



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

Building Community Capacity
and Carer Support

Community Solutions Interim Strategy 2025-27





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1 About Community Solutions

During this period of change and transition, this is an interim Strategy covering the current and following year. This will allow for the Community Solutions to align with the priorities identified in the refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIPs), which should be introduced by April 2027

Community Solutions (CS) is a Partnership Programme, which **AIMS** to improve the health and wellbeing of the people and communities across North Lanarkshire. It does this by investing in community-led initiatives which build community, family and individual strengths and resources with a focus on prevention, early intervention and recovery. It does this:

- to build more resilient people and communities who can manage their own health and wellbeing
- by investing in Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) organisations to meet the health and wellbeing priorities identified by local communities and key statutory partners
- To develop a more sustainable infrastructure of CVS organisations able to provide health and wellbeing support within the communities across North Lanarkshire
- by informing how statutory services can be shaped by the experiences of local people and communities to improve services and inform service re-design

The CS Programme is a successful, cross-sector health and social care investment and improvement programme for North Lanarkshire, established in 2012. The programme is an innovative, effective and respected partnership and collaborative initiative between statutory partners, community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations and the public. It receives core recurring funding from **University Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire** (UHSCNL), with support from NHS Lanarkshire (NHSL) and North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) who also provide project funding on occasion, as well as providing governance and delivery support for the programme.

Community Solutions is governed through a “triple-lock” approach and supported and managed at both locality and North Lanarkshire wide levels. Six local CVS organisations receive funding to act as “locality hosts” for the Community Solutions Programme in their area and convene locality Community Solutions consortia meetings involving CVS funded organisations; staff from UHSCNL Locality Teams, NHSL, NLC and VANL. These consortia review local needs and priorities; agree a Locality Development Plan and manage a Local Activity Fund for their area. The triple-lock approach also includes:

- The six locality host organisations meeting a minimum six times per year with key VANL staff to share information and discuss key issues to inform locality and NL-wide developments
- VANL convening and supporting the **Community Solutions Governance Group**, which meets every six weeks with representatives from UHSCNL, NHS Lanarkshire, NLC, VANL and the CVS to support strategic planning, review, improvements and reporting
- Participation in the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) of UHSCNL to provide regular updates and to integrate the work of the Community Solutions Programme into the implementation of the Strategic Commissioning Plan and associated Programmes of Work
- Strategic links with UHSCNL senior management and its Integrated Joint Board agree the programme’s strategy and funding and review progress reports



1 About Community Solutions

[Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire](#) (VANL), the local Third Sector Interface (TSI), hosts and manages the programme on behalf of UHSCNL and the wider Partnership. Delivery of the programme is through the diverse, large and vibrant range of CVS organisations operating across North Lanarkshire, which receives funding through the programme and other sources to provide information, support and care to individuals, families and groups and work with local people to strengthen community capacity, resources and resilience. The programme invests in CVS organisations operating in North Lanarkshire, who support local people in programme planning, delivery and evaluation as service users, carers, volunteers and residents.

Evaluation of services and projects funded through the Community Solutions Programme is undertaken through the innovative Performance Management, Evaluation, Learning and Improvement (PMELI) Framework, which provides a robust toolkit for funded projects to evaluate its impact. The PMELI Framework also provides interim and annual evaluation reports, whilst also producing flash reports to highlight the impact and learning from the Community Solutions Programme in order to inform service redesign. Annual reports and flash reports can be found on the Community Solutions website.



2 Approach and Values

Community Solutions values and approach underpin our aim and provide the foundation upon which the Programme is built. The Programme takes a **holistic and integrated approach** to health, wellbeing, quality of life and equality encompassing:

- mental and physical health and wellbeing and their connection
- the social, economic, and environmental influences on health, wellbeing, and equality and the actions needed to tackle these

The Community Solutions programme takes a **strategic investment approach** which has the following priorities in line with UHSCNL's Strategic Commissioning Plan and Programme of Work by:

- Investing in health improvement, prevention, early intervention activities, which reduce inequalities and protect human rights
- Investment in crisis and ongoing support, with a focus on recovery and re-enablement, self-directed support, and self-management
- Cost-effective, community-based support and services provided by CVS organisations
- Capacity building within the CVS and wider community by supporting key CVS 'community anchor' organisations and volunteering to build the community infrastructure and capacity that is sustainable to support provision of good community-based support over time

Community Solutions also takes a **value-based approach**, which is **person-centered and empowering**, placing the person at the centre of the service, helping them to live their best life and supporting their human rights by:

- Actively listening and understanding their needs
- Supporting people to develop their personal resources and capabilities
- Helping them to develop and sustain supportive relationships and social/community connections

The Programme is also based on a model of **collaborative working and co-production**, to achieve goals and improvements where we develop equal relationships between people who use services and people who provide services – with support provided '**with people**' rather than 'to them'. This means involving local people - including those receiving support - and service providers in the CVS and statutory sectors to facilitate a positive and participatory cycle of planning, delivery, evaluation, learning and continuous improvement. This approach is informed by the [Ladder of Participation](#) and [National Community Engagement Standards](#).



3 Strategic Objectives

The Community Solutions Programme is a unique partnership and investment model that has evolved significantly since its inception in 2012 with the aim of maximising the impact and health and social care outcomes for local people. This 2-year interim strategy seeks to continue the evolution of the delivery model and to apply the model in different ways. The strategy will be built around the following four strategic objectives, which will be supported by specific programmes of work:

3.1 Objective 1 - Expanding the funds being managed through the Community Solutions Programme

Building on the achievements of the previous Plan, which saw the first year (2022/23) of recurring funding for the Community Solutions Programme, following a commitment from the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) for it to become a recurring budget in September 2021.

The previous plan also saw additional funding from UHSCNL to fund more Prevention & Early Intervention support being provided by the Community & Voluntary Sector as part of a post COVID Business Case that awarded an additional £618,000 per year for 2 years. Over the course of the previous 3-year plan, there was also additional funding from UHSCNL to extend the Hospital Discharge Programme, along with funding to support phase 1 and phase 2 of a new Carer Breather programme; and finally, to manage a targeted fund to support community-based Alcohol & Drugs programmes.

The additional funding from UHSCNL Business Case was also matched against funding from the Scottish Government and Macmillan Cancer Support to rollout the Improving Cancer Journey and the appointment of a team of 10 Community Connectors.

Finally, the previous plan also consolidated funding from the Scottish Government to invest in community supports to improve the Mental Health & Wellbeing of people across North Lanarkshire. This programme is currently on phase 4, with a commitment from the Scottish Government to fund a further 2 phases, with the expectation that this will be an ongoing fund beyond 2027/28. North Lanarkshire Council also agreed to align the Children, Young People & Families Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund with the Community Solutions Programme to manage funding they received from the Scottish Government. This is currently on phase 6 of funding.

Building on the above successes of the previous plan, the first strategic objective is to:

Increase funding managed through the Community Solutions Programme from its current level of £3.4million in 2025/26 by 10% per year for the coming year

This will be achieved through:

- Securing funding to invest in community initiatives from other Community Planning Partners, similar to the funding provided by the Alcohol & Drugs Partnership in the previous plan
- Expanding the level/range of additional funding from UHSCNL invested through the Community Solutions Programme, similar to the additional funding managed to support the Hospital Discharge Programme and the Carer Breather Programme. Both of which are now tendered for separately
- Develop and introduce a new “corporate fund” with funding from businesses operating across North Lanarkshire. The new fund would aim to attract funding from medium to larger companies operating within and across North Lanarkshire and would be managed either as the current Locality Activity Fund and/or similar to the new Thematic Funding Programme with annual priorities set by contributing companies



3 Strategic Objectives

3.2 Objective 2 - Consistent approach to locality hosting and maximising funds invested in grass roots organisations

The current model of hosting local consortia in the six recognised Localities across North Lanarkshire has been the same for over 13 years. The role was undertaken by one large CVS organisation in each locality commissioned to support the local consortia for that area, produce a Locality Development Plan with consortia members and to manage the Locality Activity Fund. The previous plan introduced a new 3-year term for locality hosts with a new tender process, with current locality hosts contracted to 31st March 2026. However, the current model of six locality hosts is not co-terminus with the nine Community Board areas, with some hosts linking in with two or three Community Board areas.

The previous plan also strengthened the guidance provided to locality hosts around the management of the Locality Activity Fund, introducing the differentiated funding allocation for LAF funding based on population and deprivation. It also introduced further guidance on the administration and criteria for the distribution of the funds, along with introducing further conditions on the award of funding. However, it is recognised that the overall cost of managing the LAF programme of £180,000 per year costs £240,000 allocated to Locality Hosts to undertake the role.

Finally, it is recognised that the role of Community Anchor Organisations that came to the fore during the COVID pandemic supporting the communities across North Lanarkshire has weakened. It is felt that some of the larger organisations currently commissioned as locality hosts could be better utilised as Community Anchor Organisations for their communities, as part of a wider network supporting the diverse communities within North Lanarkshire.

Building on the above observations and experiences, the second strategic objective is to:

Introduce a more cost-effective model for supporting local consortia linking to the nine Community Board areas to increase funds going to grass routes community organisations and to support a new Community Anchor Organisations Network by April 2026

This will be achieved by:

- Developing a consortia support model that aligns the six localities, the nine Community Boards and the two Health & Social care sectors; the East Sector (covering Bellshill, Motherwell and Wishaw Localities linked to University Hospital Wishaw) and the West Sector (covering Airdrie, Coatbridge and the North Locality) for a more cost-effective model
- Continuing to develop greater consistency in the operation of local consortia, with further guidance on local Development Plans, enhancing the criteria for the use of the Locality Activity Fund and the support provided to consortia members
- Strengthening the relationship with key Community Anchor Organisations across North Lanarkshire, with the establishment of a Community Anchor Organisation Network. The Network will be supported to develop a role descriptor and terms of reference for Community Anchor Organisations
- Further developing the role of the Community & Voluntary Sector Partnership Group (CVSPG) to provide a more structured way of engaging and communicating with the sector to raise the awareness of the role of Community Anchor Organisations with key Community Planning Partners



3 Strategic Objectives

3.3 Objective 3 - Increase the funds managed through the Thematic Programme being invested in strategic priorities

Since the inception of the Community Solutions Programme, a key element has been funding invested in North Lanarkshire wide organisations aimed at addressing key health and social care themes. These themes, along with the organisations benefitting from the investment, remained largely unchanged over the last 10 years, with no mechanism for new themes or delivery organisations to be introduced. Similarly, the level of funding invested through the Thematic Programme (£510,000 per year) has not changed, this accounts for around 42% of the overall funding for the Community Solutions Programme.

Following the introduction of the new Thematic Funding Model for funds distributed for projects being delivered during 2025/26, a new application process was developed opening it up to a wider range of applicant organisations; whilst introducing new themes for the investment. The new funding model aims to align the themes with key local and strategic priorities on an annual basis, which will make it more responsive to people's health & social care needs.

During the period of this plan, University Health & Social Care North Lanarkshire will be introducing a new Strategic Commissioning Plan (currently in development) for the period April 2026 to March 2029. North Lanarkshire Council are also in the process of consulting on the priorities for their Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs) that will be agreed for April 2027. This provides the opportunity to refine how the priorities for the Thematic Funding Programme are identified and how local consortia and communities can identify what the local priorities for investment should be on an annual basis. To better align with these strategic planning process, we have decided to produce an interim strategy covering up to the period March 2027.

Building on the changes that have been made to the Thematic Funding Programme, the third strategic objective is to:

Increase funding managed through the Thematic Funding Programme from its current level of £510,000 in 2025/26 by 10% per year for the coming year, whilst further refining the annual priorities for investment

This will be achieved through:

- Allocating more funding to be invested through the Thematic Funding Programme from either/or additional funds attracted through strategic objective 1 or economies achieved through strategic objective 2
- Involving local consortia in an enhanced annual priority setting process based on local knowledge outlined in their local development plans, the strategic priorities highlighted in the new UHSC-NL Strategic Commissioning Plan and the priorities identified in the refreshed LOIPs



3 Strategic Objectives

3.4 Objective 4 - Strengthening the link to Service Redesign based on the learning from funded projects

With the introduction of the PMELI (Performance Measurement, Evaluation, Learning and Improvement) Framework in the previous plan, the performance measurement and evaluation has been the primary focus, with a range of evaluation reports and flash reports being provided and well received by key funders and partners. The focus for this plan will be to strengthen the link between the learning and improvement elements of the framework to service redesign.

At a time of increasing pressure on the health & social care system resulting from a tighter financial settlement, increasing demand on the health & social care system and projected demographic changes that are expected to place even more pressure on the health & social care system; there is a recognition that in order to keep pace with these pressures major service redesign is required rather than increasingly difficult budget cuts.

Over the last 10 years there has been significant learning from the projects that have been funded, including the support to unpaid carers, through to improving hospital discharge and supporting anticipatory care planning which has led to some level of service redesign and influenced the commissioning of new services and supports.

It is recognised that extensive service redesign can be difficult to achieve, given the complex nature and interconnectedness of services within the health & social care system. The financial outturn for the North Lanarkshire Integrated Joint Board for 2024/25 was £840.250,000 an increase of £17,781,000 from the previous year 2023/24. In contrast the recurring budget for the Community Solutions Programme is just under £1,200,000 or 0.14%. The biggest impact that the Programme can have is to help inform what works and what could take pressure off the system by easing waiting lists, improve how the existing investment can be used differently to achieve more outcomes or to help to achieve tangible cost savings. This will only be achieved with the support from senior leaders in UHSCNL, NHS Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire Council.

In recognition of the increased pressure on the health & social care system, the fourth strategic objective is to:

Develop a process for supporting greater service redesign with the establishment of Innovation Panels to apply the learning and improvement from funded projects with the support from senior leaders to consider and recommend significant changes by March 2027

This will be achieved through:

- A commitment from Senior Leaders to establish Innovation Panels involving the Community & Voluntary Sector with budget holders and decision makers to develop new and innovative ways to deliver improved health & social care services for the communities in North Lanarkshire
- Further develop the PMELI framework to strengthen the Learning and Improvement elements of the framework to quantify improvements that will alleviate pressure on the system and areas of cost avoidance and possible cost savings for services that will intervene earlier, identify and help prevent the need for costly services and to improve recovery for people in the community



4 Financial Performance and Projections

The CS Programme receives funding from a wide range of funders, with the original funding from the programme coming from UHSNL when the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) was formed. Prior to that, similar funding came through the Reshaping Care for Older People. In September 2023, the IJB agreed to make the funding for the CS Programme a recurring budget subject to funding availability.

Following the success of the funding model, UHSCNL provided additional funding for two years to increase the level of prevention and early intervention activity, this covered the years 2023/24 and 2024/25. Over the last 4 years, other funding has been attracted from Scottish Government for the Community Mental health & Wellbeing (CMH&WB) Fund, from North Lanarkshire Council for the Children, Young People and Families MH&WB (CYPF MH&WB) Fund, and Macmillan Cancer Support for the role out of the Improving Cancer Journey.

UHSCNL also routed additional funding for other specific purposes including the Carer Breather Fund, and funding to extend the Hospital Discharge Support Programme. Funding was also provided from the North Lanarkshire Alcohol & Drugs Partnership to run a small programme.

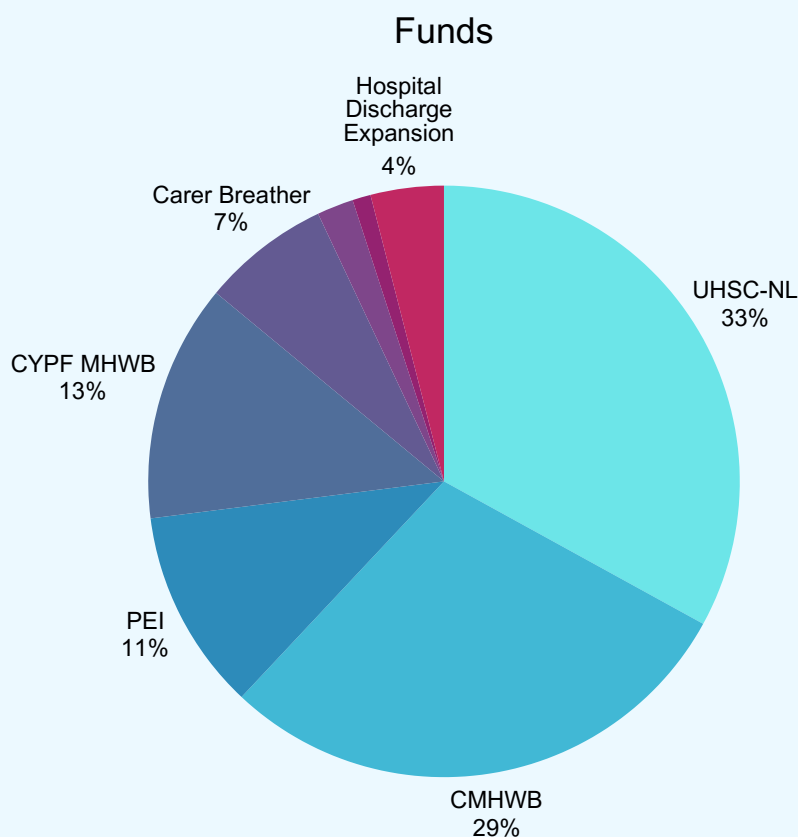
4.1 Funding for 2022/25

The CS Programme managed the following funds over the period 2022-25:

Item	£
UHSC-NL recurring funding	3,494,282
Allocation of the additional Prevention & Early Intervention (PEI) Business Case funding	1,138,294
UHSCNL Carer Breather Fund	800,000
Substance Misuse Community Support	112,000
Phase 2, 3 and 4 Scottish Gov CMH&W Fund	3,023,371
Phase 3, 4 and 5 CYP&F MH&WB Fund	1,363,786
Macmillan MIA Stage 1 and 2 Funding for scoping exercise and Community Connectors	203,571
Hospital Discharge Expansion funding	421,965
TOTAL	10,557,268



4 Financial Performance and Projections



The CS funding awarded was allocated in the following ways:

Item	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total Funds	% Total Funds
VANL Hosting & Management	224,565	400,054	354,224	978,844	9%
Thematic Funding Awards	512,000	512,000	472,000	1,496,000	14%
Locality Hosts	240,000	381,000	381,000	1,002,000	10%
Local Activities Funding Awards	180,000	353,034	246,717	779,750	7%
Capacity Building	128,000	128,000	128,000	384,000	4%
CMHW Awards	946,421	946,615	946,777	2,839,813	27%

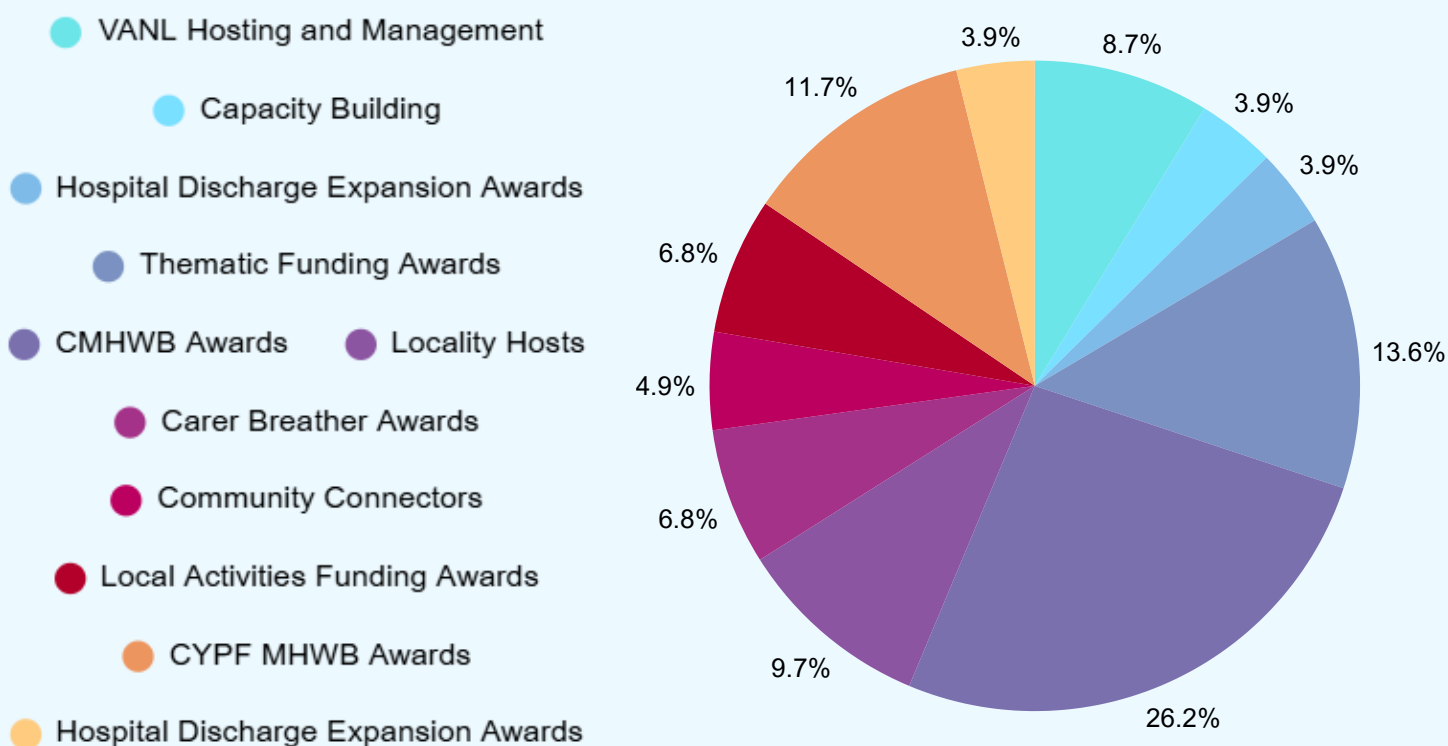


4 Financial Performance and Projections

CS funding cont'd:

Item	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total Funds	% Total Funds
Carer Breather Awards	190,000	285,000	285,000	760,000	7%
CYPF MHWB Awards	408,786	426,000	406,500	1,241,286	12%
Hospital Discharge Expansion Awards	136,420	138,522	129,779	404,721	4%
Substance Misuse Awards	3,200	-	-	3,200	0%
Community Connectors	-	403,094	160,761	563,854	5%
Total	2,969,392	3,973,318	3,510,758	10,453,468	100%

% Funds by Spending



4 Financial Performance and Projections

4.1 Projected Funding for 2025/27

In response to financial pressures and the need to maximise investment in the Community and Voluntary Sector, VANL has reviewed its operating model to streamline administration and direct more funding to frontline delivery of UHSCNL recurring funding.

From April 2026, a revised structure will bring locality coordination in-house, led by two Consortium Leads (East and West North Lanarkshire) and supported by a part-time administrator.

This approach recognises the vital role of locality hosts, strengthens collaboration, and supports the CVS's long-term sustainability. It is projected to release an additional £95,000 for reinvestment in the sector, along with £60,000 (£10,000 per locality) to sustain local anchor organisations and their community expertise. The projected funding for 2025/26 is:

Item	2025/6 £	2026/27 £
UHSC-NL recurring funding	1,195,141	1,195,141
Prevention & Early Intervention	166,000	166,000
Phase 5 & 6 Scottish Gov CMH&W Fund	1,006,000	1,006,000
Phase 6 & 7 CYP&F MH&WB Fund	315,000	315,000
Macmillan MIA	183,500	183,500
Total	2,865,641	2,865,641

Further work is being undertaken on the financial plan for 2026/27, which may affect the figures contained in the above table.



5 Programme Impacts and Performance Expectation/Projections

In 2022, the PMELI Framework was developed. The PMELI framework set out the Programme's approach to PMELI, and standardised performance and outcome measures for all funded projects.

From 2022-25, significant developments have been made to the PMELI framework, including:

- Development of a number of evaluation resources for CVS organisations
- Improvement of the Programme's evaluation and reporting processes, including developing evaluation and monitoring forms in line with feedback
- Increased reporting of Programme activity and impact, and use of learning to make improvements to each project, fund, programme, and the sector as a whole
- Increased support for the sector with evaluating their work and evidencing their impact

An annual Community Solutions Programme Impact and Learning report for each financial year from 2022-25 on the [website](#).

5.1 Programme Impacts for 2022/25

The Programme has had the following reach from 2022-25:

Financial Year: 2022-23





5 Programme Impacts and Performance Expectation/Projections

Financial Year: 2023-24

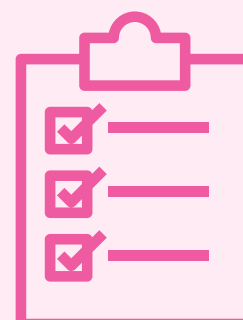


Financial Year: 2024-25



In 2024-25, **30,258** positive Community Solutions outcomes were reported.

The PMELI Framework also sets out the Programme’s commitment to producing an Impact and Learning report for each year of each Fund, [available on the website.](#)





5 Programme Impacts and Performance Expectation/Projections

5.2 Projected impacts for 2025/26 and 2026/27

With the expectations for 2026-27 to include increased income from other sources and new ways of working, the projection for 2026-27 is below.

Financial Year: 2025-26



Financial Year: 2026-27



The above projection is based on the following assumptions:

- Average annual increase in number of projects is 29
- Average annual increase in organisations is 11
- Average annual increase in individuals supported is 6.5k
- Maintaining 13 average funding stream

This projection also acknowledges that despite a reduction in the number of funding streams, the Programme supported more individuals in 2023-24 and 2024-25 as a result of increased Locality Activity Funding (LAF) from £180k to £300k each year. For example, with increased funding in 2023-24 and 2024-25, the LAF supported an additional 10k and 15k unique individuals each year respectively.