better ways to monitor support which reduces the amount of paperwork needed. It is easy to waste time chasing missing documents, or half completed records of support. Managing expectations of providers and entrepreneurs is important in ensuring a smooth administration process.



Headline Data

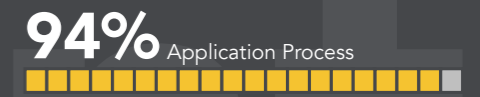


Were **satisfied** with the **overall experience** - **55%** were **extremely satisfied**



Were **satisfied** with the **quality of service** - **62%** were **extremely satisfied**

% of satisfied respondents:





C-Care Theme: Social Inclusion
Sub Theme: Self-employment

T.2.1.2: Support for Self-employment (NALEP)

New Anglia LEP

The Local Enterprise Partnership in New Anglia (operating in the English counties of Norfolk and Suffolk) has been working with two long established Local Enterprise Agencies – NWES and MENTA since October 2021 on a £700k project to support Start-ups and newly established businesses. Both organisations have their own HQ premises and a presence in both counties along with extensive connections in local communities.

Project target groups have been numerous - the unemployed, economically inactive, underemployed, 16 to 24, over 50-year-olds and refugees. The project's original ambition was to engage with 1,200 individuals and help 300 individuals on the path to either starting a business or finding employment. The project has offered thematic workshops, for example Becoming Your Own Boss, Self-employment Taxes and Legal Requirements, Business Planning, Bookkeeping, Marketing and Sales, Funding, Managing Digital and Social Media – and these have been complemented by 1:1 support and the availability of workspace.

At the time of consultation, the project had engaged 730 individuals and 421 had completed the support process. Of these, 144 have started businesses/entered self-employment and evidence of 37 jobs created had been collected. It is widely acknowledged that working with the hard to reach can be extremely challenging, such individuals often have no culture of travel, may have learning difficulties, are reluctant to participate in formal arrangements (attendance is always a challenge) may lack motivation, have a poor work ethic or inexperience of working disciplines.

What worked?



Both delivery organisations have been offering Start-up support for over four decades and have highly experienced core teams supported by tried and tested contractor trainers guaranteeing quality of delivery.



Interreg project resources allowed a much greater flexibility in delivery than has been possible under funding streams such as ESF and ERDF which have traditionally been hampered by unnecessary rules and regulations. Resources allowed for more time with beneficiaries, less bureaucracy and provided resources to support genuine targeting.



Active marketing to local organisations, libraries, government job centres, community organisations aided recruitment.

What didn't work?



The timing of the Enterprise Agency's standing arrangements around follow-up and feedback didn't allow for any kind of detailed survey of individuals.



Project targets were highly ambitious and although there is delivery time left, recent negotiations have led to a lowering of operational targets.

Lessons Learned



The hard to reach are hard to reach – by definition, they are the farthest anyone can be from the labour market and regularly amongst the least able to start and successfully run a business. However, individuals who need help have little resistance to providing personal information if they believe it is part of the process.



Ambitious projects take time to formulate and develop. Always ensure those who have direct delivery experience are involved with those who write project proposals.



Focus effort on the definitions of key concepts – for example “what will a completion look like?”. Work to measure the right things. Be conscious of the trade-off between volume targets and geographical focus.



When working in an EU funded project, remember to take account of exchange rates.



Enabling Self-Employment can also mean supporting those who are already self-employed.



Results

The project is proceeding until the end of March and therefore final results are not available.

Beneficiaries were asked to score themselves on a variety of questions relating to the relevant support topic **before** and **after** support



C-Care Theme: Social Inclusion
Sub Theme: Future Work Skills

T.2.2.3: Community Hubs (Upskill)

Plymouth City Council

Upskill aimed to reach individuals across Plymouth who were unemployed or at risk of losing their job. It worked with individuals to develop a skills action plan to identify how they could further their skills and knowledge development, with the overall aim of encouraging people to invest in their career development. Upskill targeted the most deprived parts of Plymouth, utilising effective relationships with local community groups such as the Four Greens Trust, Bernardo's, Wellbeing Hubs and more.

What worked?



Having a highly competent skills advisor who knew how to work with individuals to develop a relevant skills action plan was crucial. James Blake, who is Community Lead at Skills Launchpad Plymouth excelled in this role.



James was also able to engage and work with 36 local community organisations, and even put together a working group, bringing representatives from all organisations to discuss their priorities and how they could support each other. It was the first time these organisations had come together, and there was real power in having a room full of like-minded people, with like-minded goals, and that group continues to meet every month.

What didn't work?



The project trialled reaching individuals already in employment, but this was very difficult. There was a reluctance from employers to engage – citing a fear of losing employees if they were upskilled.



James did an excellent job of trying to continue engaging with individuals, checking in at 3, 6 and 9 months to see how they were progressing, but this was not always successful. As a result, the project only has a snapshot view of how many went on to gain employment or carry out actions.



The original target was 500 – this was quickly seen as too ambitious, and reduced to 200. Without Covid-19, it might have been possible to get closer to the original target. But there was a very slow take up with Skills Action Plans in the early days, and it took a while to develop relationships with community organisations.

Lessons Learned



It's really important to change the narrative and shift the mindset and important to get employers to listen to employees, not the other way round. Employees want to feel like they are being invested in – this is a key contributor to long term loyalty – a contrast to how some employers felt.



There are major social mobility challenges when working with individuals who are furthest from employment – healthcare, wellbeing, caring responsibilities, mental health – and many more issues which need to be considered. Its not as simple as just putting in place a skills action plan, there are more barriers to employment, and a hybrid approach could be effective.



Reaching out to as many organisations as possible, from as early as possible, and maintaining those relationships throughout is key to accessing individuals. Establishing the working group has been an unintentional major success.



More than one skills advisor is recommended, and ensuring there is a male and female would also help break down some social barriers to engagement.



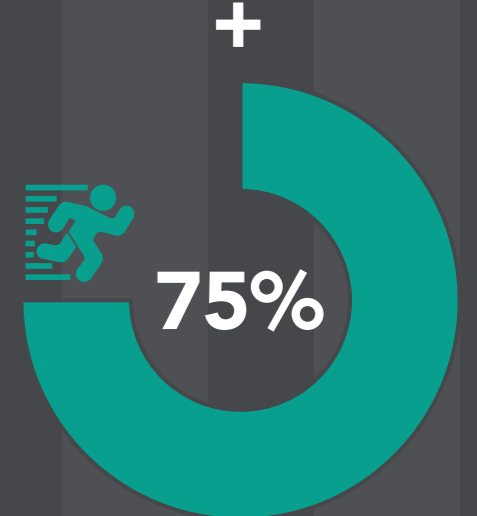
Skills Action Plans



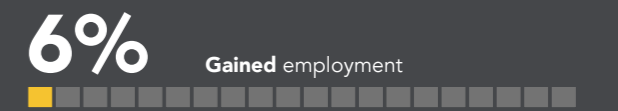
Were either **Satisfied** or **Very Satisfied** (**40%**) with the Skills Action Plan



Of respondents **learnt something about their skill requirements**



Have carried out **actions** form the **Skills Action Plan**





C-Care Theme: Social Inclusion
Sub Theme: Future Work Skills

T.2.2.4: Digital Inclusion

Conseil départemental du Finistère

Digital Skills was delivered by Conseil départemental du Finistère and was designed to fight against digital poverty. The project was split into 14 smaller interventions, delivered by local authorities across Finistère, which each targeted a different group of people – disabilities, age, etc. The aim of one intervention targeted people with disabilities to help them begin to use mobile phones and apps such as What's App to improve their ability to communicate. Another for elderly people supported them to share photos and use FaceTime so they could stay connected with loved ones.

What worked?



The support was designed to start with something small - using an app, sending an email, and then building up to things that were more difficult such as using a website to pay your tax or access public services. This approach worked really well.



The reach was fairly good – the Local Authorities have good reach into communities through local groups, but also used different mechanisms to get the message out there – advertising in local newspapers, posters in local councils, on local radio and with Facebook adverts. They also have their own network of providers they could reach out to.

What didn't work?



Some workshops didn't work because they were attempting to provide support which was too advanced. This was particularly apparent when working with people with disabilities who physically could carry out some of the tasks.



There were over 40 applications to deliver projects (a real indication of need), but it was apparent that the smaller associations found it much harder to respond to the procurement – they just didn't have the capability to develop a strong proposal. As a result, the Conceil are going to develop their own package of support to upskill the smaller associations so they can better respond to opportunities in the future.

Lessons Learned



There can often be a piece of work which needs to be done before the workshop around educating people on the benefits of certain digital solutions. For example, one association decided to do a workshop on a Car Share app for older people but there was a low take up. They didn't fully understand the benefit, so they did a piece which explained the benefits of car sharing (Social, financial, etc). This was the same for some of the other workshops.



Results

No results were available at the time of the evaluation.



C-Care Theme: Social Inclusion
Sub Theme: Future Work Skills

T.2.2.5: Support Apprenticeships


Norfolk County Council

Access to Apprenticeships was designed as a direct response to Covid-19. It was built on feedback from employers and training providers which highlighted the biggest barriers individuals face in taking up apprenticeships. That learning supported recent research, highlighting the concerns around social mobility. Parts of Norfolk are amongst the least socially mobile in the country, and areas such as Great Yarmouth, Thetford and Kings Lynn have a greater share of low-skilled, low paid employment and poor connectivity by transport. Access to digital equipment and travel are two of the key barriers holding back people accessing employment opportunities. Access to Apprenticeships provided individuals with a grant of up to £500 to contribute towards the cost of addressing the barrier. It had the added incentive that the individual got to keep the item – leaving a legacy with them which would go beyond the apprenticeship and support individuals with their future career prospects, and overall social mobility.

To date the project has received 375 applications at a combined value of almost £160,000, at an average cost of £426 per apprentice.

What worked?



 Using the Power BI Dashboard has been a game changer. It has



allowed the team to monitor and analyse data and draw live insights which have influenced the way the project has been managed and delivered. It allowed the capture of data on geography, age, referral route, provider, sector and apprenticeship levels. It's been so successful that the opportunity to roll it out for wider usage across the council has gone to Board level.



The value of the grant was correct for the level of intervention. It

allowed individuals to buy the best solution to overcome their specific barrier – be it toolkits, laptops, bus passes, moped hire, bikes or something else. This often unlocked the opportunity with employers, who also commented that the grant made the decision to take on an apprentice much easier.



Giving the grant to the individual – not the employer – was key. It left a long-term legacy of support and could unlock future opportunities that may arise after the apprenticeship. It also showed that the employer/Council was willing to invest in that individual's wellbeing. It even had additional unexpected benefits. In the case of trade apprentices, individuals who purchased tools tended to take greater care of the equipment, knowing that they owned it. With their own tools, they were able to learn much quicker. When shadowing, they could practice at the same time as being shown what to do.



What didn't work?



In the beginning, there was not enough publicity of the project, and it took a while to gain momentum. For example, in January 2022 the project received 10 applications. In January 2023 that had risen to over 30. More marketing in the early days would have helped.



There was a view that it was such a good offer that it would be easy to engage employers and individuals, but that didn't happen. Engagement only picked up when the team started visiting training providers to speak directly to new cohorts of individuals about the opportunity. They were also able to spread the message to delivery staff, who could notify employers that the scheme was open. The message was also important – it wasn't just a laptop or a bus pass for work, it was something they can use personally as well. This approach to engagement had a big impact on the success of the project.



As with all public support, there is an element of "if its free, it can't be any good" amongst potential beneficiaries. People couldn't understand that there wasn't a catch, and it took some time to get that message across.



Timing is important. Apprenticeships tend to start between September and October. This project started in December 2021, so it missed this window by a few months. The team put a lot of work into driving engagement and made some really good inroads. Despite best efforts, it wasn't until September 2022 that the numbers really started to accelerate



Every training provider has been challenging to a certain extent, and it's taken significant effort to get them to fully engage. Equally, SMEs can be difficult. They're time poor – and simply getting them to fill the form in, buy the equipment and send the receipt was difficult and required effort from the team to chase paperwork.



Originally there was a paper application. The data had to be manually entered into a spreadsheet, followed by a manual check to see when companies and providers could be chased. The team made changes and built in automation processes. The data still had to be manually inputted, but the flows in the background would auto generate emails if someone needed to make a purchase or send receipts. This helped ease the burden on the team and allowed them to cope better with demand.



Lessons Learned



It's all in the processes. Whether its marketing, application, data management, provider/SME/individual engagement – those processes need to be established and working well.



Be careful about increasing the grant value above £500. At its current level, its low risk. There were occasions where the apprentice left after 6-weeks, and the project had to recover the item purchased. There weren't many cases where individuals needed much more than £500 to overcome the barrier.



Consideration to the start dates of apprenticeships is important, and work can be done in advance to prepare for the September/October window.



Don't try to incorporate a framework, or control where the employer spends the money. There are so many sectors covered by Apprenticeships, and so many different things that could be purchased. Its far easier to give the employer the freedom to purchase from their own preferred supplier and provide receipts.



Much thought went into making this project stand out, its benefits, who it would reach and the barriers it could address. It was the right offer and the right thing to do.



The payment process is complex. It is a tripartite agreement between the provider, employer and individual, but the employer makes the purchase and needs to be reimbursed quickly. Council payment terms are 28 days, but delays can happen. Managing expectations around this is crucial.



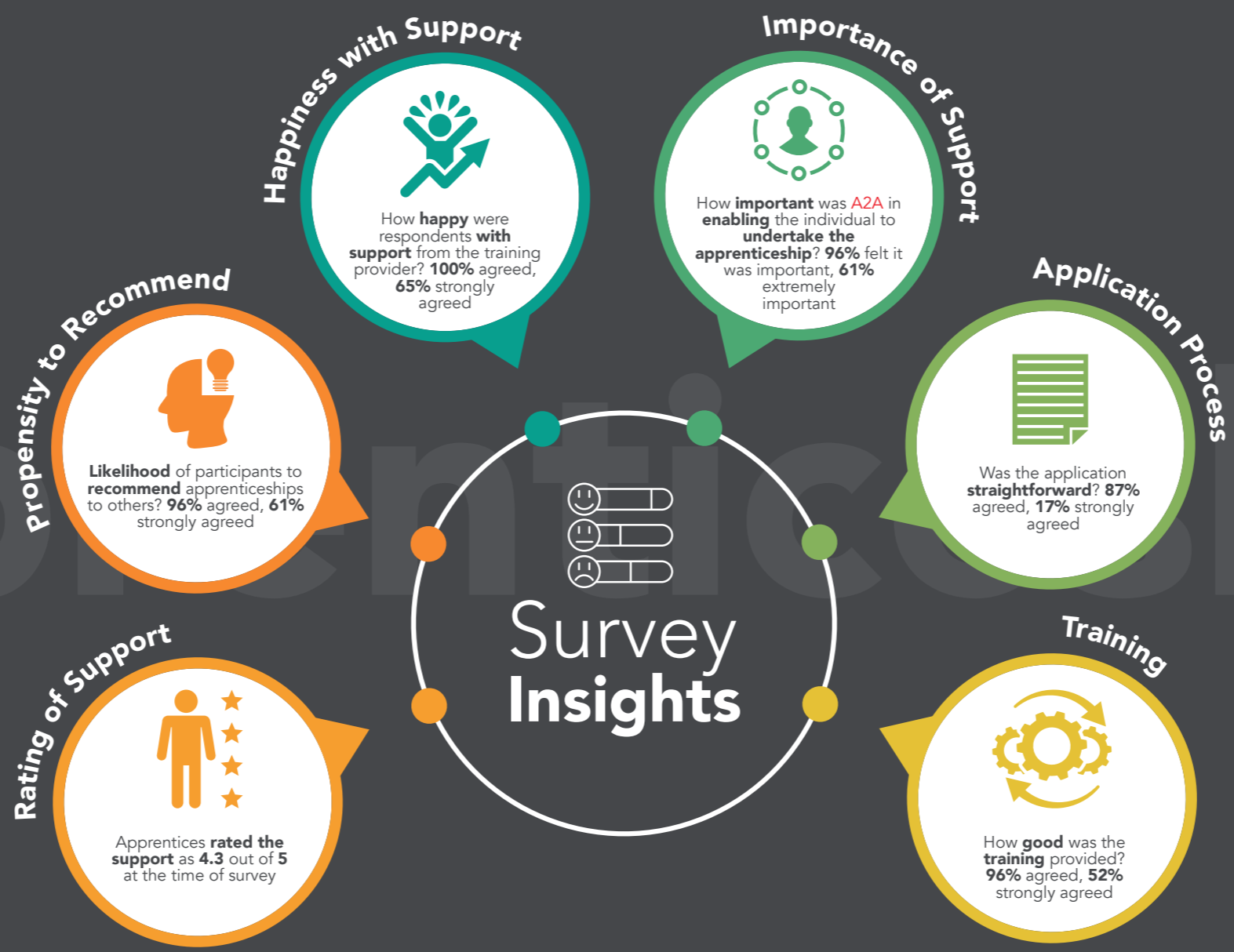
There has been a mindset shift since the pandemic. Everyone is searching for a better work/life balance, and that includes apprentices. It's affecting every industry to a certain extent (chefs have retrained because they can earn more money and achieve better working conditions somewhere else). This is something any partner should be aware of if delivering an apprenticeship scheme.



The SME needs support. Sometimes it's difficult to even get the right bank details – and they often need walking through the process. Creating good, clear, practical guidance can help.

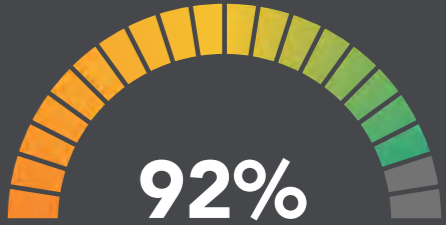


Headline Data: Apprentices



Apprenticeships

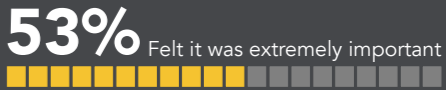
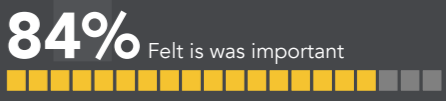
Headline Data: Employers



Of respondents said they would recruit an apprentice again



How important was the availability of the access to the Apprenticeships Grant, (and other HM Government financial incentives), in your decision to take on a young apprentice?





C-Care Theme: Social Inclusion
Sub Theme: Future Work Skills

T.2.2.6: Training in the Hospitality Sector

Pas-de-Calais Tourisme

Businesses in the visitor economy in Pas-de-Calais were severely damaged by the pandemic and they were already facing significant labour shortages – in 2022 there were 2,500 local vacancies. The pandemic also triggered a massive shift in customer behaviour. In response the team at Pas-de-Calais Tourisme created a series of training/educational programmes to directly help businesses along with a project to assist people considering a career in the hospitality sector in Northern France. Local businesses were beneficiaries of programmes which inspired them to re-think their offers. These involved 10 days of group sessions and 1:1 interaction. Over 100 individuals were recruited to the sector educational programme and although 30% dropped out 70 participants completed the process. The team also created a Sustainable Tourism Academy involving 100 SMEs.

What worked?



Initially recruitment of businesses to the programme was a challenge, but the members of the first cohort became ambassadors for the project. Feedback from the first business cohort was extremely positive.



Business participants were successfully encouraged to collect testimonials, consider decoration and modernisation, align offers more to potential clients needs and deploy digital tools.



The programme was very well received with business people applauding the quality of the training, the chance to take a step back, have time for reflection and the learning from the trainers and peers. Other benefits included; help in creating action plans, personal support and reassurance, tackling longstanding problems, new tools and methods, inspiration and understanding of both people issues and business.



The programme to boost recruitment in the sector was innovative with participants introduced to the pros and cons of employment in the sector – as well as meeting employers and employees - to help them make their decision around seeking employment in this area of work.



Project work around food design was successful – with advisors spending just a few hours with employers to inspire them to rethink menus and even consider price points

What didn't work?



Initial recruitment proved very challenging.

Lessons Learned



Be as close as possible to clients (both businesses and individuals) to fully understand their perspectives and challenges



Results

The second cohort of the business programme will be completed after the production of this report.

Business Recovery

Kent County Council Green **T.3.1.3: Green Recovery Voucher Scheme**

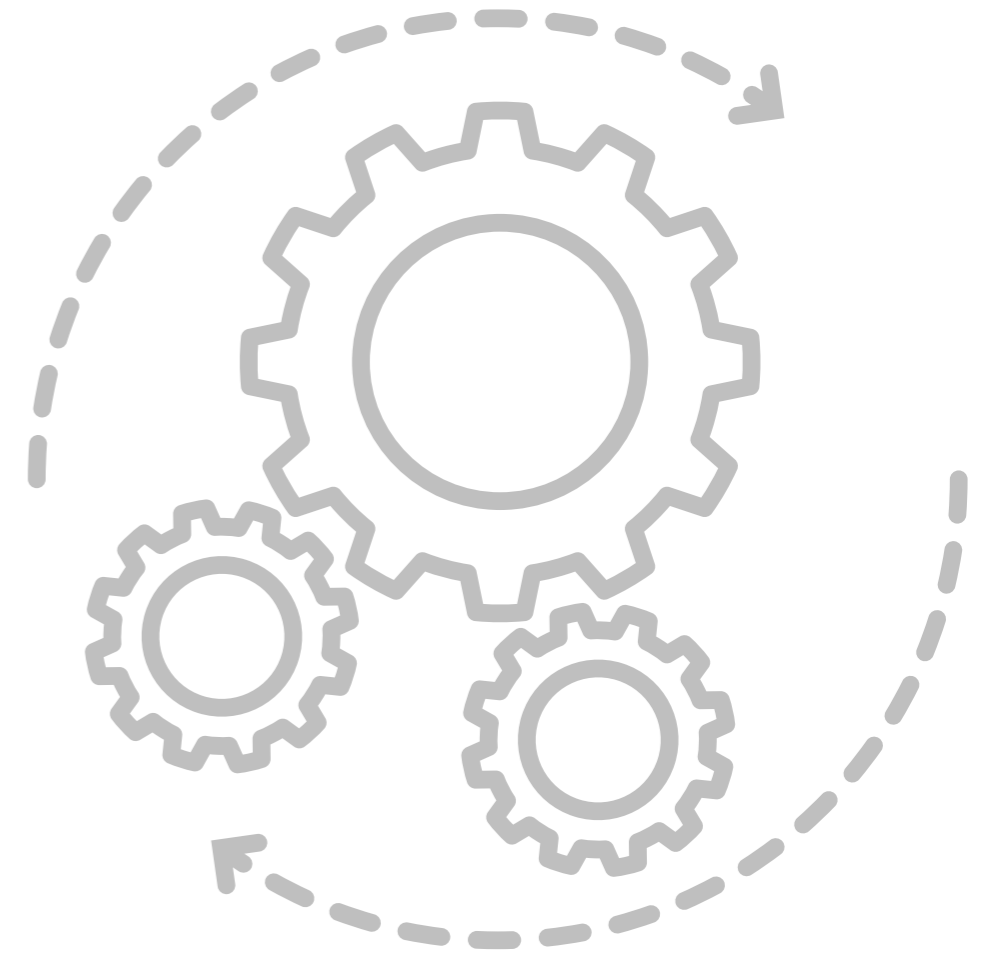
Plymouth City Council **T.3.1.4: Inclusive Economic Growth**

Campus d'Enseignement Supérieure et de Formation Professionnelle **T.3.2.3: Business Resilience Support**

Kent County Council **T.3.2.4: Technology Resilience Voucher Scheme**

Norfolk Council Council **T.3.2.5: Go Digital**

Kent County Council **T.3.2.6: Trading Standards Building Customer Confidence**





C-Care Theme: Business Recovery
Sub Theme: Sustainable Recovery

T.3.1.3: Green Recovery Voucher Scheme

Kent County Council

The Green Recovery Voucher Scheme has helped Kent businesses take advantage of environmental advice and services. Businesses have applied for vouchers of up to £1,500 to help improve business sustainability, resilience and support economic recovery. Businesses applied for a voucher, detailing what type of support they were interested in, and then accessed providers via a procurement framework that was established by Kent County Council. Once work was completed, Kent paid the provider directly.

What worked?



The de-carbonisation reviews were the most popular choice for companies, and possibly the most effective. They forced companies to think more strategically about sustainability, adding real value to the business.



The project in general was a great way to engage businesses in the Net Zero conversations. The voucher is a good incentive, and many businesses were cross referred to other projects running across the region to further support their sustainability objectives. There was initial concern that competing offers would clash, but it actually worked out well

– with partner cross referring and collaborating to provide support.



The choice of a 'voucher' as opposed to a 'grant' was important. The SME would engage the provider, and then following completion of work, the provider would invoice the Council – creating a tripartite agreement. This separated the SME from the transaction, removing the cash flow barrier which often exists. Whilst it shifted the cash flow burden to the provider, providers are used to delivering a service in advance of payment.

What didn't work?



Establishing the procurement framework was challenging – and could be considered a 'self-limiting action'. KCC found it difficult to get providers to engage and join the framework. There were 32 expressions of interest, but only eight ended up joining – many of these providers were consultants – so it did skew support towards Net Zero planning (which did have some benefit – as previously noted). There were some valid reasons for this – many sustainability service providers were overwhelmed with work, given the current energy crisis, and therefore joining the framework provided and extra layer of bureaucracy to

securing work. This knock-on effect of this lack of variety on the framework, was that it turned off many companies who were less interested in consultancy, and more interested in products or alternative services.



A number of SMEs wanted to use their own provider or someone they were aware of, as opposed to selecting someone from the framework. For example, Raleigh joined the framework, but SMEs wanted to use local bike suppliers who hadn't agreed to sign up. This discouraged participation to a certain extent.

Lessons Learned



Using the voucher as a way to 'light the fire' inside the company has been important, and working hard to build the knowledge of other support that is available is key. It almost becomes the gateway to a wraparound service for sustainability.



Despite its failings - the framework has potential. Spending more time researching local business solutions and doing some pre-engagement work to stimulate interest in the scheme would help. As would managing expectations of providers – 150 vouchers valued at £1500 equates to a £225,000 market opportunity which may appeal / not appeal.



Engaging with the local business community about what other support is around can also help with design of the framework, and the choice of provider. It can then be setup to compliment other activity – and might even negate the need for much promotion – with high potential for cross-referral from scheme with no voucher/grant option available.

Results



No results were available at time of evaluation



C-Care Theme: Business Recovery
Sub Theme: Sustainable Recovery

T.3.1.4: Inclusive Economic Growth

Plymouth City Council

Employ, Spend and Environment were part of the wider Plymouth Charter (which also included the themes of Upskill and Community) which was established to support Plymouth businesses to recover from the impact of Covid-19. The Council set out to engage with local businesses across each theme in order to better understand the related need so that focused and relevant local solutions could be developed. There were two elements – firstly, 10 businesses were engaged and convened in lunchtime focus groups to discuss barriers, needs, ideas and opportunities. The insights gained in these sessions resulted in the development of skills sessions for local businesses. Secondly, the project reached out to 40 businesses and conducted diagnostic and action plan sessions to understand how they made changes – i.e. their approach to recruitment. This process would again, inform the development of skills sessions to support best practice. Overall, 380 businesses have been engaged, 134 events have been hosted – including 15 in spend, 10 in employ and 23 in environment, and 187 skills action plans have been developed.

What worked?



The lunchtime meetings with businesses were very effective.

Participation was good, and there was genuine collaboration and effort to support each other.



It triggered change. Real Ideas hosted well and developed subsequent content

which had an impact. For example, Plymouth Argyle Football Club changed their recruitment process as a result of participating. Just one of many stories of companies improving processes.

What didn't work?



It was difficult to get engagement from businesses – and the quality of skills

sessions varied as a result. This could have been down to the platform or lack of promotion, but attendance at the sessions was lower than hoped.



Business have got used to attending events online, and in person events now

have lower turnout levels. Online events attract more people from a wider geography, as they remove travel barriers. It also suits 'time poor' businesses owners who do not have to leave the office.




A challenge to an expert isn't necessarily important to

growing the economy – and trying to change a company's way of thinking is difficult. Changing processes is hard enough, but when those processes are driven by cultural behaviour, it's extremely challenging and requires a longer-term engagement. A skills session won't be able to have that impact and managers aren't always open to looking at change.

Lessons Learned

 Engaging with local stakeholders, partners, networks, groups, trade associations to help disseminate the insights and subsequent skills sessions could improve uptake.

 Engaging with different sectors would also help – there is a large manufacturing sector in Plymouth but there was limited participation from manufacturers. It would be the same for all sectors – engaging the sectors specifically would result in more tailored skills sessions.

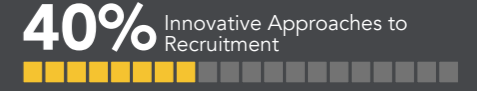
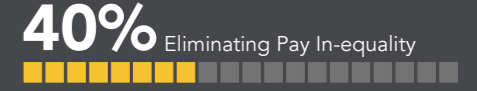
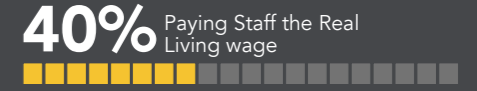
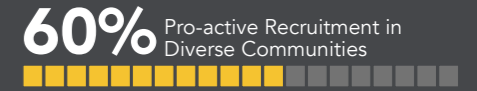
Impacting Processes



Developing People and Improving Strategy were the most impacted processes – with more people claiming a level of impact. However, at least a 1/3 of companies saw little or no impact across each key business process.



Influencing Approaches



 82% said support had influenced their approach to Net Zero – either through raising awareness, adopting sustainable practices, accelerating plans to move towards Net Zero



C-Care Theme: Business Recovery
Sub Theme: Business Resilience

T.3.2.3: Business Resilience Support

Campus d'Enseignement Supérieure et de Formation Professionnelle

It was universally recognised that almost all businesses had been damaged by the pandemic and the team at the Ecole d'ingénieurs training centre (CESI) in Normandy began work to create a resilience toolkit to help SME managers assess their level of resilience. Six students and two professors were engaged along with a cohort of younger students who worked to refine the toolkit's language to suit business users. Following detailed desk research, the team developed a prototype toolkit and tested it with a small number of businesses using these tests as a development opportunity for the engineering students / apprentices. They then created a second similar toolkit to measure a business's level of proficiency in managing innovation.

What worked?



Being able to assess the resilience of a business is a valuable exercise.

The projects achievement of a rich understanding of how businesses behaved in a crisis situation. The identification of seven common practices employed by SMEs during by the pandemic, and their three key strategic responses: cost reduction/activity optimisation, boosting marketing and sales actions / attempts to reach pre-pandemic revenue levels, business model innovation – new services, products or geographies.



The identification of a useful set of indicators to support the creation of resilience profiles - a foundation for future benchmarking and comparison.

What didn't work?



The original target was to interview 50 companies (25 in France and 25 in

England) but the appetite of SME business managers for the toolkit post pandemic was low and only 13 interviews were achieved. Partners in Kent encountered the same resistance and were only able to conduct 2 interviews.



Although the business model innovation tool offers potential, its design is based on a small number of local reviews, and it remains quite generic. Also, it has not yet been tested with SMEs and therefore there is currently no feedback around its value for beneficiaries.

Lessons Learned



Students were often unsighted around SME eligibility. Some thought the company they were working with was an SME (employing 100 people) but many were owned by much larger organisations and the testing of the toolkit (although valuable in itself) did not contribute to the understanding of the position in SMEs.



Launching new tools requires significant levels of engagement with businesses, it should be supported by a programme of webinars and conferences. Feedback from clients is vital to ensure any tool is relevant to the challenges faced by SME managers.

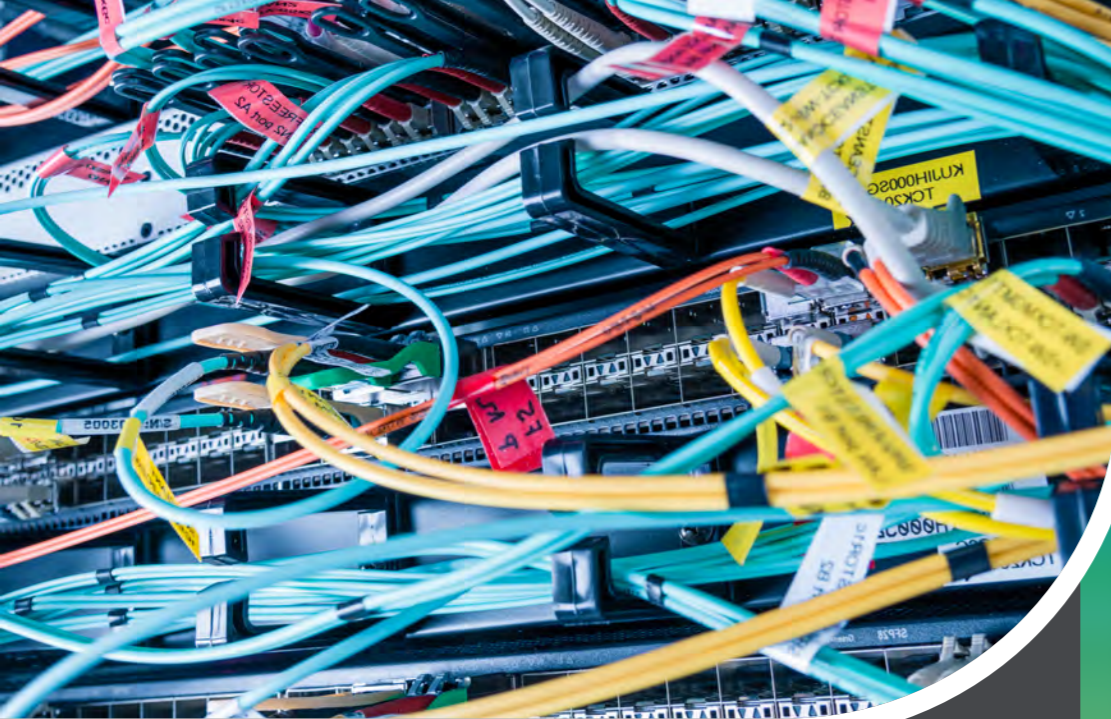


Recommendations resulting from the toolkit diagnosis must be very practical if they are to result in implementation by SME managers.



Results

The project resources have left a legacy which will be available not just for Kent businesses, but for any UK business.



C-Care Theme: Business Recovery
Sub Theme: Business Resilience

T.3.2.4: Technology Resilience Voucher Scheme

Kent County Council

The Technology Resilience Voucher Scheme has helped 468 Kent businesses access funding to implement a digital or technology-based solution to help improve business resilience and support economic recovery. Businesses have applied for vouchers of up to £1,000 to support website improvement, remote working technologies, software solutions, digital marketing and promotion, skills and capacity building or the purchase of equipment. Businesses applied for a voucher, detailing what type of support they were interested in, and then accessed providers via a procurement framework that was established by Kent County Council. Once work was completed, Kent paid the provider directly.

What worked?



There were various processes which worked well – designing sector specific engagement emails worked well to engage businesses as they were focused on support which might be relevant for those businesses.



The choice of a 'voucher' as opposed to a 'grant' was important. The SME would engage the provider, and then following completion of work, the provider would invoice the Council – creating a tripartite agreement. This separated the SME from the transaction, removing the cash flow barrier that often exists. Whilst it shifted the cash flow burden to the provider, providers are used to delivering a service in advance of payment.



The additional option for companies to have a digital assessment with an advisor before finding a digital solution was very good. That level of strategic support helped businesses make better decisions and at times changed their thinking about what they needed.



Processing applications was very smooth and supported the capture of quality baseline data, the appraisal process was fairly smooth – turning decisions round inside 10 days.

What didn't work?



There were some problems with some of the advisors – and three had to be removed from the framework after receiving some complaints about long reply times and unprofessional service.



Establishing the procurement framework was challenging – and could be considered a 'self-limiting action'. KCC found it difficult to get providers to engage and join the framework. The process to apply to the framework was probably disproportionate to the value of the opportunity.



The voucher was a success, but the value of £1,000 wasn't enough for all projects. Its ok for buying a laptop but inadequate for building a website. It is likely to have put some companies off from accessing support who felt the process wasn't worth it.

Lessons Learned



Small suppliers aren't used to the public procurement processes. There are workshops on procurement, but simple practical advice would be really helpful and possibly increase the appetite to engage.



Higher value vouchers could really help increase company engagement and allow support for bigger projects. Web design is a good example of support which needs more resource.



All businesses should go through the advice process so they can make good decisions on what to spend the money on. It also adds a layer of protection to the scheme – ensuring companies aren't buying items they don't need or overspending on items they do need.





C-Care Theme: Business Recovery
Sub Theme: Business Resilience

T.3.2.5: Go Digital

Norfolk County Council

Go Digital started as a covid recovery tool to help businesses become more digital in today's digital world – it was especially targeted at SMEs who didn't have a digital presence (maybe not even a website). The project has been incredibly popular. The initial pilot supported 43 companies, then a further 271 were supported through district council investment, and finally, an additional 600 through the C-Care scheme (all of whom were fully subscribed within a month of the launch). The district councils have committed to funding support for a further 600 businesses over the next 2 years, and there are already 300 on a waiting list. Businesses received a combination of a £500 grant, and digital consultancy.

What worked?



The consultancy – which included an audit and action plan, has been really successful. Giving companies the chance to speak to advisors and receive a 10,000 word plan which includes a step by step guide on what they should be doing is invaluable. Advisors are also stopping companies from making poor decisions – a vital intervention for early stage, cash strapped founders.



The framework of advisors has been very strong – with 10 high quality and local consultants providing services across a range of topics. Companies are matched with advisors based on need.



The process for accessing support has been very smooth, with no real issues, and the burden on businesses has remained relatively low.

What didn't work?



There haven't been any problems to note – one or two advisors weren't delivering to high enough standard (poor response times etc.) but these were removed from the framework.

Impacting Processes



Where there was an impact on a business processes, **Improved Strategy (48%)** and **Improved Operations (52%)** were the processes which saw the **biggest impact**. Accessing additional finance saw the lowest level of impact – with 42% stating there was no impact.

Lessons Learned



A higher grant would be helpful. The £500 is slightly limiting. There is value in the audit and action plan, but some companies will still see the £500 as not enough to engage, or the results of the action plan require significantly higher investment.



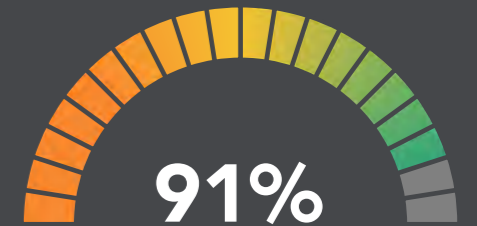
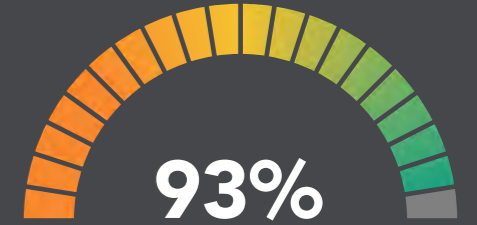
Its difficult to judge how good an advisor will be in practice. On paper, its easy to sound professional, and many come across well. But once delivery starts, they may not be up to standard, so ensure there is a process in place to remove them, and keep note of who the reliable advisors are.



Put a CRM in place that has a user interface, access to data and can automate elements of support – such as outgoing emails. Tracking data is really important, and with this volume, its difficult to catch up.



Headline Data



% of satisfied respondents:





C-Care Theme: Business Recovery
Sub Theme: Business Resilience

T.3.2.6: Trading Standards Building Customer Confidence

Kent County Council

Building Customer Confidence was designed to provide assistance to businesses within Trading Standards checked membership scheme to help them deal with the impact of Covid-19. Prior to delivery, a small research project was carried out to better understand the needs of businesses relating to the pandemic. That piece of work was important to understand that it wasn't just Covid-19, but that more support was required on customer rights, vulnerability of consumers, cost of living crisis and building customer confidence in general.

The project has produced 4 podcasts, all 30 minutes long which feature local and sometimes national, experts on each theme. The information in the podcast was then also converted into separate resources – checklists, booklets, infographics and 3-4 minute videos, offering people a variety of formats. The support culminated in an e-learning module containing 10 questions, which if they pass, will award them an accreditation which they can use for promotional purposes.

What worked?



The podcast has been a great way to reach people.

Traders are normally on the road early in the morning, and finishing late, so there isn't much time for this kind of support. So providing a format which they could listen to whilst working or travelling worked well.



Engaging beforehand to understand business need was crucial –

without that, the support would have been solely about Covid-19. But when engaged, traders were less worried about the pandemic than the Council or the residents. The engagement brought all sides much closer together.



The resources have left a legacy which will be available not just for Kent

businesses, but for any UK or French business.

What didn't work?



Engagement was difficult. Traders are a tough membership to crack – they're

time poor, out early, back late, and can lack digital skills.



Reach could have been better – and more traders taking the quiz would have

been good. A number of mechanisms were tried to increase reach including social media and PR work. However, there is a recognition that you need the right influencers to reach people – and that doesn't really exist for traders – there is a lack of a network supporting these people.

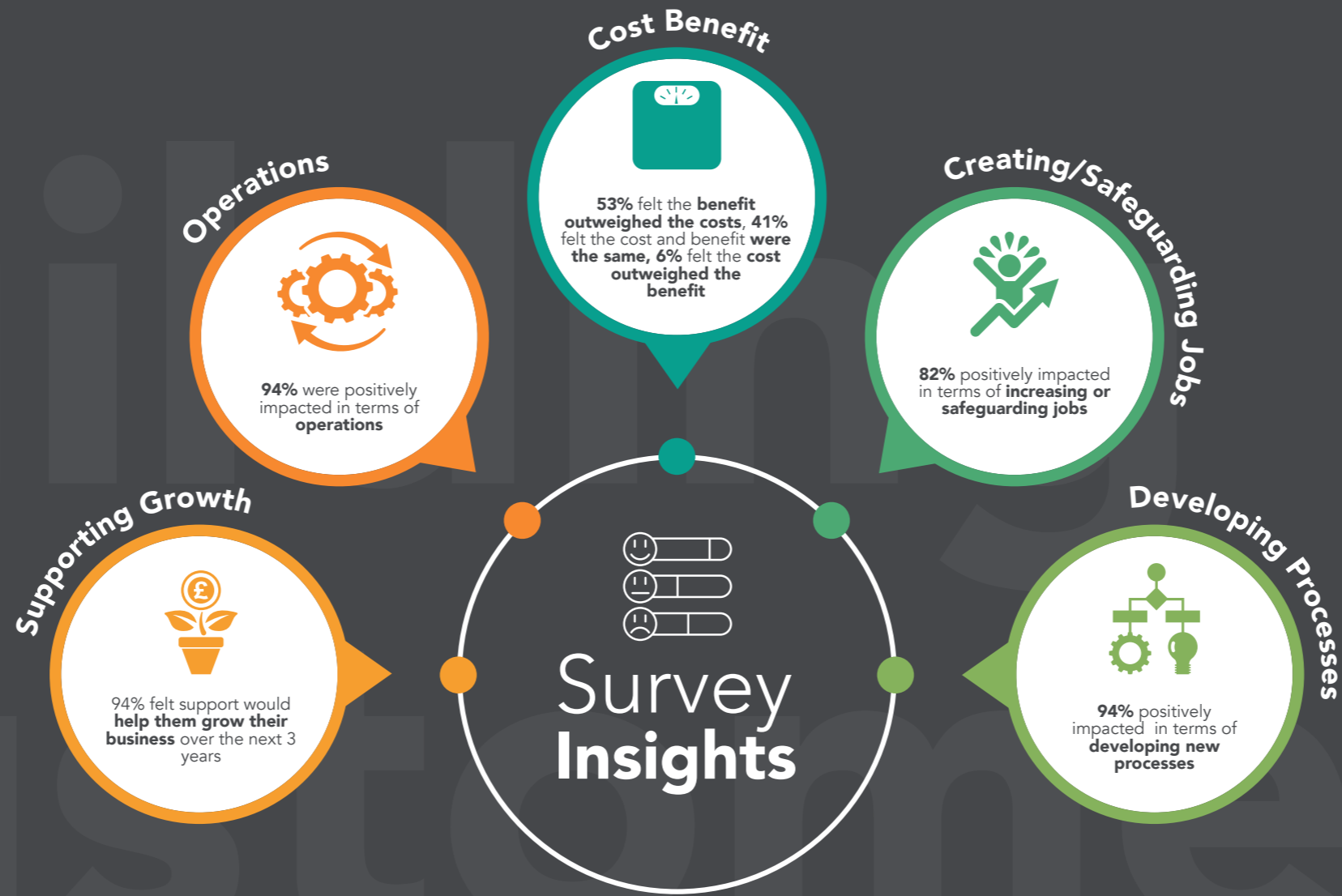
Lessons Learned



Don't skip the outreach with residents and businesses. That was crucial in tailoring the support and advice and focus on what was important.



It has been really important to have a legacy – best practice advice that is relevant, helpful, easy to access and available to all businesses.



108 | Checklist Downloads

In Total, the Support has Seen...



7.1k | Unique Visitors to the Website



119 | Infographic Downloads



384 | Video Views



45k | Page Views



183 | Booklet Downloads



643 | Podcast Listens



25 | Accredited Businesses

Reset & Re-design

New Anglia LEP **T.4.1.1: Urban Blueprints**

Plymouth City Council **T.4.1.4: City Culture**

Pas-de-Calais Tourisme **T.4.2.3: Marketing Campaign**

Campus d'Enseignement Supérieure et de Formation Professionnelle **T.4.3.3: Business Resilience Toolkit**





C-Care Theme: Reset & Re-design
Sub Theme: Future Urban Blueprint

T.4.1.1: Urban Blueprints

New Anglia LEP

With a budget of £80k, the Local Enterprise Partnership in New Anglia (geographical coverage – the English counties of Norfolk and Suffolk) has mounted an initiative with four local Councils to support feasibility studies in the market towns of Babergh and Mid Suffolk, Framlingham (Suffolk) and North Walsham and Watton in Norfolk. Each market town has its own unique economic development challenges. The final reports for all of these projects are not yet available but are due soon. It was not possible to talk to the Framlingham team due to absences, but the teams at the other involved Councils shared their emerging conclusions.

What worked?



Community engagement – with the recognition that citizens can have very different opinions! Quick wins for complainers!



Providing people with new reasons for visiting the town centre, for example; food festivals/events and considering networking and learning opportunities for high street businesses which are not open to the public – solicitors and accountants.



Taking people along and creating an inspiring vision of the future – demands a huge investment of effort – but creates “buy in”.

What didn't work?



Communication methods - talk to businesses 1:1 – shops often have no emails, some people don't answer the phone and some are not open to the public.



As the reports are not yet available and the recommended actions have not yet been operationalised this question currently remains currently unanswerable.

Lessons Learned



Some actions may be for the greater good but have adverse effects on a minority of businesses.

Results



Four in-depth studies of ways to transform town centres.



C-Care Theme: Reset & Re-design
Sub Theme: Future Urban Blueprint

T.4.1.4: City Culture

Plymouth City Council

With a population of around 250,000, Plymouth is a major City in the Southwest of England. Before the pandemic the city centre was suffering a decline in footfall, and this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Working with an independent charity – Plymouth Culture, this project aimed to create a “Blueprint for Future City Centres” by tackling the longstanding problem of filling empty retail premises with a “Meanwhile Use” approach in five different areas of the city. The Plymouth Culture team negotiated leases on seven properties and then aimed to fill them with interesting tenants. The team organised two Invitations for Proposals from local organisations and as a result provided funding of £4k to 17 projects located across city centre main streets. The final report for the project was due to be delivered after this report, however the team shared their provisional impressions with us.

What worked?



The contribution to local re-thinking of the city centre was timely. The project work connected to the Council’s wider programmes around use of the public realm, including community ownership of the High Street, the city’s climate emergency response and the theming of areas - for example in the cultural quarter around the city’s museum. A large Waterstones (English book retailer) building which had been empty for a long time was refurbished and brought back into use. Several derelict buildings have enjoyed some upgrading.



The Council have learned that landlords other than themselves are interested in “Meanwhile Use” and there has been useful experience gained in relation to the management of community asset transfer – awarding leases for empty properties.



Premises were occupied by retail artists, drama groups, a small company providing cycles in the city centre and an individual promoting a mobile screen-printing service with an associated app – some tenants offered interactive workshops.

What didn’t work?



None of the premises were in areas covered by the Councils four footfall monitoring devices and therefore impact monitoring was hampered.

Lessons Learned



Taking on leases for sub-letting led to a raft of unexpected responsibilities in terms of upgrading buildings – lifts and plumbing needed to be fixed...



Landlords of empty premises are extremely difficult to locate, their agents often have no power and many premises have landlords owned by investors which can make communication and decision making extremely difficult and long winded.



Smaller charities have no capacity to manage this kind of process



Results

The project report (available shortly) will discuss which projects were chosen and why and provide an assessment of success /impact. It may be possible to incorporate some of this learning into the C- Care Thematic Guides.



C-Care Theme: Reset & Re-design
Sub Theme: C-Care Together

T.4.2.3: Marketing Campaign

Pas-de-Calais Tourisme

The pandemic seriously affected the visitor economy in Pas de Calais and continues to do so – although visitors from many other nations have recovered, the number of English tourists to the area has been particularly hard hit. Working with the English company Fabbrica Media Ltd the team at Pas-De-Calais Tourisme created a targeted promotional campaign involving paid advertising across social media channels to attract English visitors and boost the local hospitality and leisure sector.

The campaign placed posters in 146 locations in the Southeast of England and was supplemented by full page advertisements in targeted magazines - France Today, Wanderlust and CN Traveller.

The web site for the campaign is at www.explorerealfrance.com.

What worked?



The digital campaign has provided key insights into the characteristics of potential visitors/target audiences and helped the team refine its strategy.



The web search and video campaigns have achieved an above average view rate and the Facebook and Instagram campaigns are achieving above industry average click through rates.

What didn't work?



As with any digital campaign, some elements have been less successful than others. Targeting attempts at Couples, Groups and Families delivered disappointing results, where it was found that the AI supported generic campaign worked better.

Lessons Learned



Working with an English advertising agency was really beneficial because they understand the UK market.

Results



A sophisticated, targeted commercially driven campaign.



C-Care Theme: Reset & Re-design
Sub Theme: C-Care Future Business

T.4.3.3: Business Resilience Toolkit

Kent County Council

When KCC first set out to create a sustainable business toolkit, they found that the market was already full of a variety of toolkits – with more appearing all the time.

Mapping the landscape, and understanding what toolkits were available and what they could do for different businesses was difficult. A toolkit is essentially a collection of resources that a business can utilise to access information, increase knowledge, gain understanding or deploy for improvement. But, unless the potential impact is in context, rationalised and maintained it can be difficult to understand. When it comes to increasing environmental sustainability, it may become a set of spreadsheets and conversions which quickly become obsolete when the market changes as dramatically as it has recently.



In response to this, the project changed – and rather than adding to the problem, KCC sought to create a different kind of toolkit. One that could be used to navigate the toolkits already out there – creating a summary of the resources available to support Kent businesses to reduce their carbon emissions – both locally and further afield, in attempt to connect companies to the best, most relevant and impactful toolkits.

The tool will break the various areas of the low carbon industry into subsets and interests – from waste to low-emission vehicles, energy monitoring systems to energy efficient lighting.

The team have been connecting to local partners to support the tool - such as Visit Kent, who were developing an action plan to connect businesses in the tourism industry towards support. Tourism includes transport, food, hotels, hospitality – and supports a large supply chain. Its exactly the kind of businesses who could benefit from a greater understanding of their own sustainable benchmarks.

Key to promoting the tool will be the addition of case studies. One of the best ways to measure whether something might work for you, is to see how its worked for someone else, and to hear their story. A complex topic such as voltage optimisation isn't going to be relevant to everyone – but when it is, understanding the impact it had on a similar business is vital.

Lessons Learned



Ultimately, the goal is to create something which can be adapted and updated as an ongoing tool – leaving a legacy for businesses in Kent and perhaps the wider C-Care partnership, for years to come.

Results



This tool remains work in progress and is yet to be launched.