

# Engaging and Regenerating Left Behind Communities - Coalfields Regeneration Trust in Scotland Evaluation

A Report for Coalfields Regeneration Trust in  
Scotland



*Social Research*

---



*Service Design & Innovation*

---



*Strategy & Collaboration*

---



*Evaluation Support*

---



*Social Impact Measurement*

---

February 2023



# Index/

<b>1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2: The Coalfields Regeneration Trust Programmes in Scotland</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3: Strategic Context</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4: Regenerating Communities</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5: A Route out of Poverty: Skills and Employability</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6: Tackling Inequality: Health and Wellbeing</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>7: Stakeholder Views</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>8: Conclusion</b>	<b>50</b>

# 1: Introduction

This report describes the activity and impact of seven of the key programmes of the CRT in Scotland.

## Coalfields Regeneration Trust

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) was established as an independent charity in 1999 in response to the recommendations of the Coalfields Task Force. Its main aim is to support the ex-mining communities and create opportunities for people living in these communities across the UK.

The CRT in Scotland is a branch of the charity that supports defined coalfield areas in Scotland.

The CRT supports the building of capacity of communities in ex-mining areas to eradicate poverty, address inequalities and create sustainable growth and wealth. Key themes for CRT are health and wellbeing, employment and skills.

The CRT further plays a key role in representing coalfield communities, bringing in additional funding into coalfield communities and bringing communities, statutory agencies and the business community together.

More specifically, the CRT's objectives are:

1. Increase the number of people in work and create the conditions for new job opportunities in our communities.
2. Grow the confidence, skills and qualifications of the coalfield population.
3. Improve the health outcomes for the coalfield population and increase the numbers of people taking part in healthy lifestyle activities.

## Deprivation in coalfield areas

Research<sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup> over the years has evidenced that ex-mining communities are among the most

deprived areas in the country, suffering from poverty, unemployment, health inequalities, low educational attainment and a lagging economy.

Some findings of the recent research on Scottish coalfield areas<sup>6</sup> include:

- The population of the coalfield intervention areas is growing, reaching a population of 468,000 in 2018.
- Of the 610 Data Zones in coalfield intervention areas, 189 are among Scotland's most deprived 20%. 31% of coalfield neighbourhoods are now in the most deprived 20%, showing an increase on previous editions of the SIMD.
- There remains significant and concentrated deprivation, particularly in Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, Fife, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire.
- Former coalmining communities continue to face severe challenges across education, income and employment.
- Several areas are in a worse comparative position for income- and health-related deprivation, though there has been a relative improvement in terms of geographic accessibility.
- Many former coalmining communities are in a worse relative position for educational disadvantage.
- Educational attainment of school leavers has been increasing in recent years but is still below the Scottish average.

Fothergill, S., Gore, T, Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, 2014

<sup>3</sup> The State of the Coalfields, Economic and social conditions in the mining communities in England, Scotland and Wales, Beatty, C., Fothergill, S., Gore, T, Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, 2019

<sup>4</sup> The Scottish Coalfields in 2020, Social Value Lab, 2020

<sup>5</sup> Understanding the Impact of Benefit Changes in Scotland's Mining Communities, Social Value Lab, 2021

<sup>6</sup> The Scottish Coalfields in 2020, Social Value Lab, 2020

<sup>1</sup> Analysis of Coalfield Area Deprivation, Social Value Lab, 2013; The Scottish Coalfields in 2020, Social Value Lab, 2020

<sup>2</sup> The State of the Coalfields, Economic and social conditions in the mining communities in England, Scotland and Wales, Fodden, M., [Continues over]

- Coalfield communities have lower rates of participation in education, employment or training among 16-19 year olds and fewer 17-21 year olds enrolling in higher education.
- There has been some growth in the business base in recent years, but there are more micro organisations and fewer large employers located in the coalfield areas.
- Despite some growth in jobs, coalfield areas still have significantly fewer jobs (287 jobs per 1,000 people, compared to 467 per 1,000 for Scotland)
- Overall the coalfields still have fewer jobs in higher-skill, knowledge intensive industries compared to the rest of Scotland.

The Covid-19 pandemic that hit the UK in March 2020 has had a profound impact on coalfield areas. A recent study<sup>7</sup> found that:

- Covid infection rates in coalfield areas were higher.
- Covid mortality rates were higher in coalfield areas because of an older and less healthy population.
- Despite the furlough support provided, unemployment in coalfield areas surged, as did the number of in-work benefit claims increased.
- With the re-opening of the economy, the coalfield areas resumed their place lagging behind the more affluent areas in the UK.
- The current labour shortages that are reported have not affected the long-standing job shortfalls in coalfield areas.

---

<sup>7</sup> Beyond the pandemic, Older industrial Britain in the wake of the crisis, Beatty C., Fothergill C., Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, November 202. The scope of the research is wider than the coalfield areas, it defines 'older industrial Britain' as older industrial towns, former coalfields and main regional cities.

The report summarises the situation as:

---

*"Older industrial Britain entered the pandemic lagging behind on a wide range of social and economic indicators, was then hit hard during the pandemic and is now emerging still lagging behind."*

---

## Research Objectives

The overall aim of the evaluation is to understand and evidence the impact of the CRT on communities and people in coalfield areas in Scotland.

The detailed objectives of the study are to:

- Assess the portfolio of selected programmes against to identify where
- programmes have delivered successfully; where there have been challenges;
- Provide evidence of the impact of the programmes on communities and individual citizens;
- Make suggestions for improvements to the programmes in the future;
- Suggest a potential framework for future monitoring and reporting of portfolio activity.

## The Scope of this Study

This evaluation focusses on seven specific programmes of the CRT in Scotland:

- Coalfields Community Futures
- East Ayrshire Connecting Communities and Initiatives
- Coalfields Community Investment Programme
- Coalfield Learning
- Grow and Learn in Nature Award
- Coalfields Worx
- Game On Scotland

The scope of this study is the CRT in Scotland activity in the last three years: 2019/20 – 2022/23.

## Research Method

For this evaluation we have applied a mixed method, consisting of:

- 
- Review of CRT data on the programmes included in this study.
- 
- Semi-structured interviews with 14 external key stakeholders and 2 internal key stakeholders.
- 
- Semi-structured interview with 7 Community Futures stakeholders.
- 
- Semi-structured interviews with 5 Community Connections stakeholders.
- 

- 
- Semi-structured interviews with 6 people involved in Growing and Learn in Nature (GLiN).
- 
- Semi-structured interviews with 3 Coalfields Worx deliverers.
- 
- Semi-structured interviews with 8 CRT Game On stakeholders, including coaches (4), Youth Workers (3) and a Police Scotland officer (1).
- 
- Focus group discussions with 40 young people participating in CRT Game On Scotland.
- 
- Community Investment survey (26 responses).
- 
- Coalfields Learning Programme survey (14 responses).
- 
- CRT Game On survey (27 responses).
-

## 2: The Coalfields Regeneration Trust Programmes in Scotland

This Section provides a summary of each of the programme evaluated in this report.

### Coalfields Community Futures

Coalfields Community Futures is a place-based community planning programme. Its key aim is to support the development of areas that have not benefitted substantially from external funding from the CRT and other funding partners.

Using the Scottish Government's Place Standard Tool, a nationally recognised public consultation method, and other tools, the programme enables community groups and residents to identify local needs and priorities, capitalise on existing local assets, and prepare a Local Place Plan with the participation of local people. Local Place Plans contain:

- A vision for the future of the community.
- Views on the community now.
- The identification of the main strategies for community development.
- Priorities for action.

Throughout the process, CRT provides tailored capacity building support, working with local residents and groups to establish skills and working structures and secure external funding for agreed projects.

### East Ayrshire Connecting Communities and Initiatives

Connecting Communities aims to build an enterprise culture and develop skills that will ultimately create new services and jobs.

Community Connections is funded by and a key contributor to the Coalfield Community Landscape Partnership (CCLP) that distributes over £6m funding from East Ayrshire Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and others to improve the cultural, natural and industrial heritage of the area.

CRT has established an office and created a Development Manager post in East Ayrshire who will lead the project.

The project aims to coordinate activities, develop connections and build the confidence and skills of the local community to progress the heritage and tourism aspects of their Local Place Plans and create sustainable jobs and boost the local economy.

### Coalfields Community Investment Programme

The Coalfields Community Investment Programme (CIP) builds the capacity of small voluntary organisations and charities in coalfields areas, using relatively small financial awards to allow groups to continue to improve their offering to local communities.

Funding workshops and an annual networking event are used to publicise the programme.

Applicants are supported throughout the application process with advice and signposting to other funders and similar projects. Support remains available for the project funding period and beyond (up to a one year maximum), allowing maximum flexibility should circumstances change.

### Coalfield Learning

The CRT facilitates numerous learning opportunities for residents of former coalfields communities, including the Grow and Learn in Nature programme, Coalfield Worx, and SVQ training through Game on Scotland, as well as knowledge sharing between third sector organisations.

In addition to the learning embedded in these programmes (which are discussed individually in this report), the CRT hosted a range of masterclasses and training sessions through their Learning Programme. The courses included:

- 
- First Aid;
- 
- Mental Health First Aid;
- 
- Food Hygiene;
- 
- British Sign Language;
- 
- GOALS training; and
- 
- Volunteer / retail training.
- 

## Grow and Learn in Nature Award

The Grow and Learn in Nature (GLiN) programme operates in partnership with the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society (RCHS). Participants develop a range of horticultural skills including:

- 
- Plant care;
- 
- Soil health;
- 
- Propagation;
- 
- Greenhouse maintenance; and
- 
- Nursery care and transplanting.
- 

Some participants also took part in painting, building and repurposing materials for gardens (e.g. using old tyres as planters) and pickling, jarring and selling produce.

The programme consisted of a minimum of 30 hours of activities, and included 5 online masterclasses delivered by specialists, 7 online networking events, and a meet-up day and awards ceremony at the conclusion of the programme. Participants were encouraged to keep a portfolio of their work as a requirement of the award.

The programme is adaptable and can be completed independently or as a group. RCHS and the CRT supported four groups across Scotland in the period covered by this study, including one working in partnership with the dementia support group STAND and one with Kickstarter for young people.

## Coalfields Worx

Coalfields Worx is an employment programme targeted at young people living in former

## Project Activity

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the project activity of the programmes included in this study

coalfield communities that are particularly affected by low employment.

The programme creates a realistic work environment for young people, who undertake paid training across a range of environmental maintenance jobs in outdoor spaces. They receive ongoing support from the programme facilitators in finding further employment, education or training.

## Game On Scotland

Game On Scotland is the CRT's Sport for Change programme. It offers young people aged between 11-17 the opportunity to play football on weekday evenings between 7-9pm.

Operating in some of the most deprived former coalfields areas, Game On provides young people living in these communities with a fun and engaging diversionary activity through which they can build skills and develop habits that will benefit them in reaching positive destinations.

Game On is delivered in two strands:

- 
- **Football Sives:** a weekly football programme for young people aged 11-17, delivered in 11 venues in, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire and Fife. The programme culminates in the annual CRT Community Cup and games against the England and Wales winners.
- 
- **Game On Girls and Game On Active:** a weekly programme for children of primary 3-7 focused on being active and introducing children to the game. It is delivered in 5 venues in Clackmannanshire, Fife and Stirling. Some sessions are for girls only (Game-on Girls).
- 

Game On sessions are run in partnership with youth work services in the local area, facilitating closer links between young people and youth services, and in some areas the use of a minibus to collect and deliver participants. In some areas the local police is also engaged with the sessions.

**TABLE 2.1: PROJECT ACTIVITY**

	Total 2019-22	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
<b>Community Futures</b>				
• Communities worked with/LPPs produced	5 communities		5 communities	
<b>East Ayrshire Connecting Communities</b>				
• Number of organisations supported	£406,255	£386,546	£19,709	-
• Number of network events	17	10	7	-
• Number of people attended network events	610	450	160	-
• Amount of funding levered in	36	30	6	
<b>Coalfields Community Investment Programme</b>				
• Number of supported organisations	79	18	41	20
• Amount of grant funding disbursed	£202,387	£47,774	£96,282	£58,331
<b>Coalfields Learning</b>				
• Number of beneficiaries	280	50	3	227
• Number of accreditations	49	10	-	39
<b>Grow and Learn in Nature</b>				
• Number of participants	58	58	-	-
<b>Coalfields Worx</b>				
• Number of participants	15	15	-	-
<b>Game On Scotland</b>				
• Number of participants	752	752	-	-



## 3: Strategic Context

This Section provides an overview of the strategic context the CRT in Scotland is operating in. It shows how the programme contributes to the Scottish Government's policy and strategy objectives.

### General

All projects, programmes and activities of the CRT in Scotland make a significant contribution to the main policy and strategies of the Scottish Government.

### National Performance Framework<sup>8</sup>

The National Performance Framework is the overarching strategy of the Scottish Government that sets out how it will create a more successful country; give opportunities to all people; increase peoples' wellbeing; create sustainable and inclusive growth and reduce inequalities.

In order to achieve this, the Scottish Government has developed a set of 11 National Outcomes, closely linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The CRT in Scotland makes a significant contribution towards the following National Outcomes:

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.
- We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone.
- We are healthy and active.
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.
- Children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential.

### A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22<sup>9</sup>

This strategic document sets out a programme of action for the Scottish Government for 2021/22, and in particular it shows how Scotland will recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The strategy has six key themes. The CRT in Scotland contributes to three of them:

- 2. Land Of Opportunity: supporting young people and promoting a fairer and more equal society.
- 4. An Economy That Works For All Of Scotland's People And Place: putting sustainability, wellbeing and fair work at the heart of our economic transformation.
- 5. Living Better: supporting thriving, resilient and diverse communities.

### A stronger and more resilient Scotland: the Programme for Government 2022 to 2023<sup>10</sup>

The current programme for government is written against the backdrop of the cost of living crisis and rising inflation and sets out how the Scottish Government is addressing this.

For coalfield communities, the activity of the CRT in Scotland contributes to a number of key policy ambitions:

- Supporting Our Communities: support action that will help people through the cost of living crisis and boost the resilience of people and communities for the longer term.
- A Stronger & More Resilient Scotland: mitigate the impacts of the cost crisis and support people and businesses throughout Scotland.

---

<sup>8</sup> National Performance Framework | National Performance Framework

<sup>9</sup> [A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22 \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

<sup>10</sup> [A Stronger & More Resilient Scotland: The Programme for Government 2022-23 \(moraychamber.co.uk\)](https://moraychamber.co.uk)

## Regeneration

### National Planning Framework<sup>11</sup>

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out the long-term plan for development and infrastructure in Scotland.

The plan defines spatial principles to support this:

- Sustainable places, with reduced emissions and an improved biodiversity.
- Liveable places, where people live better, healthier lives; and
- Productive places, with a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

The CRT in Scotland's programmes make a contribution to achieving these spatial principles.

### The Community Empowerment Act<sup>12</sup>

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 came into force in 2015 and aims to change the balance of power between communities and the public sector. It gives community organisations more rights and a stronger voice. The act sets out how the public sector, service providers and communities can work better together to achieve outcomes and tackling inequalities. It also gives Local Outcomes Improvement Plans (LOIP) and Locality Plans a statutory basis.

The CRT in Scotland helps coalfield communities to establish partnerships with local public sector organisations and provides input to the Locality Plans.

### Achieving a Sustainable Future<sup>13</sup>

The Scottish Government's regeneration strategy aims to make Scotland a country where 'the most disadvantaged communities are supported and where all places are sustainable and promote well-being.'

The CRT in Scotland activity contributes to a range of outcomes identified in this strategy:

<sup>11</sup> [National Planning Framework 4: Revised Draft \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>12</sup> [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>13</sup> [Achieving a Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

### Economically Sustainable Communities:

- A well trained workforce whose skills meet economic needs.
- People have access to the learning and development opportunities that they need and the right support is in place to help people to work.
- Sustainable employment and reducing welfare dependency.

### Socially Sustainable Communities

- Delivery is focussed on the needs of people.
- Communities are involved in designing and delivering the services that affect them.
- Strong and effective community networks are in place.
- Communities have a positive identity and future aspirations.
- People are empowered to improve their area and maximise local assets.
- People have good physical and mental health.
- Communities are fair and inclusive, where all have a voice and can participate.
- Sustainable employment to tackle worklessness.

### Place Principle<sup>14</sup>

The Scottish Government has introduced the Place principle to stimulate collaboration between sectors and encourage community involvement.

The CRT in Scotland is applying this place principle to coalfield communities by working with bespoke communities to make connections, draw up a plan, develop the capacity of community organisations and get in the resources to implement the plan.

The Scottish Government has developed the Place Standard tool to help communities and others to assess the quality of a place. The CRT in Scotland helps communities to use this tool and produce a

<sup>14</sup> [Place Principle: introduction - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

clear and evidenced picture of the needs of their community.

### **A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres<sup>15</sup>**

This review of the Town Centre Action Plan set out further measures towards the focus on wellbeing, inclusive development, climate change, health and inequalities and worked out the emerging concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods.

The CRT in Scotland helps developing local communities in disadvantaged ex-mining communities to bring back local programmes and services.

### **Community Wealth Building<sup>16</sup>**

The Scottish Government has adopted the internationally recognised Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to economic development.

CWB focuses on the development of local 'anchor' organisations to tackle long standing systematic challenges and structural inequalities.

It aims to transform the local and regional economic systems to make sure local communities and people have a greater stake in the creation and spending of wealth from the economy. It focuses on more and better jobs, business growth, community-owned assets and shorter supply chains.

CBW pilots are rolled out across five local authority areas, including coalfield areas such as Clackmannanshire and Fife.

## **Skills and Employment**

### **Delivering Economic Prosperity<sup>17</sup>**

The Scottish Government's economic strategy provides the roadmap to a wellbeing economy with good quality jobs and sustainable businesses.

Key priorities are:

- 
- to ensure that people have the skills they need at every stage of life to have rewarding careers and meet the demands of an ever-changing economy and society.
  - reorient the economy towards wellbeing and fair work, to deliver higher rates of employment and wage growth, to significantly reduce structural poverty, particularly child poverty, and improve health, cultural and social outcomes for disadvantaged families and communities.
- 

The work that the CRT in Scotland does in disadvantaged communities and upskilling people contributes to these priorities.

### **Fair Work Action Plan: Becoming a Leading Fair Work Nation by 2025<sup>18</sup>**

This strategic document sets out how the Scottish Government will increase the payment of the Scottish Living Wage, reduce the gender and disability pay gap and improve labour market outcomes for people in disadvantaged communities.

The CRT in Scotland supports these aims by upskilling people, creating employment and developing the local economy in disadvantaged former mining communities.

## **Health and wellbeing**

### **National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework<sup>19</sup>**

This document sets out how integrated health and social care services should work towards achieving nine key outcomes of the people in Scotland. The CRT in Scotland's programmes contribute to two of these outcomes:

- 
- People are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live in good health for longer.
  - Health and social care services contribute to reducing health inequalities.
- 

---

<sup>15</sup> [A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>16</sup> [Community wealth building - Cities and regions - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>17</sup> [Delivering Economic Prosperity \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>18</sup> [Fair Work Action Plan: Becoming a leading Fair Work Nation by 2025 \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>19</sup> [National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes: A framework for improving the planning and delivery of integrated health and social care services \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

### **Best Start, Bright Futures, Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26<sup>20</sup>**

In 2017 Child Poverty Act became law, which sets out the Scottish Government's targets to reduce the child poverty by 2030. The act is accompanied by action plans that provides the detail of implementing the measures to achieve this.

The latest action plan include a number of measures to which the CRT in Scotland makes a contribution:

- 
- Supporting parents into work and to sustain their employment.

---

  - Tackling the financial barriers parents face in entering the labour market.

---

---

<sup>20</sup> [Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Best-Start-Bright-Futures-Tackling-Child-Poverty-Delivery-Plan-2022-2026)

## 4: Regenerating Communities

This Section explores the impact CRT in Scotland has made on regeneration coalfield communities.

Although every CRT programme and activity contributes to the regeneration and development of communities across coalfield areas, there are a number of programmes particularly focused on community regeneration: Community Futures, East Ayrshire Community Connections and the Community Investment Programme.

### 1. Community Futures

The CRT in Scotland has worked with five communities in coalfields areas under the Community Futures programme: Gorebridge (Midlothian), Kelty (Fife), Crossgate (Fife), Coalsnaughton & Devonside (Clackmannanshire) and Clackmannan (Clackmannanshire).

The CRT has worked with community anchor organisations in these communities and provided strategic and practical support to produce a Local Place Plan.

#### Bringing coalfield communities together

The CRT has played a pivotal role in bringing the community together around their needs and the plans for the future.

The CRT staff have facilitated and supported steering groups that developed the Local Place Plans for the areas. This helped the steering groups making progress towards producing an action plan and keep them focused on the needs of the community.

---

*"[CRT staff member] was brilliant at explaining things (particularly jargon) and great in meetings: calm, firm, clear, engaging people and getting information from them."*

*"There was always a CRT staff member to explain things."*

---

The CRT have acted as an advocate for the interest of coalfields communities. Many community anchor organisations and development trusts the CRT worked with are completely run by volunteers, who sometimes lack the skills and sometimes lack the time to represent the interest of their community to the fullest.

The CRT spoke on their behalf with local government and other statutory agencies and built relationships with other community and voluntary organisations active in the area.

---

*"They also got other groups involved, so we had the Community Council, and the Town Hall Trust and just interested people to take part and suggest some questions or topics that local people might want to comment on."*

*"There are now so many different people engaged, not just the same group of people all the time."*

---

To facilitate networking and learning CRT in Scotland has developed Community Connect, an online platform where Community Futures coalfields communities can meet, share experiences, learning and best practice and find information.

Initially conceived as a way to maintain and develop links between local communities during the COVID pandemic, Community Connect has grown to continue strengthening the connections between coalfield communities in North and East Ayrshire, the West of Scotland and Fife.

#### Facilitating community engagement

The CRT has helped anchor community organisations to engage with their communities and get their views on their needs and wishes.

The CRT has helped communities by designing and analysing surveys and organising and facilitating consultation events.

---

*"CRT would come along and they would construct the engagement consultation process. And then they would set up all the meetings and facilitate them."*

*"The idea of having extra staff to help with community engagement and the Local Place Plan was fantastic."*

---

The CRT have used the Place Standard Tool for community engagement. Although not all interviewees were equally enthusiastic about the

tool, most agreed that having a tried and tested template to guide discussions with communities leading to an evidence base that was endorsed by the Scottish Government and recognised by local authorities was a huge benefit.

---

*“As a community council, we were sold on it, which is why it was great. It was a nice, standardised, consistent way of collecting data. It was recognised as a tool meant we could be more comparable with other areas and we could look across and see how we were doing. It just felt more evidence based, more methodical.”*

---

CRT introduced the Virtual Engagement Room for community meetings and consultation, in particular to give community members the opportunity to participate and engage during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to create an engaging online tool to attract different people to the discussions after the pandemic. Interviewees saw this as a useful additional tool, in particular to reach younger populations, although many said they would prefer face-to-face contact.

---

*“They set it all up for us and shared the link as widely as possible. The response we got was really good.”*

*“There’s more engagement, you know, since you’re having cups of tea and coffee and blathering and stuff the live events are much better than online.”*

---

### Evidencing need

The CRT has played a vital role in the five coalfield areas in conducting research and gathering data on the needs of the community. These were then used to evidence the Local Place Plan and to support funding applications.

---

*“Having evidence to back up funding applications is really useful, previously we were going in blind.”*

*“This gives us the evidence of just how interested people are in this.”*

*“Right now I can go for funding because we’re on the right track.”*

---

### Developing Local Place Plans

The CRT has facilitated the development of Local Place Plans in the five coalfield communities.

The CRT has supported this process by bringing communities together, gathering and analysing data, collecting and making sense of community consultation and by writing and printing the plans.

The CRT was also helpful in guiding and managing the process, ensuring that the plans were developed on time.

---

*“Because they know all the legalities and what and how they’ve developed since the first one was done, so it’s more formal.”*

*“A safety net to know what to do next. I’ve never done a Local Place Plan before.”*

*“They’re filling a massive gap in my knowledge”*

---

### The CRT legacy

When asked the counterfactual, interviewees mentioned a range of things they believed would not have happened if the CRT was not involved:

- 
- There would be limited community engagement.
  - Communities would not be able to track progress on the action plan.
  - There would not be a robust evidence of the community needs, only national statistics and anecdotal evidence.
- 

---

*“We need to be able to track what we’ve achieved and show the community that what they’ve asked for is being carried out.”*

---

From the interviews the main legacy of the Community Futures programme for the five participating communities was identified:

- 
- Volunteers in community organisations have gained a range of new skills and experiences, which will help them in further developing and implementing their plans.
  - Community organisations are now much better in engaging their community. Community engagement is now more embedded in the culture of the Community Futures organisations.
-

- Community organisations and local government have a much better idea about the needs and wishes of their community.
- Community organisations believe it will be easier to attract external funding for the projects identified in the action plans.

*"It has given us some tools to battle with."*

### --- CASE STUDY --- The Coalsnaughton & Devonside Community Futures Story

Coalsnaughton and Devonside Community Council (CDCC) started working with the CRT on their Local Place Plan in 2019. This was the community council's second experience of creating an action plan, the previous one was done with the help of a consultant who was hired using external funding. CDCC were aware that their action plan needed updating, but did not have access to the same funding anymore.

*"Our previous LPP had involved an online survey and conversations with people in the community, so it'd been robust enough but we just felt it lacked some extra rigour."*

#### Partnership with CRT

CDCC were made aware of the CRT by Public Health Scotland. From the community council's perspective, the fact that the CRT team had experience creating Local Place Plans in similar local communities gave them confidence that they would be an effective and reliable partner for this task.

Furthermore, some members of the community council had experience using the Place Standard Tool, which the CRT would be using to help create the action plan. They could see that their own methodologies aligned with those of the CRT, and that the additional tools and resources that the CRT brought to the process would enhance what they already had in place.

#### Expectations

From their previous experience of creating a Local Place Plan, CDCC had a clear idea of what they would like to achieve through this process, and were aware of some of the challenges

involved. In particular, they wanted support with community engagement, rigorous data analysis, and being able to track and clearly demonstrate their progress.

The CDCC members recognised that as a group, they were not sufficiently diverse to be representative of the community as a whole. They wanted to ensure they received input from a wide segment of the community, including demographics that they did not typically interact with, such as young people, young parents, and people whose experiences and priorities in the community might differ from their own.

*"It's difficult to extrapolate from our experience and say, 'Oh this is what the what everybody is interested in.'"*

An additional challenge, once people had been reached, was making sure the tools are accessible and that people are able to provide feedback in full. Previously, CDCC had experienced significant drop-off when using the Place Standard Tool booklet, because completing it took a long time and the content was not appropriately engaging. CDCC felt that the Virtual Engagement Room that the CRT offered would be an innovative way of bringing the Place Standard Tool to life and increasing engagement.

*"It just brought the booklet alive and made it much more accessible. And I understand there's still issues with drop off at certain points, but it just makes it more accessible, we should have greater retrieval accuracy."*

For their previous Local Place Plan, CDCC gathered data by conducting an online survey and having face-to-face conversations with community members. Though this helped them to develop an evidence base, they felt that their analysis lacked rigour. Using the Place Standard Tool with the CRT's guidance would provide them with a systematic, consistent method to collect data in a way that was recognised across Scotland. CDCC hoped that this would make it easier for them to identify areas of need and demonstrate to the community that these were being addressed.

#### The Process

The CRT team stepped forward to provide support across every aspect of developing the Local Place Plan. They helped plan a community engagement event which resulted in 150

members of the community attending. The CRT created the marketing materials for the event, such as leaflets and banners, and re-formatted the Place Standard Tool booklet to make it more accessible and easier to fill in. CDCC received Place Standard forms from 50 people who attended the event, and more from others who had not been able to attend the event in person, via the Virtual Engagement Room.

CDCC reflected that in comparison to previous events, this one brought the most people through the door. To generate the same level of interest and create the high-quality marketing materials they used would have required an investment of time and money that CDCC could not have committed without the support from the CRT.

---

*"What's been helpful is by having these engagement sessions, we're raising visibility of the whole process. And we've got people to sign up at each event."*

---

Having carried out the community consultation, the CRT helped CDCC to analyse the data and formulate an action plan based on the evidence they had. At this point, CDCC brought in a steering team, who helped to identify the key themes from the consultation and prioritise them according to the scoring system that the Place Standard Tool uses. The engagement events had helped to raise the profile of the work being done to create the action plan and gave people an opportunity to express their interest and willingness to be involved. As a result, the steering group was made up of a broader cross-section of the Coalsnaughton and Devonside community than previous community groups instigated by the community council.

---

*"So we've got this email distribution list [from the engagement events] that we can go to in the future and say, 'By the way there's this opportunity, do you want to be a part of this group?' So that's helping as well, just to link us up with people we don't usually see."*

---

Although at the time of this study, CDCC had not completed the analysis, they saw themes beginning to emerge that aligned with their understanding of the perspectives of their community. They interpreted this as a positive reflection of their efficacy as a community council, noting that the consultation verified their assumptions with robust evidence, and added a level of detail that otherwise would have been

missed. Importantly, the scoring system meant that they would be able to 'prioritise within priorities', and to clearly demonstrate areas of need.

---

*"If something had really been new, we should be slightly concerned about that, because we should have our finger on the pulse to a certain extent."*

---

As with organising the engagement events, a community council made up of volunteers would not have had the time to analyse more than 50 feedback booklets, so the contributions of the CRT team and the steering group were invaluable in this phase of the process.

---

*"There's no way I as a volunteer could have sat down and analysed 50 Place Standard tools, and produced a report and you know, and then moved on to the next event."*

---

### The Result

As a result of this process, CDCC were able to create a Local Place Plan that laid out clear strategies to address the community's top priorities. The detailed feedback gathered from the community provided them with clear focus points, which they were confident met the needs of their community. Suggestions and solutions had also been drawn from the evidence gathered at the engagement events, meaning that the actions CDCC took forward were guided by the community. On the whole, CDCC felt that they were better able to serve their community thanks to the methodology and support the CRT provided.

In addition to laying out their plans for the future, CDCC saw that the document they produced also gave them a baseline of evidence from which they could: provide robust evidence of the progress they had made towards each goal; compare the needs of the community to previous years and identify and address changes (particularly important given unpredictable events we have recently experienced such as the COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis); and compare the needs of their community to elsewhere, identifying where successful projects and actions could be adapted for Coalsnaughton & Devonside.



---

*"We're able to point at certain things that we've managed, and say 'We've done that.'"*

---

### Community Futures' Legacy

Without the support of the CRT, CDCC would have been working from an out-of-date plan that did not accurately reflect the present needs of their community. The time and money required to carry out a community consultation, analyse the evidence, and build a new action plan would have made it, in their view, impossible to achieve alone.

---

*"I think without CRT, we would not have been able to produce the Local Place Plan."*

---

Thanks to the Community Futures programme, CDCC have an up-to-date action plan, and furthermore have gained skills and experience that they will continue to use. Everyone on the Council is familiar with using the Place Standard Tool, and they intend to embed it into their work, carrying out annual community consultations to help them stay on track and provide evidence of the progress made.

CDCC have raised the profile of the work they are doing in the community, and consequently have raised their ambitions. They have more confidence that they are able to focus their energy and efforts on achieving outcomes that are important to their community.

Having well-defined and well-evidenced goals also means that CDCC are looking into applying for funding from the Local Authority – something that they previously had not considered, because the task was too daunting and they were not equipped to make a compelling application. They anticipate that this will help them take on bigger projects and make a more significant impact in Coalsnaughton & Devonside.

---

*"If CRT hadn't been able to offer this, our ambition would have been greatly curtailed."*

---

An important goal for CDCC was being able to tell their story to the community, demonstrating in a clear and engaging way what they have achieved, and what their ambitions for the local area are. The Community Futures programme has allowed them to do that firstly by constructing a clear story of the Coalsnaughton & Devonside community, and secondly by creating more and stronger channels of communication through

which CDCC can reach people living in their community.

---

*"It's really about going out to the community and telling that story about: 'Five years ago, you were worried about X, and in the intervening time we've done Y to help improve the situation.'"*

---

### --- CASE STUDY --- The Gorebridge Community Futures Story

Gorebridge has struggled as a former coalfields community. With the closure of the high school in the 1990s, the village lost the community facilities hosted by the school, and struggled to keep the library and leisure centre open as the only remaining local resources for residents. Groups operating in Gorebridge, such as the Gorebridge Development Trust, the Community Council, and grassroots organisations have ambitions to improve their area, but have faced numerous challenges delivering on these ambitions. The Gorebridge community needed support to work more collaboratively and efficiently and turn their motivation into demonstrable improvements in their community.

#### Partnership with the CRT

Coalfields Regeneration Trust first started working in Gorebridge in 2014. Since then, they have been a continued presence in the community. The CRT has provided small grants to Gorebridge Development Trust, worked alongside the Community Council to acquire a Community Asset Transfer, and developed Gorebridge's Local Action Plan in 2014, among other things. Recently, the CRT worked with the Community Council and the development trust to create a new Local Place Plan.

#### The expectations

The Gorebridge community knew that the CRT would be the right people to help them create their action plan, as their previous experiences working with the CRT had been extremely positive. The CRT team were well integrated in community groups, and members of the Community Council and Development Trust felt that they had a strong understanding of Gorebridge as a community. This was important, as Gorebridge had past experience of being let

down by external organisations with preconceived ideas about what was needed in the area and little understanding of what was important to the people who live there.

---

*"Their involvement in the community has been a continuing, long-running thing, and that's important because they know us and we know them."*

---

The CRT's expertise in community consultation, their tools and methods, and the knowledge they brought from creating action plans in similar communities were all seen as crucial to increasing the capacity of Gorebridge's local groups to deliver an insightful, relevant and achievable action plan.

The local groups recognised that some parts of the community were not being engaged with fully, and were determined to change their approach in this respect. With the CRT's help, they were hoping to increase their reach, and gather evidence from a wider range of people on a wider range of topics. They felt that while they could predict, based on previous consultations, how the public felt about things like transport, green spaces, and the needs of young people, they wanted to give residents an opportunity to contribute their views on other issues such as the preservation of local buildings, and solutions to green energy.

An important consideration for Gorebridge was that numerous organisations operated in the community, but with limited individual capacity and funding. Members of the Community Council, the development trust, and other local groups often held voluntary positions, and their full-time work restricted the amount of time they could dedicate to development projects. The third sector community in Gorebridge hoped that by working collaboratively with the CRT through this process, they would be able to increase their efficiency, maximise their resources, and consequently plan and deliver bigger projects that would make a significant difference to the local people.

### The process

The CRT put together a steering group to create the Local Place Plan, consisting of a core team and a wider group of contributors. The steering group was supported by a staff member of the CRT. Having someone in a dedicated role helped to keep the rest of the committee motivated and organised, and they found they were able to quickly progress beyond the initial planning

stage – something they had struggled to do in the past due to the challenge of co-ordinating a large group of people with irregular availability.

---

*"We had struggled to get out of the starting box – most of us are volunteers and also working full time, so having someone who was dedicated really gave us that follow through."*

---

Having the CRT staff member on hand to walk the committee through the consultation tools, and to explain their use to the public once the consultation process was underway, was seen as an important part of encouraging people to engage.

The steering group launched the Virtual Engagement Room and hosted community engagement events, where attendees could discuss the action plan with members of the steering group and fill in surveys in person.

They received input from a much wider segment of the community than had been reached in previous consultation efforts, which was largely attributed to the flyer carried out by CRT staff and local volunteers. Steering group members estimated that almost every house in the community had received a leaflet informing them of how to provide their input online or at events, and the link for the Virtual Engagement Room had been distributed as widely as possible too.

---

*"So many different people engaged with this, it wasn't just the same group all the time."*

*"They delivered thousands and thousands of leaflets."*

*"The last [consultation] day we had was a huge success. It was really, really busy."*

---

Apart from the Place Standard tool, the Gorebridge steering group used a variety of additional consultation tools, including the 'Gorebridge Wishes', and a number of mapping events which gave members of the community the chance to provide in-depth responses to what they would like to see happen in their community, and where. The tools were interactive and engaging, enabling the group to effectively gather evidence that accurately reflected the community's needs and interests.

In addition to gathering views from the public, the consultation events were an opportunity for

local groups to come together and showcase what they were working on and what they had achieved so far. The community were able to see what action had been taken in their area, and reflect on how their needs had been responded to in the past. At the same time, these events strengthened connections between different organisations, helping them to move forward with more effective partnership working.

---

*"The latest one we had, a few weeks ago, was really well attended. The community groups all came to show off what they'd been doing."*

---

All members of the steering group reflected that working with the CRT had been a positive experience. The knowledge and enthusiasm of the CRT staff members galvanised both the steering group and members of the public: they felt informed, listened to, and excited by the opportunity to have their voice heard.

---

*"They have completely driven this forward, but have also been very open to suggestions that we have made."*

*"I had no idea what to expect - it's been absolutely amazing; they really know their stuff."*

---

## The Result

At the time of speaking to us, Gorebridge Development Trust and the Community Council were in the process of analysing the feedback they had received from the community consultation. At this stage, they were already able to see a number of achievements that they felt would not have been possible without the CRT.

Ambitions for projects within the community were yet to be defined, but the steering group and local organisations had been able to make plans and set aims for their own work, outlining step by step how they would go about delivering the action plan. The enthusiasm and perseverance of the CRT team was a crucial aspect of keeping everyone motivated and on track; breaking the process down into tasks that could be delegated successfully helped the different groups work together effectively.

---

*"It's a lot more than just the Local Place Plan. It's about those relationships being built up, and it's about trust."*

---

---

*"Getting all our partners round the table and going - OK, what needs doing and who's working on what? It really does focus you."*

---

From conversations that took place during the community events and the initial analysis that has been done, the steering group anticipate that the evidence gathered will give them a greater depth of insight into the community's needs and priorities than they had before.

---

*"I certainly would expect that we'll learn new things - because when you're a group in the community, you tend to just do your own bit. But there are a lot of different ideas, and I'll be interested to see what comes through."*

*"There's the 'same old', you know - potholes and all that - and then there's quite a lot of new stuff as well."*

---

This was partly achieved thanks to the collaborative working between community groups. By using open-ended consultation tools and collecting evidence together, groups were introduced to ideas that were outside of their usual focus. This led to considerations about how different priorities could be incorporated into collective projects, for instance prioritising green energy when making plans to improve public transport.

---

*"I would say, without their involvement it wouldn't have happened."*

---

## The Community Futures Legacy

In addition to the practical support they provided, the CRT's input resulted in a number of long-term outcomes for the groups and individuals involved.

Most significantly, members of the steering group spoke about what they had learned from the process. The CRT provided an example of how to organise events and meetings with large number of attendees professionally and seamlessly. This was previously regarded as a daunting - and in some cases impossible - task, but having achieved so much with CRT's support, individuals felt renewed motivation and confidence.

Community groups also felt better informed of what other groups in Gorebridge were doing, and how to collaborate effectively with them in the

future. The CRT set a precedent for greater communication and collaboration, which all groups were resolved to carry forward as an integral part of their operation.

Included in this was a clearer understanding of the kind of support available from the CRT. Large established groups and smaller groups alike found that they could increase their capacity and ambitions, thanks to support from the CRT that they were previously unaware of.

---

*"They don't just dump you once they've been and gone, they've been stable people you can go to."*

---

The partnerships that have been developed through the CRT's work extend beyond the organisations involved in the Local Place Plan. Thanks to the encouragement of CRT staff, members of Gorebridge football club, staff at Gorebridge's new community hub The Beacon, and others have come forward to access support.

Small organisations that gained experience managing and delivering projects are able to make more robust funding applications thanks to their previous successes.

---

*"Being a new group, it's very, very difficult to get a grant because you've not got any history. This was our lever to start doing other things."*

---

Across the community as a whole, there is a renewed sense of hope and optimism regarding what can be achieved in Gorebridge. With The Beacon open as a community hub, Gorebridge residents have somewhere they can go to have their voices heard, and third sector organisations are better equipped to respond to the needs of their community.

The Local Place Plan has provided a clear template through which the steering committee can on one hand create a clear plan, and on the other hand demonstrate clear progress to their community. Members of the steering group anticipate that this will help them to maintain higher levels of engagement in the future, as people will see that their input has really made a difference.

---

*"They'll be reading things they recognise, and that will be translated into more engagement in the future."*

---

The CRT's continued presence in the community was seen as a useful tool for the future. While members of the steering group reported that they had collectively and individually learnt a great deal from the process of creating the new Local Place Plan, they felt that future support was needed to see through the delivery of the plan. In particular, people mentioned that those on the committee would not have the expertise or time to train new people in the methods and tools they had used and intended to keep using for future community consultations and planning.

---

*"We still need to learn some lessons, and we would still need some support to do this independently."*

---

## 2. Connecting Communities

Connecting Communities is part of the Coalfield Community Landscape Partnership (CCLP). Funded with £2.2m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, it delivers 22 community-led natural heritage, built heritage and cultural heritage projects to regenerate the East Ayrshire landscape and communities.

Creating Connections has worked with 36 community organisations, organised 17 networking events attended by 610 people and levered in £406,255 in additional funding for these organisations and communities.

### Building capacity

Connecting Communities has supported local community organisations in East Ayrshire to build their capacity to take on bigger projects and manage and grow their organisation.

The CRT staff have helped with establishing new community organisations and provided assistance to existing organisations with setting up legal structures, improving governance arrangements, project development, business planning and submitting funding applications.

---

*"If people are interested in starting up a group that would help them develop that capacity, get extra funding from other sources that we couldn't as a Council or as landscape partnership get."*

---

The CRT staff have also signposted local people to national CRT programmes (e.g. Learning Programme, Coalfields Community Investment programme).

---

*"[An advantage is] to have the national backing of CRT's activities and other programmes, which can then be so easily brought into the area. In the past, CRT has been spending money and doing other activities in other coalfields, and maybe not so much down in East Ayrshire. So in a way it has sort of filled that gap from our point of view."*

---

Other capacity building providers in the area, such as the Local Authority's Vibrant Communities programme, are overstretched and cannot meet demand. The capacity building activities provided by CRT are filling the widening gaps in capacity building support.

---

*"It's activity in this area [capacity building] that maybe traditionally in the past councils or other groups have been able to do, but just don't have the capacity anymore to do that."*

---

### Building networks and partnerships

Connecting Communities has brought organisations across East Ayrshire and beyond together. Historically, and in part due to competition for funding, local community organisations have not always been inclined towards collaboration or working across communities.

---

*"In order for the communities to survive, they're going to have to start working together a lot better, and sharing the resources a lot better, rather than keeping them within their pockets."*

---

However, primarily through a series of networking events, Connecting Communities has begun to tackle this issue by creating opportunities for organisations to work together and provide benefit to each other. It has also given local organisations the chance to network with key stakeholders, including local councillors, development trusts and existing local projects.

---

*"It's getting people to think big, getting them to think how they connect, what opportunities they have within their communities."*

---

---

*"[At networking events] they're looking at whether something didn't work for a group, and then figuring out well, why did that not work? And how can we do things differently? And what advice would you give, so they're actually supporting one another, rather than us saying 'this is how you should be doing this'."*

---

Closer collaboration between local organisations fostered by Connecting Communities has also provided additional benefits for the CCLP, allowing it to establish new relationships and work with new partners that would otherwise be ineligible for support (e.g. because they are cross-boundary projects):

---

*"Not only are we working in the coalfields area that we're supposed to be working , [we've] been establishing contacts, spreading the reach further out of the*

---

*area, so that we can help communities that are [ineligible for] the funding through the Heritage Lottery. We can help them achieve their goals using the Connecting Communities project."*

---

### Levering in funding

Connecting Communities has been instrumental in helping local organisations secure additional funding. As well as raising awareness about sources of funding available (through networking events and direct engagement with organisations), CRT staff have helped a number of organisations to become more varied or creative in their sources of funding – for example, supporting organisations to access a ‘cocktail’ of funding for particular projects.

*"Doing these networking events, and highlighting other strands of Scottish Government funding and other opportunities for funding out there, and bringing them in and getting people to listen to ideas, it opens up the opportunity to get an extra funding."*

---

As mentioned, Connecting Communities is also building capacity around making funding applications, providing advice and guidance on form-filling, writing proposals and how to structure applications to ensure maximum benefit.

*"Having somebody say no, do it this way, present it this way, this is how we do that, now you can draw down money - [Connecting Communities] was able to give them that assistance as well."*

---

This aspect of the support provided by Connecting Communities also has knock-on benefits for the CCLP. Bids for CCLP projects required match funding, but not being able to use other lottery funding to do this made it difficult for some projects to become eligible despite CCLP interest in developing them. Connecting Communities has been able to work with many of these organisations to secure alternative sources of funding and grow these projects.

*"If people are interested in starting up a group [Connecting Communities] would help them develop that capacity and get*

*extra funding from other sources that we couldn't as a Council or as Landscape Partnership get."*

---

In total the CRT has helped 23 other organisations to lever in £406,255

### Boosting confidence to deliver

In tandem with building capacity and leveraging in additional funding, Connecting Communities has boosted the confidence of local groups to be able to do these things for themselves in future. This ranges from having the confidence to fill in forms correctly or engage with new partners to feeling better able to take on increasingly larger-scale projects.

*"It's building up a level of confidence locally to be able to take on something and deliver it and manage it."*

*"The networking has been the biggest thing for building up confidence."*

---

Taken together, the support provided by Connecting Communities around capacity building, funding, and growing confidence puts local organisations in a stronger position to deliver well-managed, sustainable projects going forward. This outcome aligns with the aims of the CCLP and has the potential to deliver further value with the advent of new windfarm money coming into East Ayrshire soon.

### Going forward

Interviewees mentioned a range of focal points for the programme in the near future, including:

- The development of sustainable social enterprises and community businesses to build on the development of culture, heritage and tourism.
  - Support with community asset acquiring and managing.
  - Support to access the future windfarm funding.
  - Creation of employment opportunities.
  - Linking heritage, culture and tourism to tackle the wider socio-economic issues in the area (e.g. fuel poverty, transport, health inequalities).
-

## Community Connections' legacy

Although the Connecting Communities programme still runs until 2025, a number of legacies of the programme are emerging:

- Increased collaboration and partnership working across communities in East Ayrshire.
- New projects have emerged, often in previously overlooked areas of heritage, working with underrepresented groups or that cut across several issues – not only improving the heritage/culture offer but addressing, for example, poverty, employability or health inequalities.
- A new platform for tackling some of the significant and often interconnected issues experienced unevenly by former coalfield areas.

---

*"It's building their confidence up again, to maybe look at going out and thinking about social enterprise, thinking about how they could establish some sort of business from it. And so without having the support of CRT, these people wouldn't be doing what they're doing."*

*"It's getting people to talk about the heritage and also not feeling excluded from society anymore – being more included. And these people sometimes feel that they're overlooked, because of the stuff that they've had to face in the past or their addictions. And we've noticed an improvement in their health and wellbeing."*

*"If there were more third sector organisations like them in the area that we could work with, I think we would, start hammering home what's needed and how it's important it is community-led, and it's from the grassroots up, rather than the trickle down that we've got from the council."*

---

### --- CASE STUDY --- The Lugar Church

Lugar is a small village in East Ayrshire with few community spaces. Keen to provide a solution to this, members of the Lugar Parish Church were interested in utilising the space they had in the

church building and developing it into a community hub. They formed plans to transform the existing space and had initially been successful in sourcing funding to begin this process.

However, prior to work commencing a survey of the building uncovered more structural issues than had been anticipated and the scale of the work required increased significantly.

### Funding challenges

The amount of funding required was proving challenging for the church committee, both in the overall amount needed to cover the cost of the work and in the frequent requirement of funders to have match funding in place.

After attending a Connecting Communities network meeting hosted in the nearby town of Cumnock, committee members were introduced to CRT staff and learned more about the support that they could provide. They built up a strong relationship with CRT, meeting regularly to talk about needs for the project.

CRT staff were able to offer guidance on what sources of funding were available, how to apply and even provided practical support in helping the church to complete funding application forms.

---

*"[CRT] did help us with any forms that we had, any we were stuck with [they] could help us and it was [CRT's] input that got us the grant... It really was such a relief when somebody else could help us because to a certain extent we were floundering."*

---

The guidance and support provided through Connecting Communities has contributed towards Lugar Parish Church being successful in securing a significant amount of additional funding and helping them to realise their goals. Work achieved as a result of this additional funding includes new flooring, wiring, windows, and heating for the church, as well as the creation of a newly renovated café space, a computer suite, and an accessible toilet.

---

*"It was a lot of money and because as a small area and quite a deprived area, I think we would have still been fundraising today."*

---

## Networking

The value of Connecting Communities to Lugar Church goes beyond the additional funding it has helped them to secure. Attending Connecting Communities meetings and hearing about other work that was going on through CRT staff enabled the church to make connections with local groups. One such encounter with representatives from another CCLP project – Lost Villages in East Ayrshire – led to a collaboration between both organisations to run a series of events in the church inviting local people to come in and share their stories about life in the mining communities.

---

*“It helped us expand and meet other people face to face that had interests in the areas but probably without the CRT hosting these events, nothing really would have come of it because you were emailing people and it’s not the same. So, I think it really helped us establish links within the network that we probably would never have had.”*

---

CRT staff also helped to promote activities in the church, even bringing people along to events. They also provided direct support with social media, further expanding the church’s reach in the local community.

---

*“[On Facebook] Folk were seeing what was going on, and it was amazing how the connection was made. And folk got in touch with us.”*

---

## Looking ahead

Support received through Connecting Communities has helped to get the church into a strong position from which to deliver additional benefits to the community.

Plans are in place to provide employment opportunities through the new care space and they are looking at the possibility of operating a soup kitchen for the local community. The church is continuing to explore opportunities for collaboration and linking in with other projects in the area, including the development (through the CCLP) of new walking routes in the area and the creation of a heritage centre within the church building.

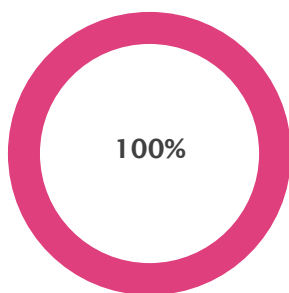


### 3. Coalfields Community Investment Programme

The Coalfields Community Investment Programme (CIP) awarded £202,387 in grant funding to 79 community organisations in the period of this study.

The support from the CRT and the delivery of this programme was generally very well received. All respondents agreed the support from the programme met or exceeded their expectations.

Figure 4.1: CRT support met expectations



Respondents' experience of the training and workshop element of the programme is presented in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Experience of training and workshops

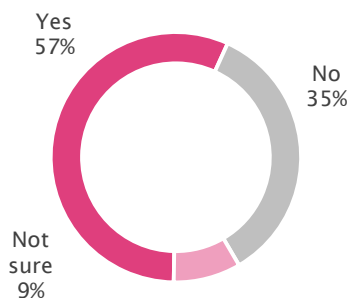


Most participants found that the workshops and training gave them opportunities to share their own knowledge (80%) and benefit from the knowledge and experience of other organisations (70%). They were able to contribute, share ideas and form lasting partnerships with each other as a result of this programme (80%). Most also reported building the skills and capacity of their entire team thanks to the training they received (70%).

*"They gave us a really good starting point and there to assist us if required."*

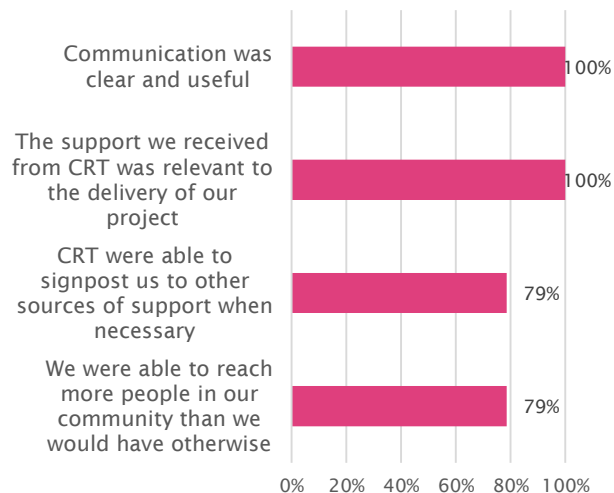
Potentially two-thirds (66%) of participating organisations received hands-on support. Over half (57%) of the participating organisations reported receiving hands-on support from the CRT over the course of this programme, with a further 9% of respondents unsure whether their organisation had or not, as shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Received hands-on support from CRT



Their experience of this support is presented below, in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Experience of practical support from CRT



All respondents agreed that the support was useful and relevant to their project, and was communicated clearly. Most organisations found that the CRT were able to helpfully signpost in cases where they couldn't provide support themselves, and that the organisation were able to reach more of their community thanks to the CRT's support (79%).

Comments indicate that those who received practical support found it extremely useful, and that interactions with the CRT team were positive and encouraging. The CRT's approach was notably different from other similar types of support in the bespoke and personal nature of the support received, which had the effect of building organisations' collective confidence as well as skills and capacity.

*"The support and assistance through visits, calls and advice was amazing. Huge interest and encouragement was shown from officers of CRT for our project and our group."*

*"I was able to speak with an advisor which was most helpful."*

*"The support gave us the confidence that our organisation was valuable to the community and an outside organisation (CRT) could appreciate that and recognise that we needed support and then provide the support quickly to meet our needs."*

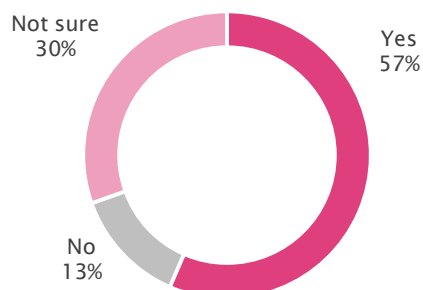
*"The whole process was much more personal than with any other funding application. I felt guided and encouraged in a way that is not always the case."*

Comments regarding improvements that could be made to the delivery of practical support were primarily focused on communication around grant funding and reimbursements:

*"Reimbursement of costs could have been swifter. There needs to be more transparency in the budget agreed and on the spending from which grant facility it is coming from."*

Figure 4.5 shows that the CIP programme has changed how organisations will deliver future projects. Over half (57%) are confident that their processes will be different in the future, with a further 30% as yet unsure.

Figure 4.5: CRT support changed how organisations will deliver future projects



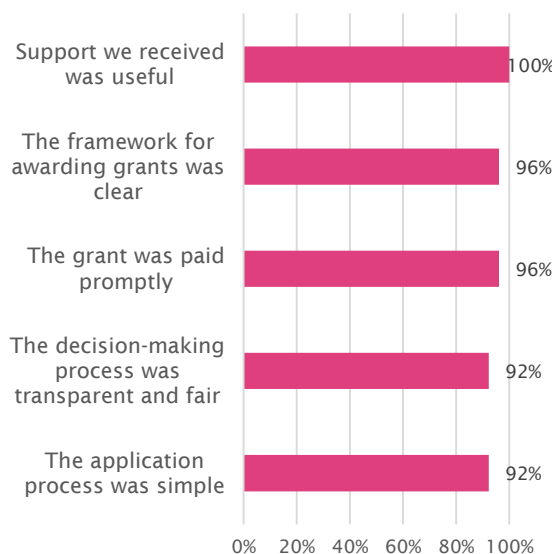
Some of the things respondents commented on regarding how their processes would be different in the future included:

- Having a clearer idea of what funders required from them.
- Making more efficient funding requests.
- Identifying where the resources are needed, and monitoring how they are being allocated.
- More detailed and specific planning.
- Reduced stress and anxiety around making funding applications.
- Involving the community more.
- More detailed and specific outlines of funding sources and uses.

*"They gave 100% encouragement and committed the initial funds required to start on the development and kept in contact with us throughout the development to completion. They gave me and our group the confidence to ask for funding and advised of other organisations who could and did help. It is with the confidence and belief in our group, that they instilled in us that we feel able to take on other projects. What we have been able to develop has given this whole community a better feel for our village, brought people together and instilled pride in our history."*

All respondents found the support they received through the CIP useful and relevant to the application process. In particular, applicants reported that the framework for awarding grants was clear, and they were paid promptly (96%). Over 90% of applicants also indicated that the process was simple, and decision making fair and transparent.

Figure 4.6: Process of applying for grant



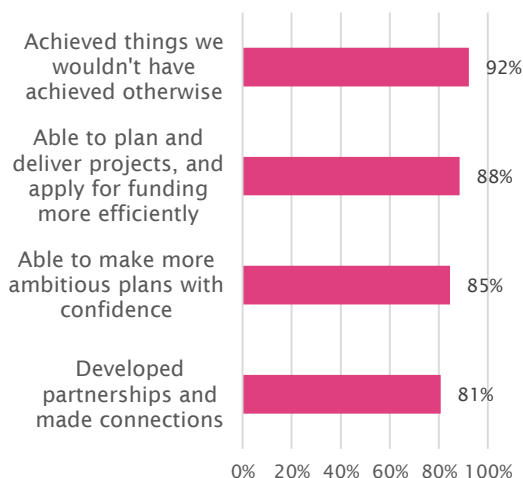
Comments suggest that the programme facilitators responded quickly and clearly to queries, which is likely to have contributed to the transparency and simplicity of the process for participating organisations.

*"Any questions that I had regarding the application process were dealt with immediately."*

*"The process was efficient and easy to work through."*

The vast majority of successful grant applicants reported significant impact on their organisation as presented in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: Impact of the programme on organisation



Almost all (92%) organisations were able to achieve more thanks to the grant awarded. Comments indicate that some organisations expanded their original project, while others took on entirely new plans.

As well as benefitting from the funding itself, organisations reported a range of improved practices, including better efficiency and planning (88%), more confidence and increased ambitions (85%), and new or strengthened relationships with partner organisations and funders (81%).

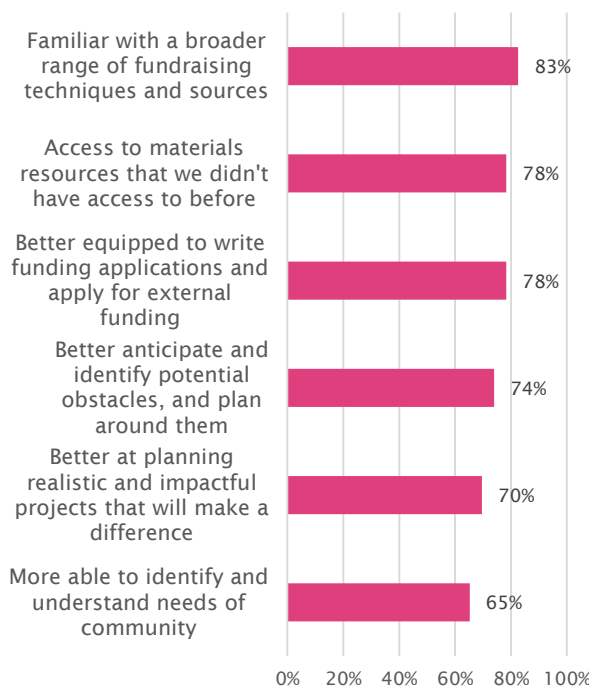
*"The grant has enabled us to expand the organisation in ways that otherwise would not have been possible."*

*"We developed a new additional project thanks to the grant funding."*

*"A beautiful child mining memorial garden and heritage site has been created thanks to the grant funding from CRT to get the development started. Their support and ongoing encouragement for that project and their advice on other funding organisations to help us was fruitful and saw the site completed. That site has just won a Best in Scotland award by RHS. They have now linked us with Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society for major development of another area in our village that will achieve another award."*

Figure 4.8 displays what applicant organisations have learned from the process.

**Figure 4.8: What organisations learnt through the programme**

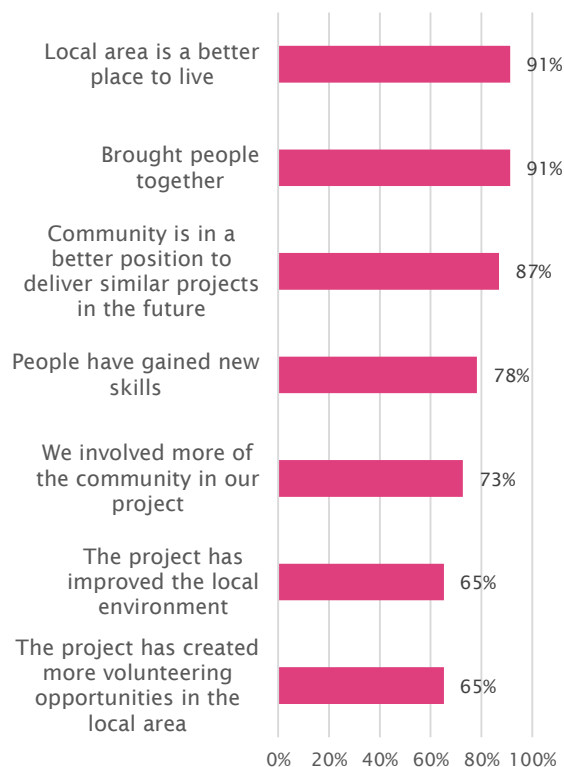


Specific learning that organisations gained includes, most significantly, familiarity with a broader range of techniques and sources for acquiring funding (83%). Over three-quarters of organisations found that they had greater access to useful materials and resources (78%), and were better equipped to write funding applications in general (78%). For most respondents, this came alongside better planning that takes into account what would be most impactful (70%), and what obstacles were likely to arise (74%).

*"We are not frightened to fill in funding applications and not anxious in the project we are doing now."*

CIP applicants reflected that the programme has had a significant impact on the communities in which they work, as exhibited in Figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9: Impact of programme on community**



Over 90% reported that their area was a nicer place to live thanks to what they achieved through this programme. A significant majority also reported lasting impacts on the community, including bringing people together (91%), being better placed to carry out similar projects in the future (87%) and gaining new skills (78%). For roughly two-thirds of the communities involved, the CIP resulted in improvements to their local environment, and increased opportunities for people to volunteer locally.

*"Due to the CRT investment we have been able to strengthen our links with the local community associations."*

*"Had CRT support and encouragement not been there for us, our group may not have been as strong today. They helped us establish, through their grant, film-making and continual encouragement, a strong and very much supported group in this community, now working with our children from school groups, to make this a better place in which to live. "*

Comments from the survey emphasise the inclusive, wrap-around, and engaging approach that the CRT took with this programme as key

features of its success in bringing together local people and strengthening community bonds.

When asked where their project would be had they not had support from the CRT, common themes that arose included:

- 
- The project would have taken longer, and some would not be completed yet.
- 
- The organisation would have folded.
- 
- Future planning would be more difficult and limited.
- 
- Organisations would not be as well connected to their community.
- 
- The community and service users would not have benefited as much as they have.
- 
- The organisation's value within the community would not be as significant or as well recognised (internally and externally).
-

# 5: A Route out of Poverty: Skills and Employability

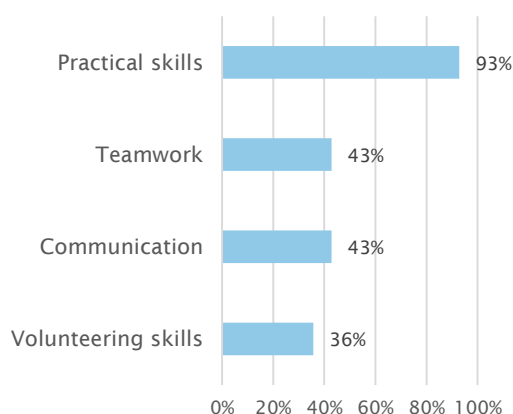
This Section provides a summary of the programmes through which communities and individuals gained skills and made progress towards or gained employment.

## 4. Coalfields Learning Programme

In the period 2019-22 there were 280 people living in the coalfield area that took part in the Coalfields Learning Programme, of whom 49 gained an accredited qualification.

All participants reported learning new skills from the training, as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Skills gained



The majority of participants developed practical skills through the course they participated in (93%). Other skills that they developed included teamwork (43%), communication (43%) and transferable skills for volunteering roles (36%).

Figure 5.2 reveals that most of the participants (86%) gained a qualification through the Learning Programme.

Figure 5.2: Gained a Qualification

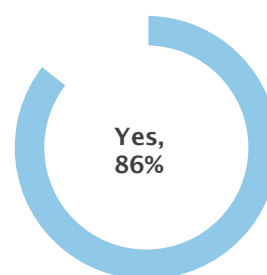
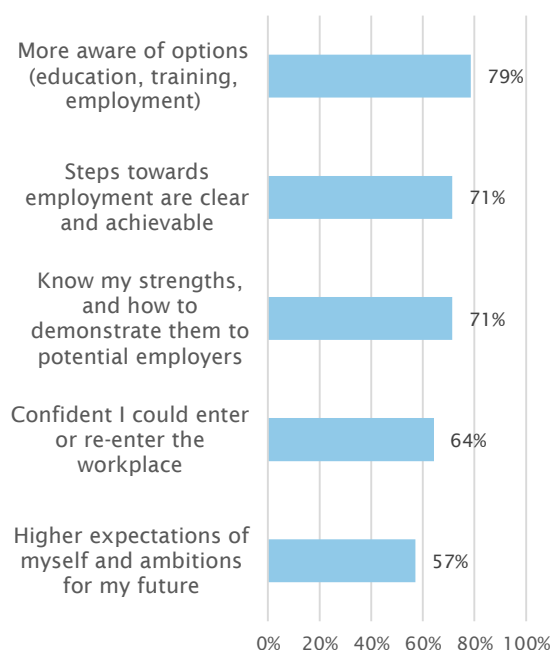


Figure 5.3 displays the reported impact of the learning on the students. It was clear that they felt that the training would be an asset in finding employment.

Figure 5.3: Impact of the learning



When asked about the impact of the course, most participants reported that they had greater awareness of their options regarding employment, training and education (79%), and that the steps to achieve this were clear and

accessible (71%). A significant proportion also reported that the course had positively impacted their self-knowledge (71%), confidence (64%), and ambitions for themselves (57%), all of which contributed to being more ready to enter or re-enter the workplace.

*"Happy to report that with gaining this qualification I have secured a job within a local Primary school, thus being told that knowing that I had a recent first aid qualification really helped them make their final decision on who they thought was best suited for the job."*

Some participants were retired or not looking for work for other reasons. Comments indicated that these people emerged from the course feeling better equipped to carry out their role as a volunteer, thanks to the skills and confidence that they had acquired.

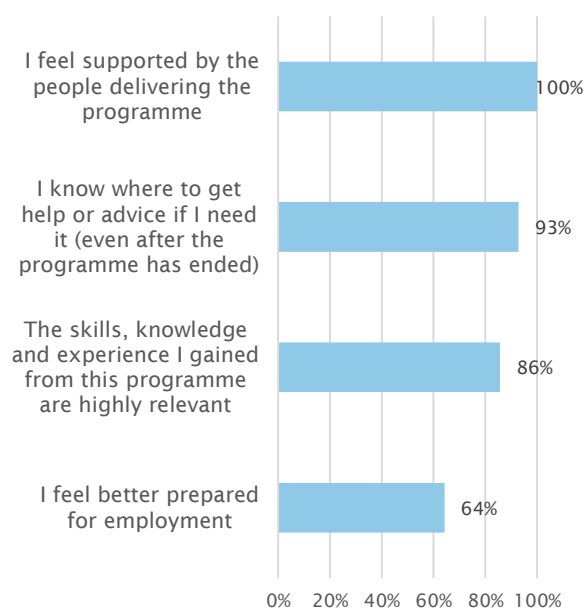
*"I am retired and have no intention of going back to work. However, the first aid training will help in various voluntary roles that I have on various groups; as well as on a personal level. It was a timely refresher."*

*"I'm not currently looking for employment but as a volunteer I feel more confident after receiving training."*

*"I am retired and not looking for employment, but I thought that some knowledge of first aid was a vital skill."*

The delivery of the programme was experienced very positively by participants, as the responses in Figure 5.4 show.

Figure 5.4: Delivery and relevance



All those who took part felt supported by the facilitators, with a significant majority reporting that they felt supported beyond the end of the programme (91%). Roughly two-thirds (66%) reported feeling better prepared for employment, and an even higher proportion (86%) found that the content of the course equipped them with relevant skills, knowledge and experience.

Comments indicate that participants felt the facilitators went 'above and beyond' the basic requirements or expectations of the course, pointing people on to further support and delivering all aspects of the course with excellence.

*"The training and learning officer was very helpful before, during and even after doing the course. She also stated that if I had seen any further courses that would suit myself to not hesitate to get in touch."*

*"It was a good experience & the trainer was excellent."*

*"All staff were amazing at the location I attended and Cairns First Aid was very welcoming and clear on all that she had to show us through the day- she went above and beyond to ensure all questions were answered especially a few I requested as it was more child based first aid. I felt very welcomed and made to feel at ease."*

*"Very well prepared, presented and enjoyable."*

## 5. Grow and Learn in Nature Programme

The CRT delivered the Grow and Learn in Nature (GLiN) programme in partnership with Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society (RCHS). The programme attracted 58 participants in five projects.

Participants and facilitators were asked about their experience of the delivery of the programme, what they learnt, and the personal benefits that they got out of it. Additional themes that emerged from interviews include the impact this programme had on the wider community.

### The content of the programme

Participants expressed positive views about the content of the course.

---

*"It gave you structure, you didn't feel you were just meandering - you can go out and potter about in the garden, but this gave you a bit of purpose, intent, you had produce at the end of it. It was a very concrete, tangible very straightforward thing to follow."*

---

The practical tasks were described as fun and engaging. The facilitators of each group found that they were able to incorporate tasks that suited the interests and ability of their participants, which ranged from children as young as four, to older adults with dementia and limited mobility. The flexibility of the content was regarded as an important way of keeping participants committed and interested throughout the programme, making the delivery easier for the facilitators, too.

---

*"It's not very formal but there is a structure."*

*"It was learning, laughing, having a cup of tea and out in the fresh air."*

*"It's hard physical activity, but it can be a group activity for people at all different levels."*

*"The objectives and things in the workbooks were dead easy to follow, it wasn't an arduous process filling in the forms - that was quite user-friendly."*

---

Participants also expressed that the range of activities they took part in went above and beyond their expectations. Participants described

how they grew a variety of plants, were introduced to tools and techniques that they had never used before, and learnt specific skills such as pickling vegetables, using a polytunnel, and transplanting seedlings.

---

*"Not just flowers - we've been growing onions, potatoes, beetroot, all from seed; and then a few months later we took them outside and planted them out."*

---

When discussing the content of the course, participants emphasised the importance of the awards day at the end of the course. They reflected that the day itself was an enjoyable experience, and gave them a sense of achievement and recognition.

Facilitators saw the awards day as an important opportunity to share what they had achieved, and to see what other groups had done through the GLiN course, giving them ideas for improvement in their own community. Meeting in person helped to cement or create relationships with other groups and to build a stronger network across Fife.

---

*"One of the things I enjoyed was going to visit other places."*

*"It was great to see what the other groups had done - and fair play to them!"*

---

### Learning and experiences

The five online masterclasses were attended by a total of 89 participants.

---

*"It's always been based around education, around people learning."*

---

The masterclasses were seen as a distinguishing feature of the GLiN programme that raised it above other gardening courses. The level of expertise was impressive, and the sessions covered an appropriate range of 'basics' and more detailed information.

The online delivery worked well in most cases, though some experienced connectivity issues. This was seen as 'typical' of online courses, but caveated with the acknowledgement that the online format meant more people could attend more easily, which outweighed the risks of technological failures.



---

*"Really helpful, really detailed, lots of seminars, lots of structure around it."*

*"I've never been involved in anything like it."*

*"The masterclasses just take it to a new level."*

*"Loads and loads of information in the masterclasses."*

---

Participants commented that it felt as though everyone was 'there to learn'. In particular, it was clear that the masterclasses appealed to people of all levels, including people who did not consider themselves gardeners, but were nonetheless interested in learning. At the same time, those with more horticultural experience were pleased to have the opportunity to get advice and insights from specialists. Facilitators commented that the content was easy to adapt and apply in their own community growing space.

---

*"Every bit of it was interesting."*

*"I quite enjoyed it because I don't know much about gardening, I was a bit of a novice really."*

*"I'm not a gardener, but it was quite interesting. And I do stuff in the garden now, I plant things that I would never have planted before."*

---

Gardening was a new experience for a large proportion of the participants. Facilitators noted that for some participants, in particular the young children, the prospect of 'getting your hands dirty' through activities that involved soil work was daunting. Through their experiences on the GLiN programme, children and young people gained a new understanding of nature and in some cases overcame fears, for instance of mud or bugs.

---

*"The idea of putting your hands in mud is scary for some of them - they're always being told to keep themselves clean and it's seen as dirty. But once they'd done it, they were confident about it."*

---

Interviews also indicated that participants took on a great deal of new knowledge – about gardening tools, natural processes such as pollination and pollinators, and practical knowledge – and retained that knowledge beyond

the end of the course. As well as benefiting the participants, facilitators anticipated that they would be able to deliver the programme more easily in the future, thanks to the knowledge they gained.

---

*"We didn't need the same amount of support because we sort of knew what we were doing because of what we did last time [through GLiN]."*

*"It was a learning process for us all."*

---

The positive experience of being outdoors and observing and interacting with nature was a common theme across interviews. Participants mentioned observing changes in plants and nature, as they grew and as the seasons changed. They reflected that the programme was structured around these changes, as they planted, transplanted and harvested what they grew. This helped them to feel connected to nature in general. Some comments indicated that without the GLiN programme, participants would not have been motivated to leave the house and spend time in nature.

---

*"They're out in the fresh air and the fresh air does make a lot of difference."*

*"Things I wouldn't have paid attention to - the different colours in the trees, the bees and wildflowers, just watching the garden come alive. It was amazing."*

---

Some groups provided additional experiences for their participants, including visiting beehives, pickling, jarring and selling their produce, and building and painting planters out of recycled materials. In addition to the horticultural skills they gained, participants reflected on transferrable skills that the programme helped them to learn and develop. In particular, participants mentioned teamwork, social skills, perseverance and adaptability.

### Achieving

52 people were awarded a GLiN certificate at the end of the programme, indicating that they had completed 30 hours of activities.

---

*"It was like Young Entrepreneurs!"*

*"You get a certificate, that's tremendous for people - young people or people out of work, or with mental health issues."*

---

---

*"When I heard I would be getting a certificate, I jumped on board."*

---

Participants and facilitators all emphasised the importance of gaining a certificate through the programme. Some of the young people on the programme were disengaged at school, and gaining the GLiN award was a demonstration of their commitment and achievement.

Similarly, for participants from the STAND dementia group, gaining an award demonstrated that despite their diagnosis, they were still able to achieve things. Interviewees commented on the sense of satisfaction, pride and self-confidence that they gained through participating and being awarded with the certificate at the end of the programme.

---

*"You look back and you think, 'We did that!'"*

*"When you think back, it was some achievement."*

*"Because I'm living with early onset dementia, it just gave me a different purpose."*

---

### Personal impact

The most common theme that arose from discussions about the personal benefits of the GLiN programme was the enjoyment that everyone got out of the sessions. The activities themselves were fun, and the informal structure allowed time to chat and get to know people.

In addition to this, participants also described improvements in mental and physical health, confidence and self-esteem, and the benefits of increased social interactions and time spent outdoors.

Older participants reflected that having fun while working towards a common goal was something that they missed in retirement, and that many of them would be spending the time alone at home if they weren't taking part in GLiN. The programme helped to alleviate loneliness and provided a sense of purpose. Participants spoke about having something to look forward to, and how the programme provided structure to their week.

---

*"We're always joking with somebody; we're always you know trying to get one up on*

*somebody else. And I think that little bit of banter helps, because everybody used to work - some of them like myself have semi-retired, and you miss that banter."*

*"Every week, I got excited to go up to the Shed because you got to see it growing and it was just amazing."*

*"It gave me something to look forward to, because I've not got a job at the moment."*

*"It's just to get them laughing, because sadly some of them stay by themselves - we're trying to stop isolation and [poor] mental health. The only other voice some of the members have is a television."*

---

Another common theme for older participants was the impact of COVID-19 on their mental and physical health. GLiN activities were for the most part delivered outside, meaning that participants could attend during less restrictive periods of lockdown. Participants felt that the programme helped them to overcome fears about returning to normal life and interacting with people again.

---

*"Coming out of lockdown, it was quite clear that a lot of our members had really struggled with no connection and not getting out the house and stuff."*

*"It was really good coming out of lockdown because it really meant the emphasis was on the outside."*

---

For younger participants, the programme created opportunities for them to enjoy activities that they were sceptical about, and combine productivity with fun. Facilitators noticed that young people's enjoyment of the programme grew as their understanding of horticulture grew, which to them indicated that the young people were thoroughly engaged with the principles of the programme.

---

*"Bit by bit, they [C&YP] got what we were looking to achieve."*

*"One lad who was a tough nut to crack eventually brought his friend to see the garden and show him what we'd been doing. So you could tell he was getting something out of it, even though he didn't let on."*

*"It gave me something to look forward to, and it was just an amazing experience - seeing the fruits of my labour and thinking, I've done all that hard work."*

---

---

*"I had sunflowers this year and put them in and they grew! So, wee simple things just enhance your own life in maybe a small way for me, but other people would really thrive on the whole thing."*

*"Getting outside and growing stuff is probably one of the best therapies of the lot."*

---

### Strengthening the community

A significant theme that arose from all interviews was the impact that the GLiN programme had on the communities where the programme was delivered. It brought people together, and the flowers and produce that were grown were appreciated by all local residents. Interviewees reflected that positive relationships had developed between the people on the programme, and that these connections became a useful avenue for reaching groups who are otherwise hard to reach, such as parents of children who aren't in school, or older people who are isolated.

---

*"It's a wee boost for everyone in the village, and it's a great place to stay and visit."*

*"It's important to get kids involved so their relatives and parents feel comfortable in the space, too."*

---

Some programmes worked to improve green spaces in their local area, filling them with wildflower beds and other plants, and fixing and decorating structures. Participants were keen to apply what they had learnt beyond the end of the GLiN programme, and some became regularly involved in other community groups to help with gardening and horticulture.

---

*"There's this lunch club and they've got a garden outside, so I can go and help them maintain the garden and plant flowers."*

---

At one programme, the pickled and jarred produce was sold along with other locally-grown produce; this strengthened bonds in the community as participants were able to demonstrate what they'd done to residents who hadn't been involved in the programme, and the buyers benefitted from the opportunity to buy locally-grown food and feel that they were contributing to their community as well.

---

*"We made money from it! We made £50 off selling the stuff the year we did the GLiN, and then we made £160 or something this year."*

---

Connections between community groups and grass-roots organisations were strengthened through the GLiN programme. Groups that worked together within programmes felt they had developed strong and long-lasting partnerships. The Kennoway Community Shed has put in place dementia-friendly actions as a result of working with the STAND group, to ensure the Shed is accessible to a wider group of people. Similarly, the connection between RCHS and the primary schools had opened up ideas about how to embed more horticultural activities into the school programme, and bring young people to gardening events.

---

*"I would like to think we've got a strong bond with the Shed and the dementia group."*

*"Due to my ignorance - we're asking them, is this ok with you? [...] So you think everything's alright, but now we've changed our building, we've gone dementia friendly."*

*"We've also got a strong bond with the local primary school."*

---

GLiN groups also found that their experience on the programme had introduced them to other organisations further afield. These connections led to small local groups having a clearer idea of what was going on across Fife. They could use this information to build on partnerships, to learn about and take part in more opportunities that were available to them, and for inspiration about what could be achieved in their local area - learning from the examples of others.

---

*"We've tried to continue the relationships [The Shed, The Ecology Centre, Botanic] beyond the end of the programme."*

*"We met a lot of people through this actually, we met this lovely bunch of people at the event, so we extended our knowledge of what's going on across Fife through the whole thing."*

---

## Support from the CRT

It was widely reported that the support from the CRT met and exceeded expectations.

---

*"It was great, really well organised."*

---

The CRT provided practical support to increase the knowledge and capacity of the facilitators. Discussions revealed that facilitators found the support was thorough and continuous, and that they learnt a great deal about how to deliver a programme as well as learning from the content. All their practical needs were met, and facilitators reflected that they felt very confident about being able to ask for help if and when they needed it.

---

*"CRT are always, always there to help us if we need it."*

*"You weren't just left out in the open. You weren't left just to sink."*

*"[Without CRT support] I'd still be doing things wrong probably!"*

---

The relationships built between CRT staff and facilitators were regarded extremely positively: CRT staff were seen to be helpful, friendly, and going above and beyond what expected of them, making the experience uniquely enjoyable and easy for those delivering the programme.

---

*"He said: 'If you want me to come through with the school kids or anybody else, and show you what tools to use or anything at all, just pick up the phone and keep in touch.' And he wasn't just saying that because I was sitting in front of him, he sorely meant that. I felt like I wasn't just a number, I felt we're part of a wee family."*

---

## Challenges

When asked about challenges involved in delivering the programme, facilitators mentioned that in most cases, there were very few challenges and any that arose were dealt with easily – with the support of the CRT where necessary.

One concern about the format of the programme was that the days were long and infrequent. For older participants, the long days were physically challenging, and some found they weren't able to contribute for the whole day.

---

*"When they come in on a Monday, it's a long day for them."*

---

At the same time, sessions happening once a week meant that facilitators were required to maintain the plants and gardens in between sessions. In some cases, this amounted to many hours of work for one individual.

---

*"It's quite hard to get people to water and weed and stuff - it's not like we're there every day."*

*"They [plants] need watering in between, but it's not possible for them [GLiN ppts] to come in every day and water them."*

---

Facilitators suggested that shorter sessions that happen more frequently would be beneficial, especially for older people who are retired or have few other weekday commitments.

## 6. Coalfields Worx

The Coalfields Worx programme ran at two locations with in total 15 unemployed young people (18-24 years): Fife (5 participants) and East Ayrshire (10 participants).

### Working towards employment

The programme was clearly focused on getting the participants work-ready through a number of activities:

- **Formal qualifications:** the young people worked full time in the project, got paid for their work and got a range of qualifications, including forklift, chainsaw, trailer and rope access certificates.
- **Informal on the job training:** the Project Supervisor worked alongside the young people, showing them what to do, and how to do it. The young people were involved in all stages of the assignments they have taken on: negotiating with the clients, planning the work, costing things out and aftercare.
- **Work experience:** by actually working for a long period of time in real jobs, the young people gained valuable work experience.
- **Job seeking support:** the Project Supervisor helped the young people with preparing their CV and covering letters, searching for vacancies and preparing for interviews.

All 15 young people that took part in the programme are currently in paid full-time employment.

### Wider impact on young people

Apart from getting young people into a job, the programme had a wider impact on them:

- **Increased work related skills:** the young people taking part in the programme learned valuable transferable skills, including time keeping, teamwork, leadership skills,
- **More social skills:** from working together as a groups and interacting with clients and the wider community young people developed their social and communication skills.

- **Improved motivation:** from working and achieving the young people became more motivated to do other things, including looking for employment, improving their housing situation and repairing relationships.
- **Increased confidence:** from working and developing themselves the young people got a boost in confidence. The programme showed them that it was possible to turn their life around and work towards a positive destination.
- **Improved mental health:** many of the young people taking part in the programme had mental health issues, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures. The Project Supervisor worked with young people on these issues and referred them on to other services when required.

## --- CASE STUDY --- Fife Coalfields Worx

### The Coalfields Worx programme

The programme ran in Fife during 2022. Originally the project was planned to last for 6 months, but the Covid-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on the opportunity for face-to-face contact, the ability to win and deliver work and the opportunities for formal training. Therefore, the programme was extended with another 6 months.

The programme was delivered by the Fife Employment Access Trust (FEAT).

The programme started by recruiting suitable young people. To ensure that the experience was as much real as possible, there was an open competitive recruitment process. There were ten applicants for the positions, six got interviewed and five were successful. One of the selection criteria was that the applicant was unemployed, had significant barriers to employment and showed a willingness to turn their life around.

*"It's quite easy to find suitable young people, because there are so many young people looking for work."*

After initial training, the group did a range of gardening and maintenance jobs for a variety of clients. This included gardening and grass cutting, horticulture, path maintenance, litter picking, street and street furniture maintenance and house clearings.

### Overcoming barriers

The young people that were successful showed a range of issues, including a history of addiction, offending behaviour, mental health issues and serious lack of confidence.

It took a long time for some young people, but through working and achieving eventually they overcame these barriers. Working gave them a sense of purpose and pride.

The young people worked in their local communities in the West-Fife villages, where some of them were well known, but not in a positive way. Being seen by their neighbours in a positive way has helped them to come out of their shell.

*“They had these kind of mental barriers at times where they felt they couldn’t do it, they couldn’t achieve. So it was just a case of giving them reassurance.”*

*“There is a sort of inertia among young people that are out of work”*

*“A lot of them were quite shy, they didn’t want to speak to anyone.”*

### Developing skills

The programme started with extensive training by Fife Council (e.g. first aid, asbestos handling, manual handling) and the Project Supervisor (e.g. grass cutting, joinery, gardening).

Later in the programme the young people were given a budget to access further specialised training with external providers. The young people chose Forklift License training (2), Chainsaw certificate and Rope Access training. One young person chose not to do any other training.

At the end of the course the young people showed evidence of a range of work-related and personal skills, including time keeping, customer

care, communication, leadership, showing initiative and taking criticism.

*“If it hadn’t been for [Project Supervisor] taking this course I wouldn’t have got out of bed in the morning.”*

*“They gained transferrable skills – not just skills they can use in work, but skills they can use socially while they’re out and about and while they’re at home.”*

### Developing the confidence to move on

The programme, which resembled a ‘proper job’ gave them the motivation and confidence to look for a job.

*“They weren’t just signing up to a training programme, they were treated like adults in a proper job.”*

Over the course of a year, all five young people have found fulltime sustainable jobs: greenkeeper at a golf course, painter decorator, ground staff at a university, environmental services in Council and maintenance officer at a power station.

An assessment of professionals revealed that without intervention the outcome for the five young people would most likely be quite different, as shown in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1:

	Prediction	Actual
A	Needed a bit of confidence, would have eventually got there.	In sustainable employment
B	Well-known character in the community, ducking and diving ‘wide boy’, would not get employment.	In sustainable employment
C	Mental health issues and had some work experience. Would have got some kind of job eventually.	Made a career change, now in dream job
D	Addiction history, mental health issues, would not get employment.	In sustainable employment
E	Lived in rough situation, involved in offending behaviour, would not get a job.	In sustainable employment

# 6: Tackling Inequality: Health and Wellbeing

This Section provides evidence of the impact of the Game On Scotland programme on health and wellbeing.

## Game On

The Game On programme in Scotland has worked with 752 young people across the Football 5ives, Game On Girls and Game On Active strands of the programme.

The sessions are co-delivered by a football coach and a youth worker. This means that when young people are not playing, they can chat to the youth worker, who can get to know them, and signpost them to other programmes and services. In some location the involvement of youth workers means that young people with transport barriers can be collected by minibus.

In some of the locations the local police is involved. They can build up trust with young people, deliver information on topics such as alcohol, drugs or criminal behaviour.

Young people are recruited via posters, flyers, social media and local schools, via Active School staff. When the programme is established, word of mouth is the most powerful recruitment tool.

*"There won't be many who haven't heard of it."*

*"Kids come from the local primary school and pretend to be old enough to join because they have heard of it and want to be involved."*

The programme is very well received. Almost all young people(97%) enjoyed the Game On sessions as shown in Figure 6.1 .

Figure 6.1: Enjoy Game On

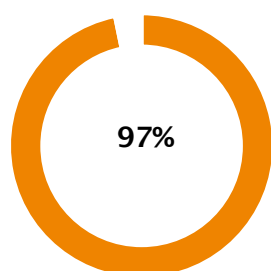
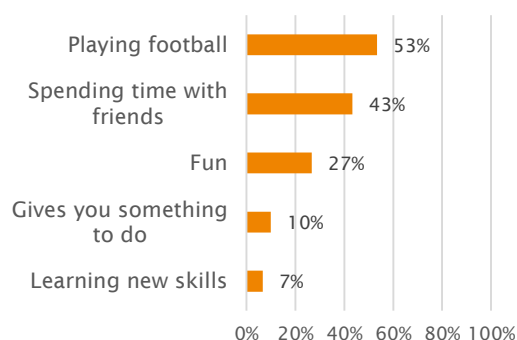


Figure 6.2 highlights the most favourite aspects of the programme.

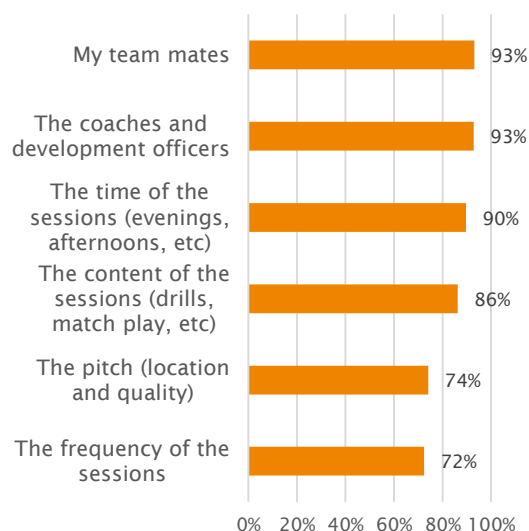
Figure 6.2: Favourite aspect



Other favourite aspects that were mentioned included: inclusivity, competitiveness, the coaches, getting to know new people, and the fact that it was free.

Figure 6.3 details the satisfaction of the young people with the various elements of the programme.

Figure 6.3: Delivery of the sessions



Players enjoy the company of their fellow players (93%) and the coaches (93%). Young people are

also happy with the content of the sessions (86%), their timings (90) and frequency (72%) and the venue (74%).

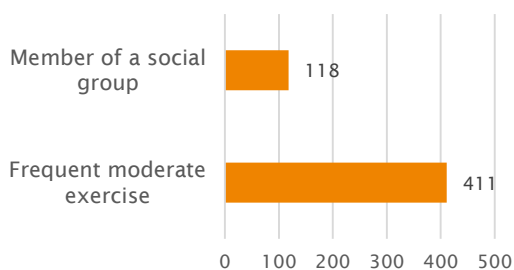
Delivery partners are very satisfied with how the programme runs and with the support the receive from the CRT.

*"Any issues, XXX [CRT staff] is there. He is in touch a lot anyway, asking how things have gone and how he can help."*

### The impact of Game On

The CRT uses the Value Insight Tool to track the achievement of the participants. Game On has collected evidence for 411 Football 5 participants who achieved the outcome of doing moderate exercise frequently and 118 Game On Girls participants who being part of a community group in the Value Insight Tool.

Figure 6.4: Value Insight Tool outcomes



From the Game On participant survey as part of this study a wider range of outcomes of the programme was identified.

Four out of five young people (80%) reported an increase in confidence from their participation in Game On as shown in Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5: Increased confidence

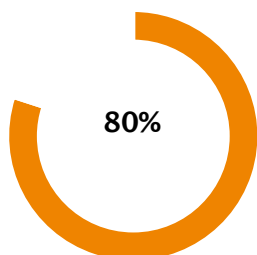
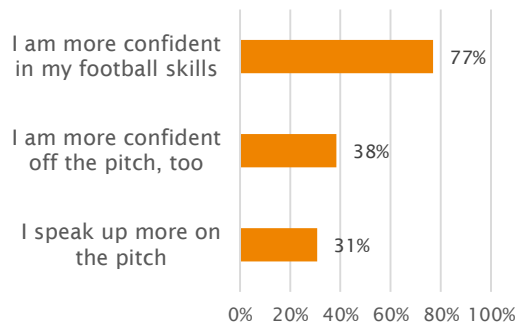


Figure 6.6 provides more detail about why participants think they are more confident.

Figure 6.6: Indicators of increased confidence



More than threequarters of participants is more confident in their football skills (77%), almost four in ten (38%) feels more confident off the pitch as well (38%) and just under a third speaks up more (31%).

One of the coaches talks about a young person that really came out of his shell. In the beginning he was very nervous speaking to people, now he chats away at the beginning of the session.

The vast majority of young people (90%) reported a better physical health as a result of taking part in the programme, as is depicted in Figure 6.7.

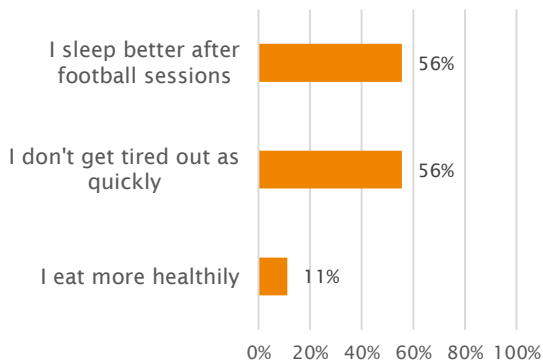
Figure 6.7: Improved physical health



Figure 6.8 provides some indicators of improved health.



**Figure 6.8: Indicators of improved physical health**



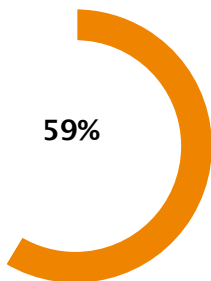
Young people report sleeping better (56%), being fitter (56%) and eating better (11%).

*"I am not as fat anymore."*

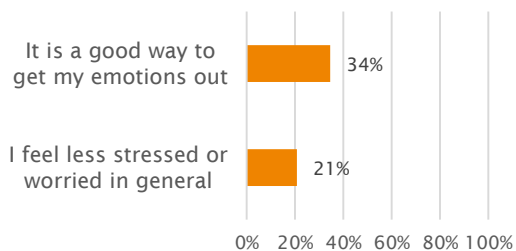
*"It makes me feel better at breathing."*

Figure 6.9 reveals that the game On programme also has a positive impact on the majority of young people's mental health (59%).

**Figure 6.9: Improved Mental Health**



**Figure 6.10: Indicators of improved mental health**



A third of participants (34%) see the Game On sessions as a good way to relieve stress and a fifth (21%) say they feel less stressed in general.

Figure 6.11 reveals that almost three quarter of young people taking part in the Game On programme (71%) have made new friends.

**Figure 6.11: Made new friends**

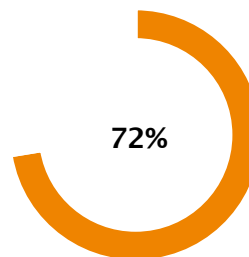
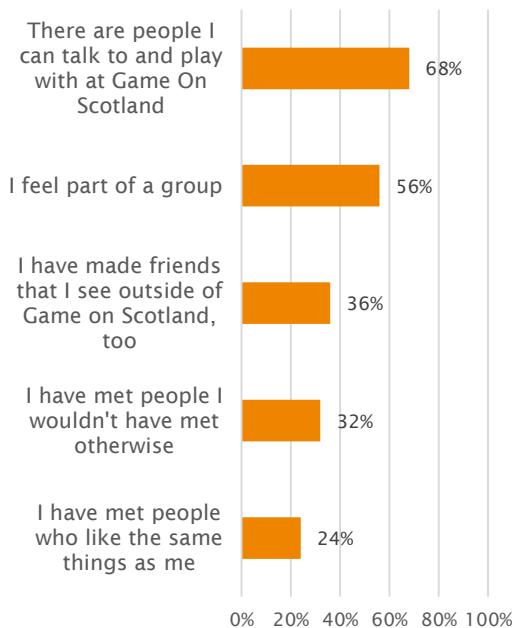


Figure 6.12 provides more insight in those new friendships.

**Figure 6.12: New friendships**



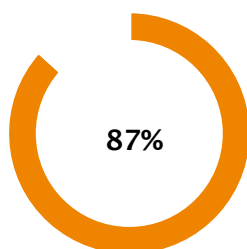
Young people feel they can talk to others (68%) and feel part of a group (56%). They report meeting new people who they would not have met otherwise (32%) with similar interests (24%) that they also see outside of the programme (36%).

*"Getting to know new people and learning new skills."*

An important element of the Game On programme is to divert young people from undesirable behaviour.

Just under half of the young people (48%) indicated that this was an issue for them and of those the majority (87%) report that the programme has had a positive effect on their behaviour.

Figure 6.13: Diverted from antisocial behaviour



---

*"It helped me cause I was always out with my friends mucking about and doing stupid things that would get us in trouble but Game On helped me stop do those things."*

*"Yes this help me a lot by keeping me away from crime and bad thing that go on In my area."*

*"I used to do stuff I shouldn't be but Game On keeps me occupied."*

*"I am in here and not in house or out and about causing trouble or being cheeky."*

---

Coaches and Youth Workers emphasise that 'keeping young people out of trouble' is an important aspect of the programme. They build trust relationships with the young people.

One coach tells that before the programme started, there was frequent vandalism and drinking going on at the school grounds at night. Young people were with bikes on the Astro turf, burning holes in it, were rude to staff, stealing things, breaking and climbing fences. This was very stressful for the staff at the school, but now it is hardly an issue any more. The Police have noticed the difference too.

A police officer talks about regular nuisance of a large group of young people gathering in the field behind the pitch. Now they have all moved from the field where they were disrupting the peace to playing football.

A Youth Worker gave the example of a girl that always had issues at school but did not want the Youth Worker to talk to school about it. Eventually, the girl got excluded, told the Youth Worker about it, and agreed it would be good to come back to school and see the Youth Worker at school once a week. It took a long time but the relationship developed thanks to football and would not have happened at school.

Another youth worker tells that it is a good chance to connect with young people, especially after lockdown, and tell them what other work they do, get their opinion on what needs changed in the local area, how they can help them more, for example with social media security or making good choices. Game On helps to improve basic life skills and learns them how to behave in a group.

A police officer reveals that he feels young people now trust and have relationship with the police. If they are called out to people making trouble, chances are one of the young people will tell them who it was, engage with them, whereas previously you'd just be met with blank faces. The game on programme has mad young people see police officers as humans.

---

*"They build relationships with the coaches - someone everyone knows from the community; someone the kids trust."*

*"School staff have the support of the coaches and the police and kids respect what happens on the Astro and so they respect the staff more."*

*"There's a range, good mixture, relatable but also people they respect. They become people that young people have a bond with. They see them out in the community as well."*

*"It gives them something to do - would just be sitting at home otherwise, or getting into things they shouldn't be doing. There is a knock on effect - their friends see them at football rather than messing about and are less likely to get into trouble themselves."*

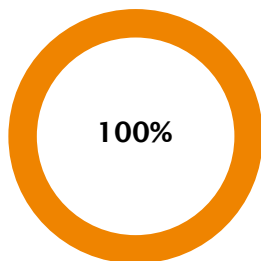
*"There is social deprivation in XXX - but you don't get kids bringing alcohol to the football, so they drink less and cause less trouble."*

*"It is dispersing hotspots on a Friday night, it's a massively helpful to the Police."*

---

Finally, all young people (100%) indicated that taking part in Game On made them happy, as revealed in Figure 6.14.

Figure 6.14: Increased happiness



Young people indicated that they were looking forward to Game On sessions (55%) and have fun (90%)

*"It just makes u happy waking up in the morning knowing you've got something good to go to."*

*"Fun to have a kick about with your mates."*

*"It's fun and something else to do outside of school. Is better than sitting about the house."*

--- CASE STUDY ---  
**Game On: Dalmellington**

The Game On sessions in Dalmellington happen every Friday night at the leisure centre Astro. They are attended by a regular group of roughly 70 young people aged between 12-17 years old.

Participants come from two other local villages, Bellsbank and Patna, as well as from Dalmellington. The sessions are advertised via the local schools and through social media, but most effectively through word-of-mouth by the young people who attend and enjoy the sessions, and encourage their friends to come along.

The sessions are informal in structure, and directed by the interests of those attending. The young people are split into groups according to age, and given freedom to organise drills, training matches or other games amongst themselves. Two coaches supervise the sessions and step in to coach or manage small matches when needed.

In the lead-up to the Community Cup (discussed below), young people who volunteered for the

team took part in formal training sessions delivered by the coaches. Game On Dalmellington also hosted a small tournament day at the end of the year, where the winning teams and select individuals won awards.

Kit (bibs and footballs) is provided by Game On, water and snacks by partner social workers, and a minibus is supplied by the youth club that the coach is attached to, which means that young people who have limited access to public transport can be picked up and dropped off in the local area.

**Something to do**

It was clear from interviews that the sessions provide young people with something to do on a Friday night when they would otherwise have very limited options. Young people reflected that if it wasn't for Game On sessions, they would spend the time on their own at home, most suggesting that they would either be playing video-games or doing nothing. Very few participants played football for local clubs or attended any other after-school activity.

*"At least there's something we can do."*

*"If the Astro was open, I'd come round to the Astro, otherwise I'd be doing nothing or on my play-station probably."*

*(Participants)*

This perspective was reiterated by the coach. There is very little on offer in any of the local villages, and without the football sessions, young people would likely have nothing to do on a Friday evening. The football provided them with a positive activity to get involved in, and encouraged them to get outdoors even in the winter. The coach also reflected that the Friday night sessions served the same purpose for himself, the other coaches and delivery partners involved.

*"I'd probably be doing nothing - just finish up my normal work and sitting in the house."*

*(Coach)*

**Being social**

Spending time with friends was a significant theme that arose from interviews with young people. The chance to spend time with people outside of school was important to them, and the

Game On sessions provided a fun, relaxed environment in which people could develop old friendships and build new ones.

---

*"It's the only place you can really see your friends that's not on a stupid wee X-box."*

*"It gets him out the house, and it means I get to see him, so that's win-win."*

*"There's very little opportunity for engagement with your friends except for this."*

*(Participants)*

---

Young people found that they were able to maintain friendships with people that went to other schools, whom they wouldn't see otherwise, and to make new, lasting friendships. In particular, the Game On sessions were a place where age, football ability, and team affiliations didn't matter, and conventional social barriers were broken down.

---

*"Me and him have become pals because of this - when he sees me at school, he'll come over."*

*"I go to a different school, so it's a big chance for me to see my pals."*

*(Participants)*

*"Breaking down barriers, because it's a big age group - 12 to 17, so we're trying to break down barriers between the older ones and the younger ones and mix them all together and that. And they're all getting on really well."*

*(Coach)*

---

The coach noted that opportunities to socialise were particularly important for young people after the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns had had a lasting negative impact on young people's ability to participate in group activities, and Game On enabled them to develop social skills such as teamwork, collaboration and communication.

---

*"He feels welcome here, I'd never spoken to him before, and now I speak to him."*

*(Participant)*

*"Somewhere they can come with their friends, especially after the pandemic, it's getting them all together."*

*(Coach)*

---

The format of the sessions encourages socialising, and the coaches have noticed that young people come along to the Dalmellington sessions with their friends and stay to watch even if they don't want to play football.

Young people reflected that the attitude of the coaches helped to cultivate the friendly atmosphere of the sessions, and that they had built up good relationships with the adults. They speak to them outside of the sessions, and felt that if they had anything on their mind, the adults at Game On were people they would be able to speak to.

---

*"[Coach] is probably my favourite person in the world."*

*"He's my best pal."*

*"They're amazing, so good, he's a good guy."*

*"He lifts the spirits of the group."*

*(Participants)*

---

### Gaining skills

Some participants reflected that Game On sessions had helped them to improve their football skills. For those who played for other clubs or local teams, the informal sessions were a chance to practice and improve on what they'd been taught elsewhere. For others, the mixing of age groups and abilities meant that they played with people with a broader range of ability than they would otherwise, and were pushed to improve or to adapt their football.

The Game On sessions provided some participants with the opportunity to develop coaching skills, including transferable skills such as leadership, patience, and techniques for teaching people new things.

One of the older participants has returned to the Game On sessions as a support coach, to develop his abilities and gain experience that will contribute to his SQA in coaching.

### Improving wellbeing

A number of mental and physical wellbeing benefits were mentioned during interviews with young people. Game On was seen as an effective way of lifting their mood during the sessions and during the rest of the week as it gave them something to look forward to. The enjoyment of playing football with a large group of friends

came through strongly in discussions with both young people and the coach.

---

*"A lot of my week is hanging on this - from the Monday, this is what I get through each day for, what I get through the week for."*

*"Everybody looks forward to it from the Monday on."*

*"I can't wait till a Friday night so I can just get out and play."*

*(Participants)*

*"To be fair, I've started looking forward to the Friday nights, because it's just enjoyable, it's really good!"*

*(Coach)*

---

Some mentioned that Game On helped them to cope with stress. The relaxed setting and the chance to throw themselves into a physical activity without any pressure was a good way to release pent-up emotions.

---

*"If I had issues, I could imagine this would be a good place to come and get my stress out."*

*"There's no, 'get in boys, you've got a training session' - there's no hassle here. There's nothing to be scared of, you just walk in and everything's calm."*

*"It is quite stressful sometimes, with exams and stuff, and this takes some of that stress away because you just get to kick a ball around."*

*(Participants)*

---

The coach recognised this as a key benefit for participants, too. In particular, it gave young people the chance to express themselves through sport, which was different to how they were expected to behave at school.

---

*"Football gives you a chance to express yourself, it lets them get things out of their mind and body - a release."*

*(Coach)*

---

People discussed losing weight and having a chance to get outside and be active more often as benefitting their physical health, in some cases making PE lessons at school easier. In general, however, since the sessions were informal and didn't require fitness training, young people reflected that sports they did at school had a

greater impact than Game On on their physical health and fitness.

### **Boosting confidence**

Young people developed their confidence through the Game On sessions, to a noticeable extent. Young people reflected that they had felt their own confidence develop, and saw their friends becoming more confident, too. Their increased confidence during sessions led to them feeling more self-confident in general, in particular when speaking to new people.

There were a variety of things that young people identified as contributing to their increased confidence. For some, the opportunity to practice gave them confidence when playing football elsewhere. Others found that they were more confident playing against people who were older and more skilled than themselves, while others reflected that teaching younger or less experienced players skills and tricks boosted their self-confidence. Winning games, tackles, matches, and making good saves as goalie were also mentioned as key moments when players felt confident and proud of their abilities.

The coach commented on the difference in individuals' confidence since the beginning of the sessions, noting that Game On helped them to come out of their shell.

---

*"Some individuals were really shy, and had less to say and weren't coming out of their shell - and recently I've seen them actually getting into the middle of things and everybody talking - it really does help them."*

*(Coach)*

---

### **Increasing pride in the community**

The Game On sessions have had a significant impact on how young people view their community and their place within the community.

In discussions, they reflected that there was little in Dalmellington that they were proud of. The Leisure Centre is the only community resource, and young people expressed feeling disconnected from it, because there were no regular activities available for free, and there was no clear avenue of communication for them to find out about what was available or voice their opinions about what they would like. The Astro, which was opened at the discretion of the Leisure Centre, had been built on top of a green space they had previously used for sports and

games, so some residents felt they had lost an opportunity to play sport for free at any time.

Since Game On started in Dalmellington, young people felt they had something to be proud of, and that Dalmellington could be advantageously compared to other local villages.

---

*"Dalmellington's a pretty average place, without football. Now it's above average."*

*"Being at a different school, I'm always boasting about this. They're literally a stone's toss away from their Astro, and I'm in the middle of nowhere but I've still got an Astro."*

*(Participants)*

---

### Strengthening community connections

The Game On sessions helped to strengthen connections within the community, as the CRT partnered with youth workers and Active Schools Scotland to deliver the sessions.

The adults involved in Game On found that young people were more likely to engage with them after joining the sessions, despite having known them for a long time through other roles. Communication between youth workers and teachers helped to provide all adults with a fuller picture of individual young people, and provide more targeted and personalised support where necessary.

---

*"I've had some approach me when they've had problems at school, so I can go to their school and it's just another voice for them."*

*(Coach)*

---

Young people gain a sense of recognition in school, as they know that teachers are aware of the sessions because everybody talks about Game On during the week. Adults commented that the sessions have contributed to young people's behaviour at school improving, through respect for their teachers and as a result of having somewhere to go to let off steam.

---

*"There are some kids that have had trouble at school with their behaviour and I've heard that they're calming down a bit and having a wee bit more respect for their teachers."*

*(Coach)*

---

Young people also feel more included in their own community, amongst their peers. Being part of a football team helps to bring people together, and interviewees described actively drawing people in who were shy at first, or not part of an established friendship group.

---

*"We all crowded round him shouting, 'One of us' and that made him feel a bit more at home."*

*(Participant)*

---

The participants and adults involved in Game On Dalmellington come from three near-by villages, between which public transport is infrequent and unreliable. The sessions have strengthened links between these communities, as young people and adults have shared experiences and stronger relationships.

### Wider benefits for Dalmellington

Dalmellington and the local area has experienced problems with antisocial behaviour in the past. Adults reflected that boredom and a lack of connection or ownership within their community contributed to young people's tendencies to engage in destructive or harmful behaviour.

---

*"Without the Friday nights, the kids would be running amok, they'd have nothing to do. And it keeps them away from alcohol and that - which has been a big problem up our way for years."*

*(Coach)*

---

Since Game On sessions have been delivered in Dalmellington, there has been a marked reduction in antisocial behaviour. Friday nights went from being a point of negative comparison to other nights of the week for antisocial behaviour, to being the night with the least incidents. Additionally, the coach inferred that the football sessions had contributed to young people improving their behaviour in general, thanks in part to the positive relationships they developed with adults at Game On.

---

*"We've had problems with antisocial behaviour in these villages and within three months of this getting up and running that's completely gone."*

*"You always get a 'Hello' when you see them out and about, they've got a lot of respect."*

*(Coach)*

---

Another contributing factor was that the area around the Leisure Centre was somewhere people would congregate on Friday nights to drink alcohol and engage in other disruptive behaviour, but those groups have now been effectively redirected towards football.

Young people likewise recognised the significant impact that Game On sessions had on antisocial behaviour in the area. They reflected that they or their peers would be drawn towards destructive activities on a Friday night out of boredom, and because their friends were doing the same.

---

*"If this wasn't on, on a Friday night, they might be getting up to things like setting bins on fire or something."*

*"It keeps people occupied, that's important."*

*"There's a bunch that would be drinking on a Friday night but they don't because this is on."*

---

Having football sessions instead was a positive distraction, and had a lasting impact for a number of reasons. Young people described feeling more respect towards the Astro and the Leisure Centre in general, and developing good habits and traits through Game On such as turning up on time and respecting other people and the equipment.

The sessions also tired them out, making them less inclined to go out and release their energy in other ways after the sessions end at 9pm.

---

*"It keeps people off the streets."*

*"It tires you out so when people go home they're not going out afterwards."*

*"We like having the Astro, so 100% yeah [would respect it]."*

*(Participants)*

---

Some participants also noted that older members of the community come along to the football sessions sometimes when they have nothing else to do. This was seen as their way of getting out of the house and engaging in something positive when they otherwise might not be.

---

*"This is set up for kids, but even adults come, even 20-year olds because they don't have anything else to do and they*

*don't want to do things that would get them in trouble or something."*

*(Participant)*

---

### The Community Cup

Game On Dalmellington entered a team of 14-16 year olds in the Coalfields Community Cup 2022. The experience was a memorable one for those who played, and all Game On participants reported looking forward to the next event.

The team had few opportunities to practice together and had not experienced playing together against another full team before the Community Cup tournament itself. While some teams had been training all year, the Dalmellington group had only had two months' of Friday night sessions to prepare. Young people also noted that they were from a collection of small villages and they considered their collective talent to be limited compared to larger villages and towns where there might be more people from which to select a competitive team.

Despite these apparent disadvantages, the Dalmellington group made it to the semi-finals, and were beaten on penalties in their last match, coming 3<sup>rd</sup> out of all the Game On teams in Scotland. The coach indicated that he felt an enormous sense of pride in their achievement, and the young people likewise felt proud to have represented their community so well.

---

*"It gives you a sense of pride, playing for such a small village in such a big tournament."*

*(Participant)*

---

Alongside this achievement, the young people reported that they had enjoyed the experience of travelling to Kelty where the matches were hosted, playing against other Game On teams, and getting a broader sense of what their football sessions were part of. They also projected that winning the Community Cup firstly was an achievable goal for their football team, and secondly would bring significant recognition and celebration to the villages in support of their achievement.

---

*"It would be incredible if we won the Community Cup. Everyone in the village would celebrate - we'd all be out on the streets."*

*(Participant)*

---

### Programme delivery

Participants largely agreed that they liked the format of the sessions, and had few suggestions on how they could be improved. One theme that arose frequently in interviews was that young people would like the sessions to happen more often. Though the Astro was open on other nights of the week, Game On sessions brought the greatest number of people, and that made a difference to the atmosphere of the sessions.

---

*"There isn't the same buzz on other nights."*

*"If you said Game On was happening every night of the week, you see the same numbers [as at the Friday sessions] at every session."*

*"I'd be here every single day if it was on."*

*(Participants)*

---

Some older participants spoke about including more rigorous training, and having more differentiation between younger and older participants. With so many people on the Astro, and younger boys playing against older boys, they felt that the opportunity to release pent-up emotions and physical stress was reduced because they had to be more careful.

From the perspective of the adults, the delivery of the sessions ran smoothly, and the support from the CRT was effective and efficient. The coach reflected that football session would perhaps continue to happen on a Friday night if the CRT were not there to support it, but it would be a significantly bigger drain on financial and other resources of the adults delivering it. Having a large and supportive organisation on hand to help meant that they could deliver a higher quality session to more people, more easily.

---

*"Anything we need, like kit, bibs, anything we need he's got a budget for that."*

*"If we run into any slight problems, they're always there to get it sorted and there's no hitches in the road, it gets done there and then you're not waiting around."*

---

Additionally, the coach was able to consider improvements and plans for the future, including expanding the provision of youth support activities in tandem with the football sessions. At the time of speaking to us, initial discussions

with CRT staff had taken place and the coach was optimistic about being able to implement talks and integrate visits from community organisations such as Fire and Safety and the local Police, in line with what the young people had demonstrated or expressed an interest in.



## 7: Stakeholder Views

This section of the report provides an analysis of the views of key stakeholders as expressed in interviews.

### Adding value

It is clear that the CRT in Scotland helps other organisations in coalfields areas, ranging from community organisations to statutory agencies to achieve their strategic objectives and thus add value.

Many interviewees acknowledged that the CRT in Scotland is working towards the same strategic objectives as their own organisations, including inclusive growth, tackling inequalities, creating thriving places and environmental sustainability.

Organisations mentioned the practical support, resources and expertise that CRT brings. This includes funding, support to access external funding, research and connections.

It was particularly valued that CRT in Scotland has longstanding relationships with organisations and communities. This makes them a trusted pair of hands, both by statutory organisations and communities.

---

*"From previous experience, I do know that they have real credibility with the communities they are working with."*

*"They can provide consistent focused time and support, which the Council can't."*

*"I don't have the luxury of concentrated input, whereas they come along and commit to that project for that given period and often afterwards as well for follow-up support."*

*"We are working with them to reverse the fortunes of those areas."*

*"We see them as one of our core delivery partners in Scotland. I can't overstate how much of a difference they've made in terms of delivering this programme."*

*"They use methodologies that support our work and are similar to the way we would work, so alignment from what they do to what we do is very easy."*

*"They understand what we're trying to do here with our support mechanisms to families."*

---

This trust enabled the CRT to broker productive relationships between coalfield communities and public sector organisations.

---

*"They save a lot of time and hassle. They make connections with organisations I would otherwise not have heard of."*

*"They let us understand views, positions or opportunities on the ground."*

---

The CRT's expertise in engaging and consulting communities was also frequently mentioned.

---

*"CRT helps us to filter out the loudest people so that everyone gets heard."*

---

Finally, the research and evidence base that the CRT in Scotland have created was seen as valuable.

---

*"It means we can go to the Scottish Government and lobby and it's not based on a hunch, or a bias, or a prejudice, it's based on evidence, it's based on analysis of the facts. And it's not swayed by a political perspective, either."*

---

### Effective programme delivery

Most interviewees believe that the CRT delivers their programmes in an effective and efficient way. Having CRT around avoids duplication.

---

*"I can't really think of another organisation who could do it as effectively."*

*"They come prepared every time they're involved in anything. They're prepared, they're organised, they're approachable and enthusiastic, they're focused and they try to keep the communities on track - that's not an easy task when you're a new group."*

*"They're so approachable and it's a can-do attitude."*

---

Most interviewees agree that the focus of the CRT in Scotland is the right one. They bring knowledge and expertise plus a thorough understanding of what coalfield communities need and the skills and contacts to bring the right partners to the table.

The fact that the CRT had an in depth understanding of what is happening in other coalfield areas was mentioned as beneficial.

---

*"The important thing about CRT is that they're sticking with it. They've got tenacity and endurance and resilience and they're sticking with it."*

*"The majority of my team will know exactly who they are and we all have their phone and email saved because of the relationships they've had over the years."*

---

## The impact of the CRT in Scotland

### Building capacity

Capacity building for coalfield communities to address their issues and regenerate their area was seen as a key priority area for the CRT in Scotland and where they make significant impact. They create a sense of ownership with communities.

The CRT in Scotland was also recognised for raising and supporting the aspirations of coalfield communities. A combination of knowledge of other areas with listening in detail to what communities want was seen as a major strength of the CRT in Scotland.

---

*"What they can do that we can't is they can provide focused time and support and resource to help and prepare the community - not to do it for them, but to generally co-produce and assist the community to undertake mapping and needs assessment and then to make sense of that local place and work out what's needed to for that local place going forward. And they do it so well."*

*"They act like a community partner for us in these communities, so ideally what the next phase will be, is they hand that over to the community groups and make it very locally owned."*

*"There are now communities that are more empowered and able to self-organised, and they've got a clearer idea of what some of their priorities are."*

---

---

*"The volunteers are there to learn skills, to have that support around them and to help them on to further education or volunteering or a job. How can we help them climb out of poverty? And CRT has very much been a part of that."*

*"It was a bit of a catalyst for the community to see what could actually be done with funding - small amounts and larger amounts can actually make a massive change."*

---

### Engaging communities

Interviewees frequently mentioned the expertise of the CRT in Scotland to engage with communities and make sure that everyone was included and all voices were heard.

The CRT in Scotland were also credited for turning community views into solid pieces of evidence, which could be used for planning, fundraising and lobbying purposes.

---

*"There was a lot of contribution from the community and other partners."*

*"Like with any community consultation, you could always do more, but they've done their very best to engage with the different parts of the community."*

*"They do some very, very good analysis and consultation work, they're good at publicising their documents and giving us a summary of what people are saying."*

*"They know what the community wants in a broader sense, on many levels, and they tell me what the community needs. They're even thinking beyond the next stage."*

*"She spoke to the right people in the community to get that support and buy-in."*

*"It facilitates conversations, which we can then draw information from."*

*"They kind of marshal the community, and they're excellent at that."*

*[without CRT] "It would be hugely time consuming; I would probably be involved with the loudest people not the right people, and I would not be sure that it would reflect what the community really wants."*

---

---

*"It wasn't just people coming in directly and saying, Oh you need that and this, They were actually asking the community."*

---

### Bringing partners on board

Most interviewees thought that the CRT in Scotland was good at collaborating and partnership working. They know the right partners and are able to get them to buy in to the process.

Historically, the relationship between community organisations and the Council and other agencies can be somewhat tense. The CRT in Scotland in many cases is the bridge between communities and the statutory agencies.

---

*"We find it a very productive relationship, very helpful organisation to work with generally, they're really good at communicating, really good at meeting up and chatting, open to ideas, so that ethos of working in partnership is clearly very much what they do."*

*"They're an invaluable partner."*

*"They do a very thorough mapping job at that stage, which then means that because they know who are the stakeholders from the third sector partnership, they can then know who they need to go and engage with."*

*"They tend to be quite connected and quite accessible to local community groups, local political groups, and local environmental groups - that's an interface that we as a council need to be aware of."*

*"CRT just save me a lot of hassle, because they actually know everybody that I need to speak to. Even before I know they exist, they've made the connections and I get a call."*

*The partnership benefits us in both ways - we can use their relationships but also it can help them cultivate new relationships where they maybe are lacking in certain areas."*

*"Their links with the community and their ability to cultivate those conversations not only with the community members but with public bodies - so the schools, the health teams, the council themselves - so all of those connections that span a whole range of the community has been really, really helpful."*

---

---

*"They do have great relationships across the board."*

---

### Reducing inequality and poverty

By doing the work they do, the CRT in Scotland is helping left behind coalfield communities and individuals reducing inequality and poverty by developing skills, creating employment, increasing health and wellbeing and regenerating communities.

---

*"I think if CRT Scotland weren't there, some of these communities would feel perhaps, from a social point of view, more isolated."*

*"I think they've left [XXXX] a better place than they found it."*

*"Quite a lot of them suffer disproportionately from issues around unemployment, poverty, and lots of inequalities that come with that."*

*"If we can offer the training and support, then we can help people climb out of poverty, and then less children will be living in deprivation."*

*"They have grassroots knowledge of coalfield and former coalfield issues, both physically around dilapidation and regeneration, but also socially around capacity building, education, and upskilling and reskilling."*

---

### Room for improvement

Stakeholders made a number of suggestions for the future direction of the CRT in Scotland.

- 
- Some interviewees mentioned that the CRT in Scotland should pay more attention to existing plans (e.g. the Sustrans plan).
  - Some interviewees found that the CRT in Scotland sometimes took too much the side of communities against public agencies.
  - The CRT in Scotland should focus more on Community Asset Transfers and the development of property than it does already.
  - Transport is a main issue for coalfield communities and the CRT in Scotland should do more to support community transport.
-

## 8: Conclusion

This section draws conclusions from the evaluation findings and provides recommendations on the further development of the programmes

### Conclusions

From the study the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. Coalfield areas are still among the most deprived in Scotland, in particular for income, employment, education, health and business.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit coalfield areas harder than other areas, increasing the deprivation gap.
3. The programmes delivered by the CRT in Scotland have a good fit with Scottish Government policy and strategy, in particular the CRT programmes make a significant contribution in the areas of regeneration, skills and employment and health and wellbeing.

### Community Futures

4. The CRT in Scotland has played a pivotal role in bringing communities together to produce a Local Place Plan under the Community Futures programme.
5. The Community Futures programme has engaged with all sections of the communities in worked, and more importantly, upskilled community organisations to do so themselves in the future.
6. The Community Futures programme has produced compelling evidence of the needs and wishes of communities, who can use this to draw in additional funding and resources.

### East Ayrshire Community Connections

7. Community Connections has helped to establish new organisations and strengthened existing ones.
8. Community Connections helped to make connections with previously underrepresented sections of the community and gave them a voice.

9. Community Connections has increased the capacity of the third sector to take on new and ambitious project and find the funding for them.
10. Community Connections is filling a gap in capacity building provision for community organisations.
11. Community Connections facilitated collaboration between community organisations through a series of networking events.
12. Community Connections helped to lever in additional funding in the area.
13. Community Connections has created a platform to tackle wider issues.
14. Some areas for future development of the programme include: social enterprise development, creating employment, developing community assets, accessing windfarm funding and further linking heritage and tourism to wider issues.

### Coalfield Community Investment Programme

15. The CIP was well delivered and well received by the grant recipients.
16. The combination of grant funding and practical support has built skills, confidence capacity with the recipient organisations.
17. The grants have improved coalfield communities, made them a better place to live, brought people together and forged connections with other organisations, created more volunteering opportunities and build increased capacity to undertake projects.

### Coalfields Learning Programme

18. The learning programme was well delivered and well received by the students who found the content relevant and useful.

19. The learning programme has given individuals living in coalfield areas skills and qualifications that helped them to work towards employment or increased their effectivity as a volunteer.

#### **Grow and Learn in Nature (GLiN)**

20. For most participants gardening was new, and GLiN gave them a good introduction of what benefits growing plants and food and being outdoors could bring to them.
21. The combination of masterclasses with practical skills was seen as very successful. It gave participants additional skills beyond gardening. Online delivery worked well in general.
22. Having an award at the end of the course gave participants a great sense of achievement.
23. Taking part in the GLiN programme had a positive impact on participants' physical and mental wellbeing, confidence and social interaction.
24. The GLiN programme helped people to return to normal life after the pandemic.
25. The GLiN programme had a positive effect on the communities they were delivered in. It brought the community closer together and improved the appearance of places.
26. New partnerships between organisations have been formed through the programme.
27. Participants and facilitators suggested more frequent and shorter sessions for future programmes.

#### **Coalfields Worx**

28. The programme worked with the right kind of participants: unemployed young people with significant barriers to employment.
29. Young people gained work-related and personal skills, relevant qualifications, confidence, motivation and improved mental health from the programme.
30. Coalfields Worx gave the young people the confidence and enthusiasm to turn their life around. All 15 participants moved into sustainable employment through the programme.

31. The programme has helped young people to reconnect with their communities. For some young people it was the first time they interacted with their community in a positive way.

32. The extension of the programme from 6 to 12 months was seen as very positive, and should be considered for future programmes.

#### **Game On Scotland**

33. The Game On programme is delivered well and well received by young people.
34. The combined delivery of the programme by football coaches and youth workers and sometimes involvement from Police Scotland, adds value to the programme. It provides a way for them to get to know the young people and start tackling wider issues the young people are facing.
35. Attending Game On has a positive impact on young people. They report an increase in confidence, an improvement in physical health and mental wellbeing, increased social interaction.
36. There is strong evidence that the Game On programme works well as a diversion from anti-social behaviour.
37. The Game On programme gives young people a pride in their community and strengthens their connections with it.

#### **Key stakeholder views**

38. The CRT in Scotland programmes add value to the offering of other organisations working in the coalfield areas. The expertise, resources, research, long-standing community connections that the CRT brings help them to achieve their strategic objectives.
39. Stakeholders appreciate the overview of what is happening in other coalfield areas across Scotland and the UK as hugely beneficial.
40. Stakeholders recognise that the CRT in Scotland is essential to build the capacity of coalfields organisations and communities to address their disadvantages and raising their ambitions.

41. One of the main strengths of the CRT in Scotland is their expertise and capability to engage with coalfields communities, including all sections of the community.
42. The CRT in Scotland plays the role of honest broker between public sector agencies and communities in coalfields areas.
43. Suggestions for future development include: support Community Asset Transfers, property management and community transport.
5. The Value Insight tool used for the Game On sessions should be extended to incorporate the range of additional outcomes identified.

### General

44. It is clear that the suite of programmes the CRT in Scotland run have a significant impact on reducing poverty and inequality.
45. Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the current energy and cost-of-living crises will most likely have a more detrimental effect on coalfields areas than on other areas in the country. Therefore, the CRT programmes are needed more than ever to help communities to develop the capacity to tackle their disadvantage.

## Recommendations

From the research we can make the following recommendations:

1. The CRT in Scotland should continue to look for resources to continue and extend the suite of programmes to tackle poverty and inequality in coalfields areas.
2. One of the key strengths of the work of CRT in Scotland is their ability to work with communities intensively over a longer period of time. Core funding for one year only and short term project funding is detrimental to this. CRT in Scotland should therefore aim to seek agreement for longer-term core funding (at least three years).
3. The CRT in Scotland should improve their impact measurement and collect outcome data as a matter of routine. The fieldwork materials (surveys and questionnaires) can be used as starting point.
4. The CRT in Scotland should consider extending future Coalfields Work or other Intermediate Labour Market programmes to last one year.

Find out more  
[www.socialvaluelab.org.uk](http://www.socialvaluelab.org.uk)

[info@socialvaluelab.org.uk](mailto:info@socialvaluelab.org.uk)

---

Call us on **0141 530 1479**

---



Studio 222, South Block,  
60 Osborne Street, Glasgow, G1 5QH.

---