

Impact of the Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme

Impact Report 2023

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Foreword by Claire Dove CBE

Claire has acted as VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) Crown Representative since 2018. She has played an extensive role in the social enterprise sector, having previously chaired Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) and led Blackburne House Group. In her role as VCSE Crown Representative she works to champion the sector and identify and reduce barriers to VCSE commissioning.

In order to realise the potential of the sector we need innovation and commitment to bring impactful solutions to the market. Programmes like the Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme are key to unleashing this potential.

Social entrepreneurship harnesses entrepreneurial initiative to confront a social or environmental problem. It is not a fad or a new concept. Whilst the term itself has only been in use since the 1980s, we see examples through the centuries.

“2,467 social entrepreneurs on this programme have led the way in reaching those in need, building community connections and growing the economy.”

However, social entrepreneurship’s time has finally come. Transformations are seldom more necessary than in times of crisis. In the United Kingdom, we have been affected by more than one crisis in recent times. The COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have hit the country hard. We stand at a critical juncture, where the power of social enterprises offers hope.

This evaluation report from AKOU on the Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme, shows us the impact of social entrepreneurs with first-hand experience of the social and economic challenge tackling society’s biggest issues. They are doing this from within their communities, for their communities, playing a key role in levelling up the country.

Over the last decade, the 2,467 social entrepreneurs on this programme have led the way in reaching those in need, building community connections and growing the economy. Rather than admitting defeat, they have instead decided to tackle local issues head on, empowering communities to take control of their destinies in the process.

What this report also shows is that there is a new way we can fund social organisations that gives agency to local people. Match Trading is a tool that can incentivise organisations to trade more, which in turn creates more sustainable and resilient social enterprises. This moves social entrepreneurs away from a dependency mindset and to one where policymakers and funders place trust and power to those on the frontline to innovate and grow on their own terms. It is an innovative approach which can really support the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.

This report lays out the impact social enterprises, learning support and Match Trading can have on supporting marginalised communities and regenerating local economies. On a larger scale, that has the potential to have the sort of transformational effect that social entrepreneurship was created for in the first place - a new way of doing business that brings purpose and profit together.

As we absorb the findings from this report, let us recognise that our collective work is far from complete. We must continue to nurture and support social enterprises, ensuring that they have the resources, networks, and funding to thrive. Together, let us seize the opportunities that lie ahead. By empowering social enterprises, we will not only level up our nation's economy but also weave the fabric of a more compassionate, inclusive, and unified society.



2. Executive summary

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme was the School for Social Entrepreneurs' (SSE) flagship programme between 2012 and late 2022. The programme supported 2,467 social entrepreneurs at various points in their journey through learning programmes and grants. Funded by Lloyds Bank and the Bank of Scotland, The National Lottery Community Fund in England and Scotland and the Scottish Government, its objectives were to:

- Improve business & entrepreneurial skills, social impact skills, networks, and emotional resourcefulness of social entrepreneurs.
- Develop more sustainable businesses that are financially resilient and create employment.
- Increase impact on communities, enhancing the social entrepreneur's ability to support more beneficiaries.

Evaluating the programme

This report evaluates Phase 2 of the programme (September 2017 – November 2022), using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess how effective the programme was in each of the above objectives. Data was collected throughout the programme and into early 2023, with evaluation work taking place throughout 2023.

During this phase, 1,217 social entrepreneurs completed the programme in 66 cohorts, based in Scotland and eight English regions¹. These entrepreneurs came from diverse backgrounds and their ventures have a wide range of characteristics but were united in a common mission: to enact positive change in their communities.

The evaluation found significant gains in key skills essential for social leadership with average scores of each of the 21 skills indicators tracked increasing between baseline and endline. Furthermore, this report highlights that the combined effect of support and grants enhanced the business resilience of these social ventures seen through increased trading income and a two-year survival rate surpassing that of typical small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Notably, we observed a correlation between skill level at the end of the programme and business survival rates. This suggests that the programme's focus on individual skill development ultimately had a positive impact on the business survival rate of ventures. This in turn allows social entrepreneurs to continue the work they are doing in their communities. The impact of this manifests in several ways: reaching more beneficiaries, increasing community well-being, and contributing to local economies through job creation and spending.

Key Outcomes

- 99% of participants improved at least one skill, with an average skill gain of 55%. Average scores for every one of the 21 skill indicators increased between baseline and endline.
- The leading areas of skill development were found to be:
 - improving networks; and
 - increasing trading income generation.
- Ventures showed a 2-year survival rate of 81%, surpassing the UK SME average of 73%.
- The skill levels of social entrepreneurs when they complete the programme correlated strongly with higher survival rates of their ventures.
- Ventures benefiting from Match Trading grants saw a 41% increase in trading income. The results were consistent across different sized ventures.
- Employee headcount increased by an average of 21%, primarily in more established ventures.
- By the programme's end, programme fellows were collectively supporting up to 1.8 million beneficiaries annually.
- Over 5 years, programme fellows contributed an estimated £11.9 million to local economies through direct spending.

Implications and Future Directions

For social enterprises to thrive, a collaborative effort involving the public sector, private industry, and civic society is essential. The successes we've seen in this programme offer valuable insights that can guide future initiatives in social enterprise support, allowing us to build on past achievements. It is equally crucial to identify and focus on areas needing improvement. Specifically, future work should consider the following:

- Lower survival rates among social entrepreneurs with less developed skills highlight the need for a deeper understanding of the reasons for ventures closing. Further analysis could uncover the specific support needs of social entrepreneurs who enter the programme with a low skill base, or it could help in identifying which social entrepreneurs or ventures are less likely to benefit from SSE's programmes.
- Analysing demographic data of participating social entrepreneurs is important to ensure the programme is reaching marginalised social entrepreneurs. Based on demographic data collected at enrolment, this report shows that SSE has been successful in ensuring the programme is accessible to Minority Ethnic Groups and females in particular. In order to take this analysis to the next level and measure the equity of programme impact, more complete data collection is required with a higher response rate.
- Existing frameworks for social impact measurement are often tailored for larger, well-established enterprises. There is an opportunity to develop evaluation measurement tools and resources that are more accessible for smaller, emerging ventures.

3. Introduction

Introduction

3.1 About SSE & AKOU

The School for Social Entrepreneurs (herein SSE) is a charity with over 25 years' experience in supporting people working entrepreneurially for social or environmental impact (social entrepreneurs). It exists to help people develop the skills, strengths and networks needed to tackle society's biggest problems. Rather than working as a traditional school, learning at SSE is action-based and accessible, and other forms of support are offered too, such as funding and mentoring. Thousands of social entrepreneurs have now been supported by SSE in the UK and overseas, to start, grow and scale their organisations.

Since 2017, AKOU has worked to make social impact measurement, reporting and community engagement meaningful for all involved, particularly in activities to reach seldom heard voices. AKOU's work supports teams and third sector organisations to better demonstrate how they make positive change in the lives of their service users. Across their projects, they employ a range of tools to gather, understand and analyse data relating to people, change and impact. AKOU was co-founded by an SSE Fellow. AKOU was selected to evaluate this programme after an open invitation to tender, followed by a panel assessment and interview.



3.2 About the programme

Since 2012, SSE has supported 2,467 social entrepreneurs through the Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme (herein 'the programme'), which was run in partnership with SSE, and jointly funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

Each year, over a 12-month period, the programme offered social entrepreneurs tailored support, including: expert-led sessions covering diverse topics, experience sharing, Action Learning Sets, project visits, support from a Lloyds Banking Group mentor and a grant.

Figure 1: The typical journey of a social entrepreneur

The typical journey of a social entrepreneur was:

1. Application	2. Enrolment	3. Programme support	4. Grants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application form • interview panel • assessment 	<p>social entrepreneurs sign grant and learning agreements</p>	<p>a. Study sessions and project visits: These brought social entrepreneurs together in their cohort (of approximately 20) to engage with a range of subject experts and other practising social entrepreneurs who shared insights on a range of topics from business planning to finance. Programme content was adjusted to meet the differing needs of Start Up, Trade Up and Scale Up levels and by location as necessary.</p> <p>b. Action Learning Sets: These sessions brought social entrepreneurs together in smaller groups with a trained facilitator to help them find ways of overcoming the stumbling blocks, dilemmas and problems they and their project faced.</p> <p>c. Mentoring: Social entrepreneurs were assigned a mentor from Lloyds Banking Group at the start of the programme. Mentors were offered training and ongoing support to offer an appropriate sounding board for social entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Grants of between £1,000-£10,000 given, depending on the cohort.</p>

Note: Social entrepreneurs who completed the programme are herein referred to as 'programme fellows'.

The programme was delivered in two distinct phases:

	Phase 1 (2012-17)	Phase 2 (2017-22)
Number of programme fellows	1,250	1,217
Support offered	<p>Start Up² 1 year learning programme + £4,000 grant</p> <p>Scale Up³ 1 year learning programme + £15,000 grant</p>	<p>Start Up 1 year learning programme + grant (the size varied between £3,000 in y.1, £1,000 in subsequent years)</p> <p>Trade Up⁴ 1 year learning programme + Match Trading grant (the size varied up to £5,000 in y.1 and up to £4,000 in subsequent years). In Scotland, Match Trading grants of up to £5,000 in 2018 and up to £7,000 in 2020</p> <p>Scale Up 1 year learning programme + Match Trading grant (up to £10,000 in y.1, up to £7,000 for subsequent years)</p>
Location of support	9 regions (Scotland, London, North West, Yorkshire and North East, East and West Midlands, Hampshire, East, Cornwall, South West)	9 regions (Scotland, London, North West, Yorkshire and North East, East and West Midlands, Hampshire, East, Cornwall, South West)

Support was deliberately tailored to meet the needs of different groups:

- **Start Up:** Learning programmes and grants were geared towards the needs of social entrepreneurs who were in the planning or pilot stages. Applicants needed to have a venture that was less than two years old, and with a turnover of less than £15,000.
- **Trade Up:** Learning programmes and grants were introduced in phase 2 of the programme to offer support to mid-level ventures with a turnover of between £15,000 and £75,000.
- **Scale Up:** Learning programmes and grants supported those looking to scale their organisation from a solid foundation and scale their impact. In phase 1 this included ventures with a turnover of more than £15,000. In phase 2 this was narrowed, to organisations with a turnover of greater than £75,000.

As detailed above, the programme evolved between Phases 1 and Phases 2, which supported 1,250 and 1,217 programme fellows respectively. Changes included:

Trade Up: The introduction of a 'Trade Up' category of support in phase 2 followed reflection by SSE that the broad categorisation of 'Scale Up' in phase 1 might not offer the right support to some organisations. In particular, SSE was concerned that those with established organisations which were not yet ready to scale might not be able to access support. Trade Up was therefore introduced to ensure that the programme could offer comprehensive support to social entrepreneurs at each stage of their journey.

Grants: Grant sizes were altered between Phase 1 and Phase 2, and also varied depending on location (between Scotland and elsewhere). This was largely in response to funding constraints. A key further change between Phase 1 and Phase 2 was the introduction of Match Trading grants. This funding tool seeks to incentivise ventures to expand trading activities by making full payment of the grant dependent on increased trading. The aim is to support the social entrepreneurs to build a solid foundation for business models that are less reliant on grant funding. For every pound an organisation increased their traded income by, they would receive a pound in Match Trading grant up to the specified amount. Match Trading grants were piloted at the end of Phase 1, via a Trade Up programme in London. In Phase 2 they were rolled out at Trade Up and Scale Up level with Match Trading grants of up to £4,000 - £10,000.

Learning Programme: Core features of the learning programme remained consistent throughout phases 1 and 2. However, the programmes delivered varied slightly according to location and over time evolved based on student feedback and Learning Manager feedback.

Programme aims

The programme's foundational aims remained consistent across both stages, including to:

- Improve business & entrepreneurial skills, social impact skills, networks, and emotional resourcefulness of social entrepreneurs.
- Develop more sustainable businesses that are financially resilient and create employment.
- Increase impact on communities, enhancing the social entrepreneur's ability to support more beneficiaries.

3.3 Aims of this evaluation

This report evaluates Phase 2 of the programme, focusing on programme fellows who took part between September 2017 and November 2022. The term ‘programme fellows’ refers to all social entrepreneurs who completed the programme. Hereinafter any reference to the impact related to the programme specially refers to Phase 2 unless otherwise stated.

Evaluation question	Sub question	Report section
1. What impact did the programme have on programme fellows	1.1 How did the programme impact the skills and networks of programme fellows?	5
	1.2 What elements of support are producing the greatest impact?	
	1.3 What areas of support can be improved to ensure programme fellows have the necessary skills for success?	
2. What effect did the programme have on business resilience of the programme fellows’ ventures?	2.1. How did the programme impact the level of employment of the venture?	6
	2.2. How did the programme impact the financial resilience of the venture?	
	2.3. How did the programme impact the long-term sustainability of the venture?	
	2.4. How does skills development impact business survival?	
3. How did the programme influence community impact?	3.1. How many beneficiaries were supported by programme fellows, and how were their lives impacted?	7
	3.2 How are the ventures impacting the local communities they work in.	

Throughout the report we also consider the following:

- Which elements contributed most to the programme’s success?
- Were there any factors that led to challenges or less optimal outcomes?
- How did external events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, influence results?

3.4 Previous evaluations

Several previous independent evaluations were commissioned at set points during the programme to review progress against objectives. This report attempts to supplement the pre-existing reports but focuses on Phase 2 of the programme as well as digging deeper into the impact of the social ventures at the community level.

Previous evaluation reports include:

- Phase 1 (2015 and 2016): Interim reviews were conducted by Middlesex University⁵, and then CANInvest and Investing for Good⁶ looked at the achievements and impact of the programme's first 2 and 3 years respectively to check on progress.
- Phase 1 (October 2018): An evaluation of the completed Phase 1 of the project was conducted by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and reviewed the programme's performance against objectives⁷.
- Phase 2 (April 2021): An interim review, conducted by ERS, reviewed the first three years of Phase 2 of the programme⁸.

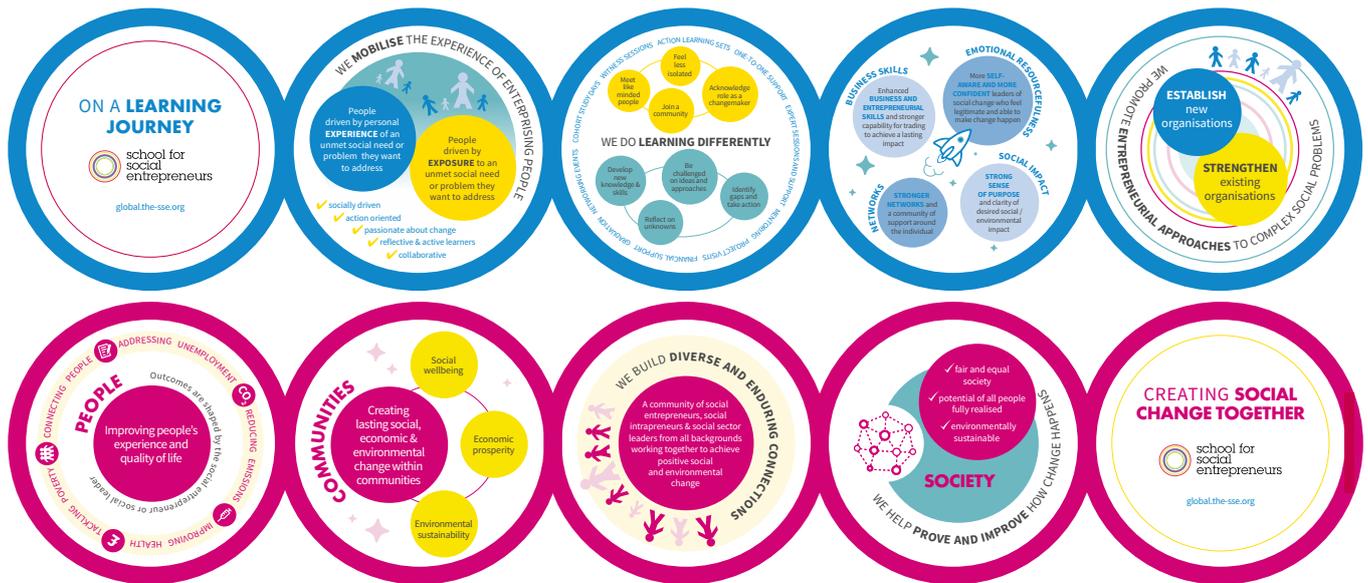
The Phase 1 evaluation found that the programme was meeting, or on track to meet nearly all targets and the shared learning experience and programme design were crucial to helping programme fellows to develop skills and successful, sustainable ventures. They recommended that SSE:

- Develop programme frameworks and tools to guide learning outcomes, monitoring and evaluation.
- Develop internal roles to support impact measurement.
- Improve pre- and post-programme support.
- Reframe the mentoring offer.
- Grow the social enterprise movement through sector collaboration and communicating the evidence.

3.5 Methodology

This evaluation uses SSE’s own Theory of Change as a framework. This recognises that there are areas of impact under SSE’s direct control (in blue) and areas which are more removed, but within their sphere of influence (in pink).

Figure 2: SSE Theory of Change



[Click to view SSE’s Theory of Change online](#)

In order to evaluate the programme’s impact in both distinct areas, this evaluation employs a mixed methods approach, leveraging both quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Evaluation questions 1 and 2

The impact on programme fellows & their ventures

1. Application Data (quantitative research methods)

This data provided insights into the social entrepreneur and their venture at the point of application.

2. Baseline Surveys (quantitative research methods)

Conducted at the start of the programme, these surveys gauged initial skill levels of social entrepreneurs, and established baseline metrics related to their ventures, such as their skills in a particular area and beneficiary count.

3. Endline Surveys (quantitative research methods)

These surveys, conducted post-programme, tracked progress against the baselines.

4. AKOU's Programme Fellow Survey (quantitative research methods)

A survey sent to all SSE fellows, gathering additional insight around their impact.

5. Survival Rate Analysis (quantitative research methods)

By cross-referencing grantees with Companies House data and the Charity Commission, this analysis assessed the operational status of ventures two years post-programme. Criteria for survival included active company status, charity or FCA registration, and other tangible evidence of operational continuity.

6. Match Trading claims forms (quantitative research methods)

This data provided information on the trading and non-trading income of social entrepreneurs who received Match Trading grants.

7. Qualitative feedback (qualitative research methods)

SSE collected feedback data from programme fellows at the end of their programme. This focussed on their experience and the areas of the programme they found most, and least, helpful.

Gaining insight into evaluation question 3 (how the programme drove impact in communities) is more challenging, as it would be disproportionate to attempt to gain in-depth insights from all programme fellows on their own community impact. Instead, we focussed on a small sample. With input from SSE, we selected 10 programme fellows and trained them as Research Associates ([explore more about the Research Associates Programme on page 85](#)) who were then empowered to gather impact data about their own ventures.

The purpose of this work was to give a more detailed view of a small number of ventures to gain further insight into the impact they have in their community. Again, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used:

Evaluation question 3

The impact on communities

1. Beneficiary survey (qualitative and quantitative research methods)

Research Associates used a survey developed by AKOU to gather insights from their beneficiaries. All surveys were standardised, with beneficiaries asked questions around how engaging with social enterprise made them feel, the impact that the venture had on the beneficiary personally/their community, connections formed as a result of participation in the venture, the impact that it would have on the community if the ventures were to stop existing. Research Associates were welcome to add general questions or tweak tone of voice for questions but the main set of questions and multiple choice options remained the same for all.

2. Focus Groups and Journey maps (qualitative research methods)

Research Associates were trained to conduct qualitative research, doing semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and filling in journey maps with beneficiaries. AKOU shared materials to support qualitative research and Research Associates adopted the materials to their contexts, so there is variation in data collected. This data is contained mostly in their individual case studies

The in-depth work with 10 Research Associates out of 1,217 is designed to go into significant detail with a small sample of programme fellows. Because of this, the findings are anecdotal and not necessarily representative across the entire programme. They allow us to make inferences, but not to directly attribute impact at the community level to SSE.

3.6 Limitations of our work

The evaluation aims to provide analysis across Phase 2 of the programme. However, some limitations should be acknowledged:

- 1. Inconsistent data completion:** Not all programme fellows consistently completed surveys and other data collection mechanisms. Consequently, our analyses often rely on a subset of the programme fellows rather than the entirety of the data. While we assume that the samples are representative of the overall population, it's worth noting that findings might not capture the full spectrum of experiences. Wherever the sample size might affect the robustness of our findings, we've highlighted such instances in the report.
- 2. Data quality:** The analysis was occasionally constrained by the quality and accuracy of self-reported data from programme fellows. Self-reporting, while invaluable for capturing firsthand experiences and insights, can occasionally lead to discrepancies or inconsistencies.
- 3. Community-level impact limitations:** Evaluating the impact at the community level presents its own set of challenges. Given that the effects at this level are further removed from the direct line of accountability, it becomes challenging to make definitive conclusions about the programme's direct contribution to community-level impacts.
- 4. COVID-19 impact:** The unexpected challenges and shifts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic affected various facets of the programme and its subsequent evaluation. Some methodological adjustments, especially in qualitative data collection, had to be made to accommodate these unforeseen circumstances.

Where any of these limitations had a direct bearing on specific analyses or interpretations, we've made a point to highlight and address them in the respective sections of the report.

3.7 External context / COVID-19

To better understand the impact of the programme, it is helpful to consider the wider socio-economic context in which it operated. From March 2020, COVID-19 brought levels of uncertainty and challenges unparalleled in recent times in the UK. It posed an immediate and multi-faceted challenge to the programme and various mitigations were put in place:

- Delivery of an in-person learning programme became impossible at times, due to restrictions on face-to-face meetings. The learning programme was moved fully online when necessary, and then over the following months to a hybrid in-person/online model to reflect changing regulations, regional variations and social entrepreneur needs.
- Programme fellows, and their ventures, were directly impacted. Many were forced to balance the demands of running their ventures with reduced capacity and reduced income. SSE attempted to offset this uncertainty by adapting grants for cohorts in 2019-20 and introducing Trade Back grants for those in 2020-21 and 2021-22 cohorts, who would have received a Match Trading grant. Trade Back grants focussed on supporting survival in challenging times, providing upfront funding based on anticipated trading activity, irrespective of actual trading.

An interim evaluation conducted by ERS in 2021 found that completion rates and student feedback remained in line with previous cohorts during this time. The evaluation stated that “the move was handled well, and students’ learning needs and expectations continued to be met⁹.” However, wherever possible, this evaluation seeks to draw out the possible impact of COVID-19 on the programme, with 2019-20 and 2020-21 cohorts the most directly affected.

It is also worth bearing in mind that although the social enterprise sector has recovered from COVID-19 much more strongly than previously anticipated¹⁰ the poor economic outlook in the UK since has caused an ongoing challenge for programme fellows. Like charities and businesses across the UK, social entrepreneurs are facing a range of challenges including, but not limited to: inflationary pressures on running costs, reduced opportunities for public service contracts, reduced grant availability and challenging trading conditions amidst reduced consumer spending¹¹.

Case Study:

Arts Well - innovating during COVID-19

Arts Well was created and founded in 2017 by Jayne Howard, who has over 15 years of experience initiating, advising and collaborating on arts-based health projects in Cornwall. It was founded to improve the experiences of individuals and communities and to tackle social inequalities related to accessibility in

arts and health. They create tailored programmes of creative activities for specific communities aimed at improving health and wellbeing. They also provide professional training and development opportunities for creative health practitioners.

“Arts Well has created a community of like-minded people. It offers a place to receive professional development and support, project/job opportunities and a place you can go to for guidance.”

Beneficiary of Arts Well

Jayne first attended a Start Up programme in Cornwall in 2016, before joining a Trade Up programme in 2019. Jane was one of the fellows who completed the programme with the background of an emerging pandemic. Whilst on the programme, Jane increased her skills scores across the board and more than doubled her skill score in 'New product / service development' - an area important for adapting to new challenges.



In 2021 Jayne designed and ran a project focused on the impact of creative practice in a post-COVID world. The Creative Health and Wellbeing programme, funded by the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) facilitated professional development workshops across Cornwall creating impact by:

- Developing a range of accessible participatory creative activities and programmes that relied on local assets (people, venues, existing groups and activities) through place-based Creative Health networks

The programme was impactful for social prescribers across Cornwall, helping them to identify and make new connections with local creative arts practitioners and organisations in their communities. In doing so, it allowed more beneficiaries to access creative practices more easily.

- Significantly improving mental health and well-being for both beneficiaries and practitioners and significantly reduced feelings of social isolation
- Establishing the development of a collaborative Directory of Creative Opportunities which contains details of over 80 organisations offering creative activities in Cornwall.



Case Study:

Wythenshawe Community Radio – adapting during and post COVID-19

Wythenshawe Community Radio aims to promote local services and community groups; raise awareness of issues which affect local communities; give local people access to qualifications in radio presentation and/or production leading to

better chances of employment. Wythenshawe Community Radio also champions equality and believes in bringing people together – regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs.

“It has helped build my confidence and I have been more successful in my career and doing job interviews. I feel I may be mildly on the [Autism Spectrum Disorder] and Community radio is an outlet for people like me who have poor communication and social skills to find a voice.”

Beneficiary of Wythenshawe Community Radio



Chris Paul started the programme in 2021 as part of the North West Trade Up cohort. This cohort were dealing with communities changed by COVID-19. Wythenshawe Community Radio had adapted to the challenges of the pandemic and were looking to continue to grow their reach and increase their business resilience.

During the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Wythenshawe Community Radio's was able to adapt and became a vital repository of information for its listeners. Understanding the importance of maintaining their service while ensuring the safety of their presenters and staff, the station organised systems that allowed their presenters to broadcast from their own homes. The continuation of their programming and service was crucial for their community, as the Radio



station became a vital source of public health information for their listeners during this crisis. This was particularly important for those in the community who were not as digitally literate or faced challenges in accessing online sources of information. Through their broadcasts, the station played a pivotal role in disseminating essential information, offering guidance, and fostering community connectedness in this time of uncertainty and social isolation.

Since the pandemic, Wythenshawe Community Radio still provides training to individuals on how to present on the station from their own homes, improving the accessibility of their services to the community as a whole. Through teaching new skills related to broadcasting and production, beneficiaries' self-confidence increased. It also helped improve their communication skills via sustained social contact with other presenters and the local people who interact with them via their shows.

By widening access to radio, Wythenshawe Community Radio actively promotes accessibility and equality. Beneficiaries felt accepted and valued because of their diverse lived experiences and WFM helped them celebrate this.

“In an area that mostly gets a bad rep and is classed as an area of deprivation, community means everything. WFM provides a platform for Wythenshawe residents ... to come together to share all the positive things that happen.”

Beneficiary of Wythenshawe Community Radio



“The internal community of presenters is made up of people with different disabilities and health issues, such as autism, anxiety, depression, learning disabilities or difficulty, physical disabilities, and many more. Being involved in WFM is their mental health lifeline, a place they fit in, and can make a difference to others.”

Beneficiary of Wythenshawe Community Radio

4. The social entrepreneurs and ventures supported on the programme

The social entrepreneurs and ventures supported on the programme

During Phase 2, 1,217 social entrepreneurs from 66 cohorts across 9 UK regions completed the programme to become programme fellows. These individuals came from various backgrounds with different goals. Their ventures, while diverse, all operated with a common purpose: to make a positive difference in their communities. In the next section, we'll share more details about these entrepreneurs and provide an overview of their ventures.

4.1 Cohorts

Figure 3: Number of programme fellows and number of cohorts by type and location (n=1,217)

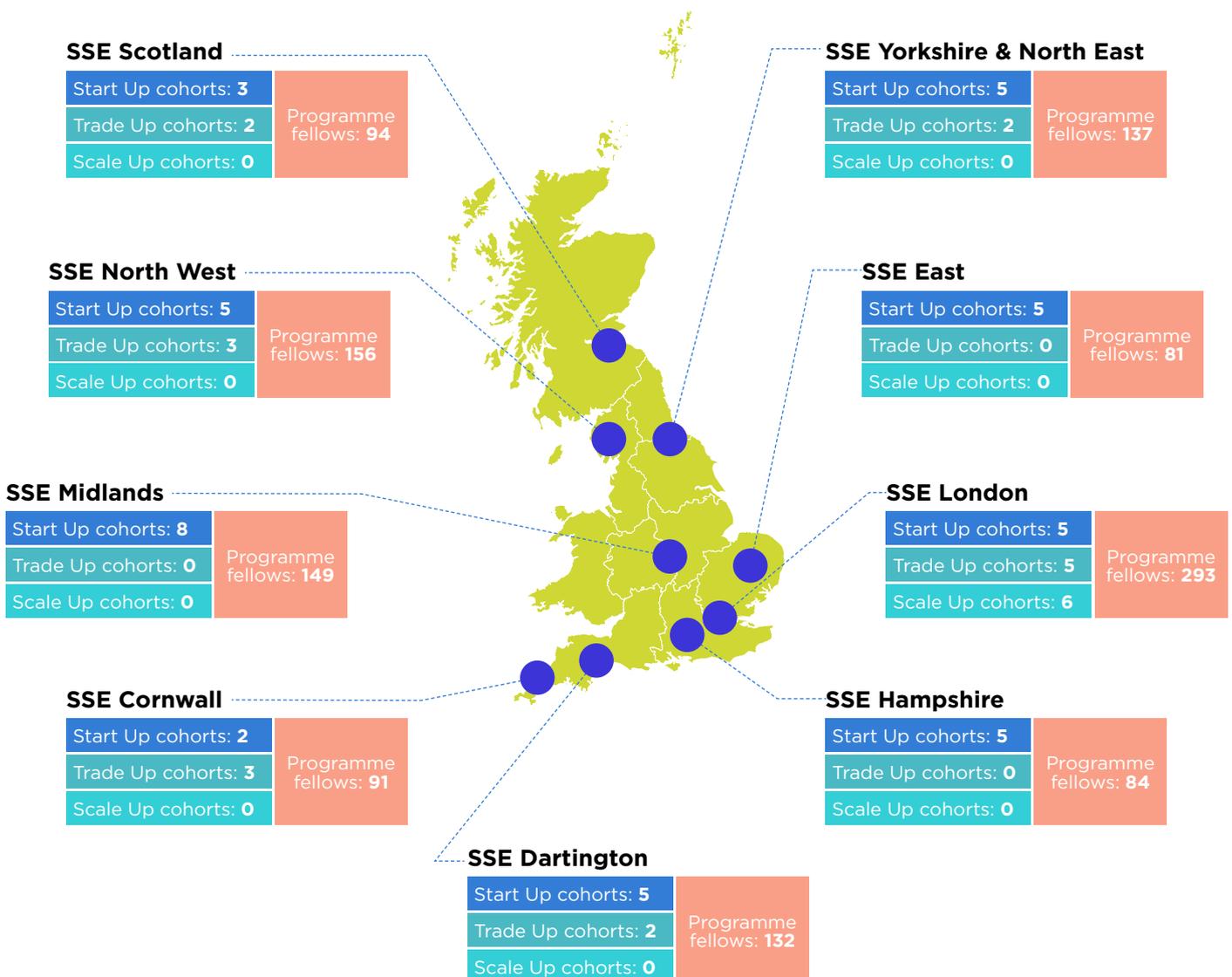
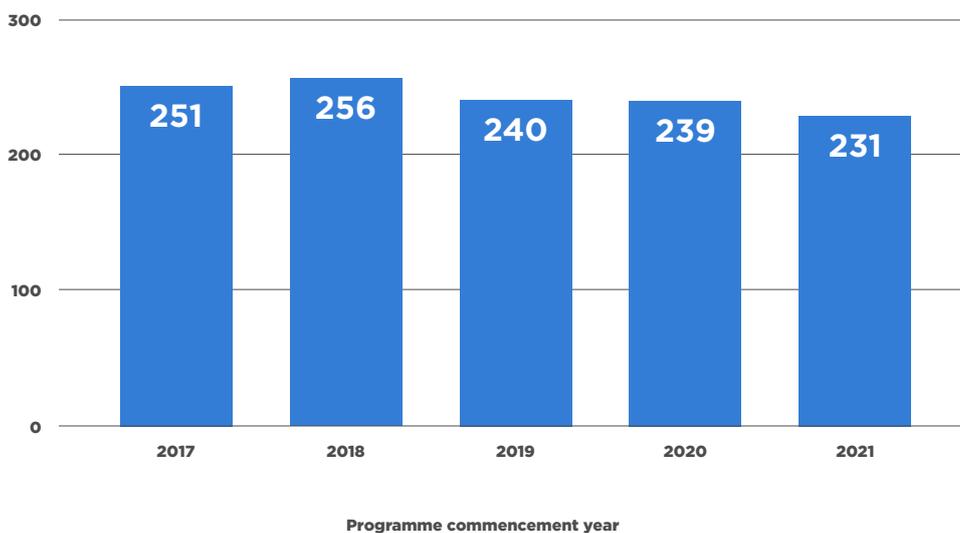


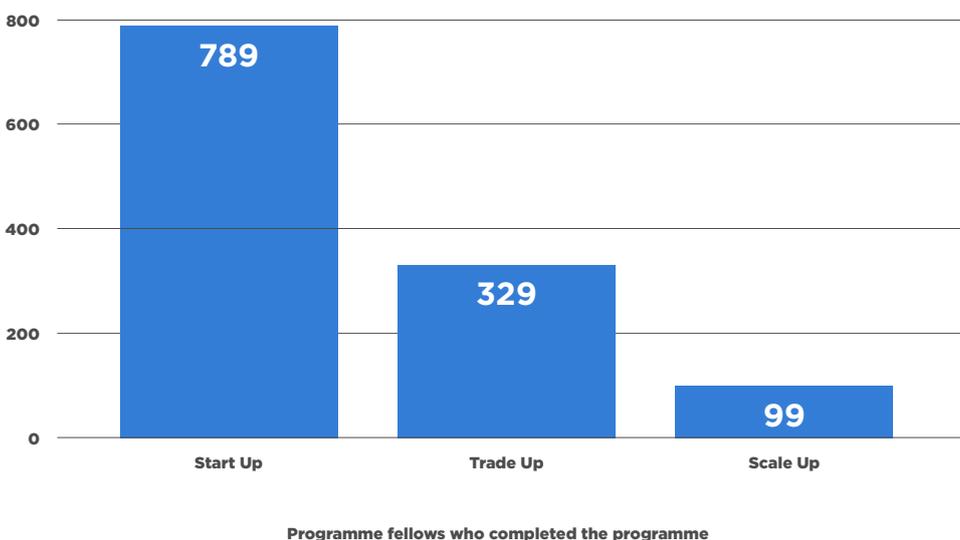
Figure 4: Number of programme fellows by year of programme commencement



Source: Application Data and SSE programme completion status

Total: 1,217

Figure 5: Number of programme fellows by cohort type



Source: Application Data and SSE programme completion status

Total: 1,217

4.2 Social entrepreneurs

SSE has pledged to make EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) a priority in all that it does, as part of a commitment to share power, wealth and opportunity more equally within the organisation and through all programmes. A crucial tenet of SSE’s approach is that diverse cohorts enhance the learning experience and realise the best outcomes.

Monitoring is crucial in revealing any gaps in diversity and therefore demographic data was collected from programme fellows to monitor this.

Figure 6: Proportion of programme fellows by gender

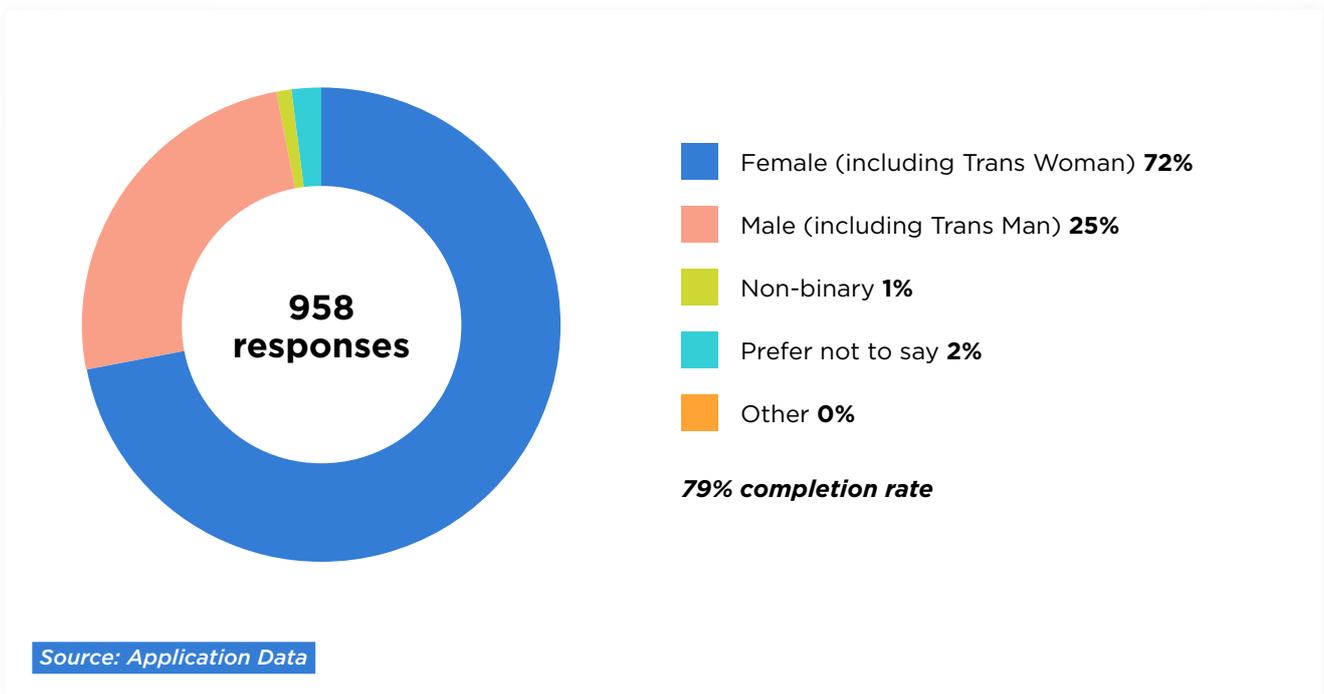


Figure 7: Proportion of programme fellows by ethnicity

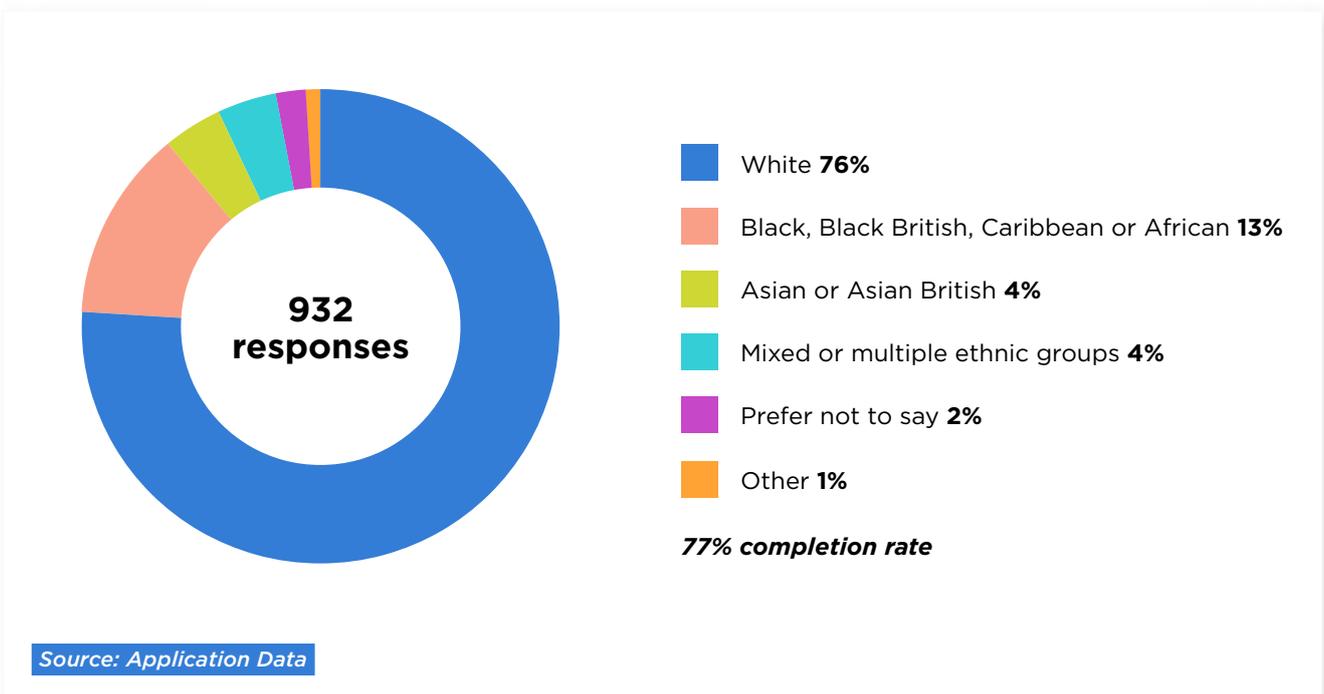
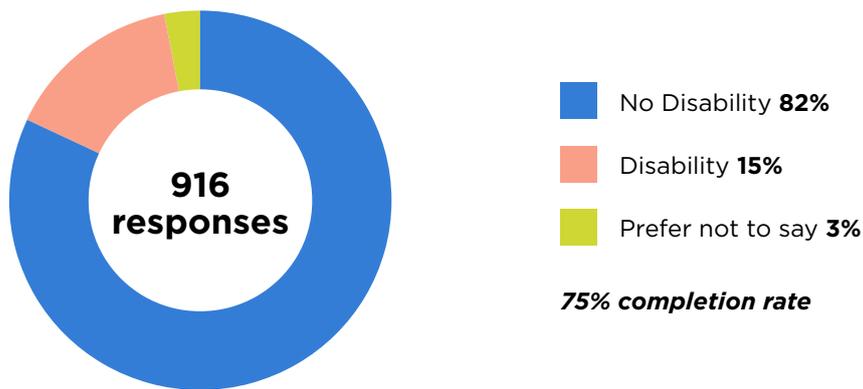
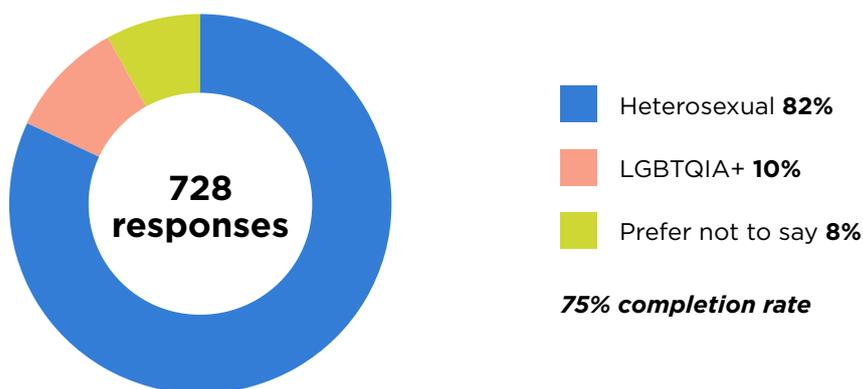


Figure 8: Proportion of programme fellows by disability



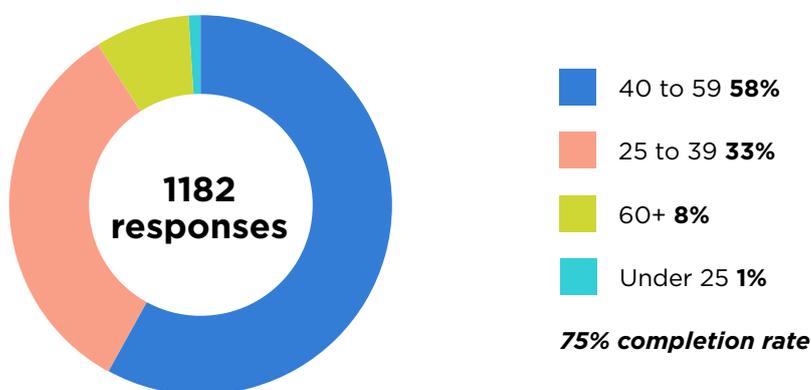
Source: Application Data

Figure 9: Proportion of programme fellows by sexual orientation



Source: Application Data

Figure 10: Proportion of programme fellows by age



Source: Application Data

The data revealed that:

- Whilst 47% of social enterprises nationally are female-led¹², 72% of social entrepreneurs who completed the programme identified as female (including trans women).
- Approximately 22% of the social entrepreneurs who enrolled belonged to Minority Ethnic Groups. This is a slightly higher proportion than in Phase 1¹³ and far surpasses the national average of 6% for leaders in SMEs and 14% in social enterprises¹⁴. It is also a higher proportion than the national population average (18%¹⁵). This suggests that SSE has been successful in ensuring the programme is accessible to Minority Ethnic Groups.
- There were slightly fewer disabled social entrepreneurs enrolled on the programme than the national average (15% vs national average of 18%)¹⁶, although positive movement was demonstrated compared to Phase 1¹⁷. There is progress to be made in terms of outreach and ensuring the proportion of applications from those with a disability increase to at least the national levels.

Figure 11: Proportion of programme fellows responding to ‘I felt well supported in my needs during the application process’

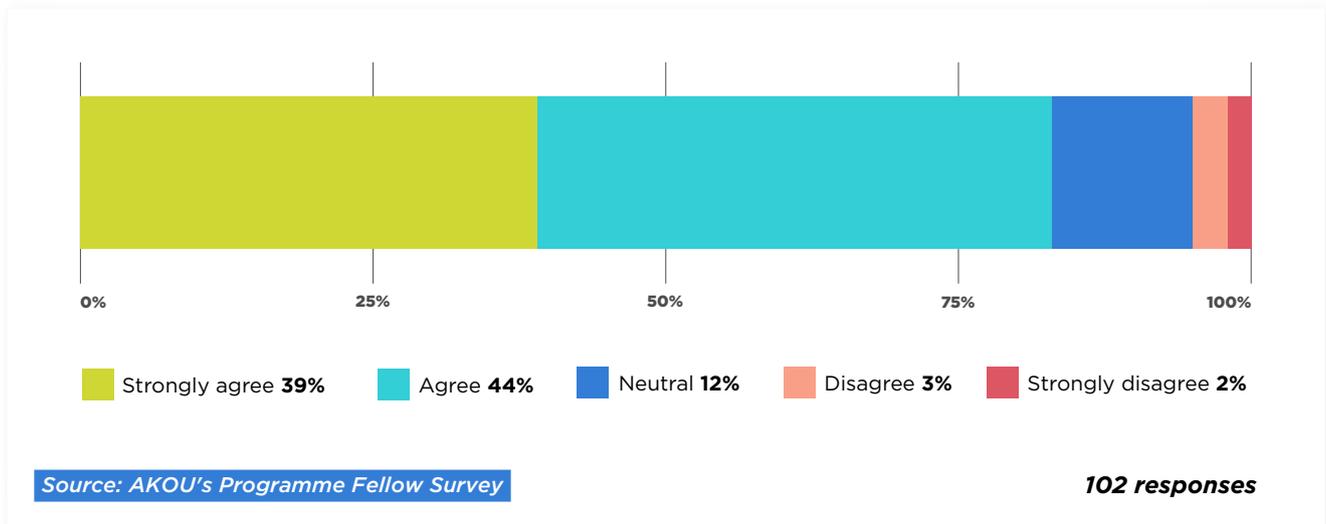
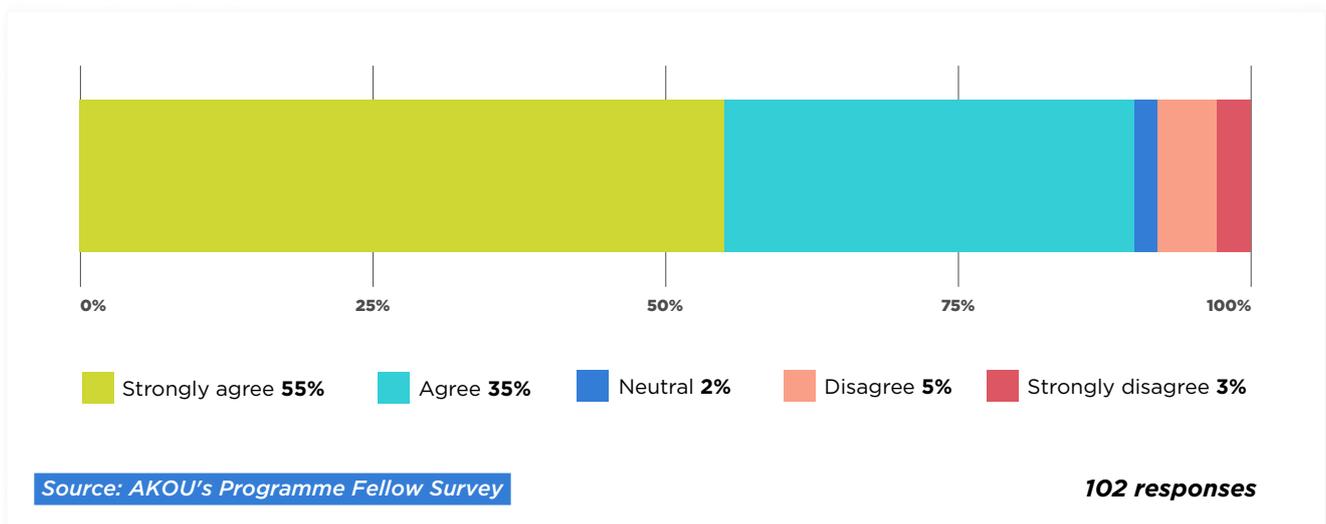


Figure 12: Proportion of programme fellows responding to ‘I felt well supported in my needs during the programme’



For this programme, as with others, SSE collected demographic data as an additional extra data collection point (following on from the application), resulting in relatively low completion rates. This means our understanding of EDI, and its impact on outcomes is limited. SSE is in the process of redesigning data collection processes to ensure more comprehensive demographic information is collected in future, which will be crucial in monitoring this from now on.

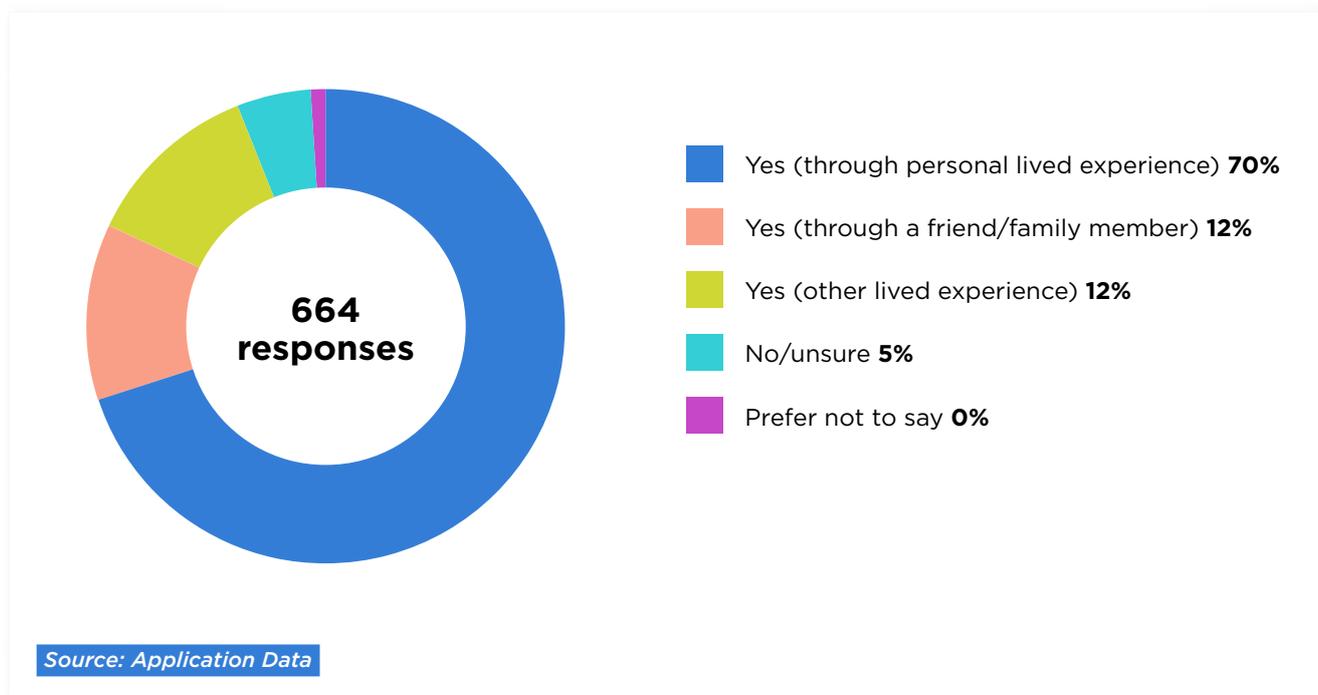
4.3 Lived Experience

SSE has long emphasised the belief that individuals with lived experience often make highly effective social entrepreneurs. This assertion is grounded in the philosophy that those affected by a problem are often best placed to resolve it and that they:

- Create bottom-up solutions challenging existing power structures.
- Have the authenticity required to create genuine connections in communities.
- Create innovative, unexpected and effective solutions to problems.

In line with these values, most of the social entrepreneurs who enrolled on the programme brought their own lived experience to bear. 94%¹⁸ of ventures were rooted in the lived experience of their founders and 70% had directly been impacted by issues they were now addressing through their venture (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Proportion of programme fellows with lived experience



Case Study:

Her Path to Purpose – creating bottom-up solutions challenging existing power structures

Nicole Robinson-Edwards founded Her Path to Purpose in 2018, driven by her personal journey as a young black woman facing challenges without proper direction or guidance in pursuing her ambitions. Realising

that her experiences were shared by others, she decided to support and empower young women who may encounter similar obstacles. Nicole started the programme in 2019 as part of the Midlands Start Up cohort.

“Black women often struggle to find good quality and affordable counselling. Her Path to Purpose enables black women to gain access to therapy that has the potential to be life-changing”

Beneficiary of Her Path to Purpose

By providing free and easily accessible services in mental health support and professional development, Her Path to Purpose helps marginalised young women thrive. Reducing financial and social barriers to such services resulted in beneficiaries feeling a shift in self-worth and confidence. Those with mental health issues were taught how to manage and advocate for their needs. The professional development support led to more employment opportunities by guiding the young women in their career progression and inspiring ambition to achieve their goals.



By providing mentorship, collaborative workshops and opportunities for networking, Her Path to Purpose encouraged beneficiaries to work towards their goals and forge new connections. This has enabled them to give back to their communities through other volunteering opportunities which were introduced to them through connections made at Her Path to Purpose. 82% of beneficiaries felt that Her Path to Purpose had a positive impact on their community¹⁹.

Through connecting with other young women with shared experiences, beneficiaries felt that Her Path to Purpose fostered a sense of belonging. They felt heard and accepted, which eventually led to new opportunities outside of Her Path to Purpose via connections made.

“There’s lots of information from big charities about how they can help women like me but it’s so hard to access the services you need. There are so many barriers but accessing support from HPTP felt so easy.”

Beneficiary of Her Path to Purpose



“I had group counselling last year and it made a huge impact on myself and the other girls in my group. I definitely saw the change in our self-worth, confidence and general wellbeing throughout that process.”

Beneficiary of Her Path to Purpose

4.4 Social ventures

Figure 14: Proportion of programme ventures by legal structure

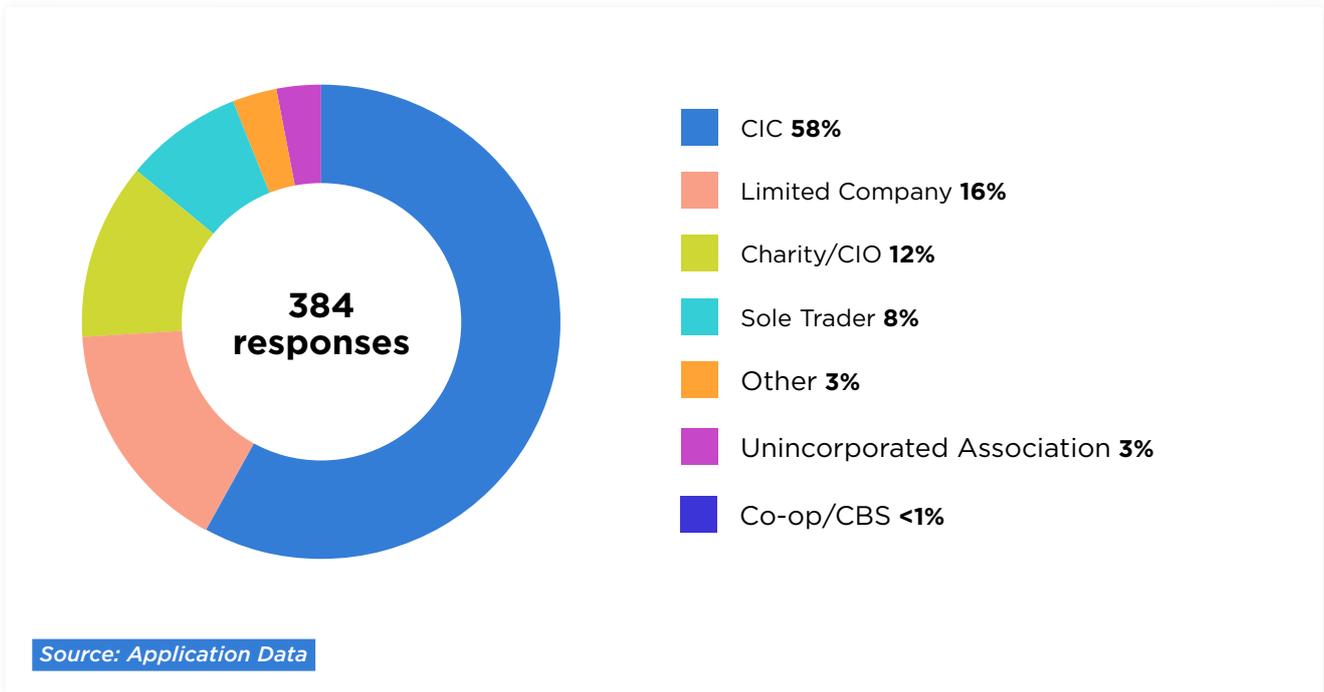


Figure 15: Proportion of programme ventures by main region of delivery

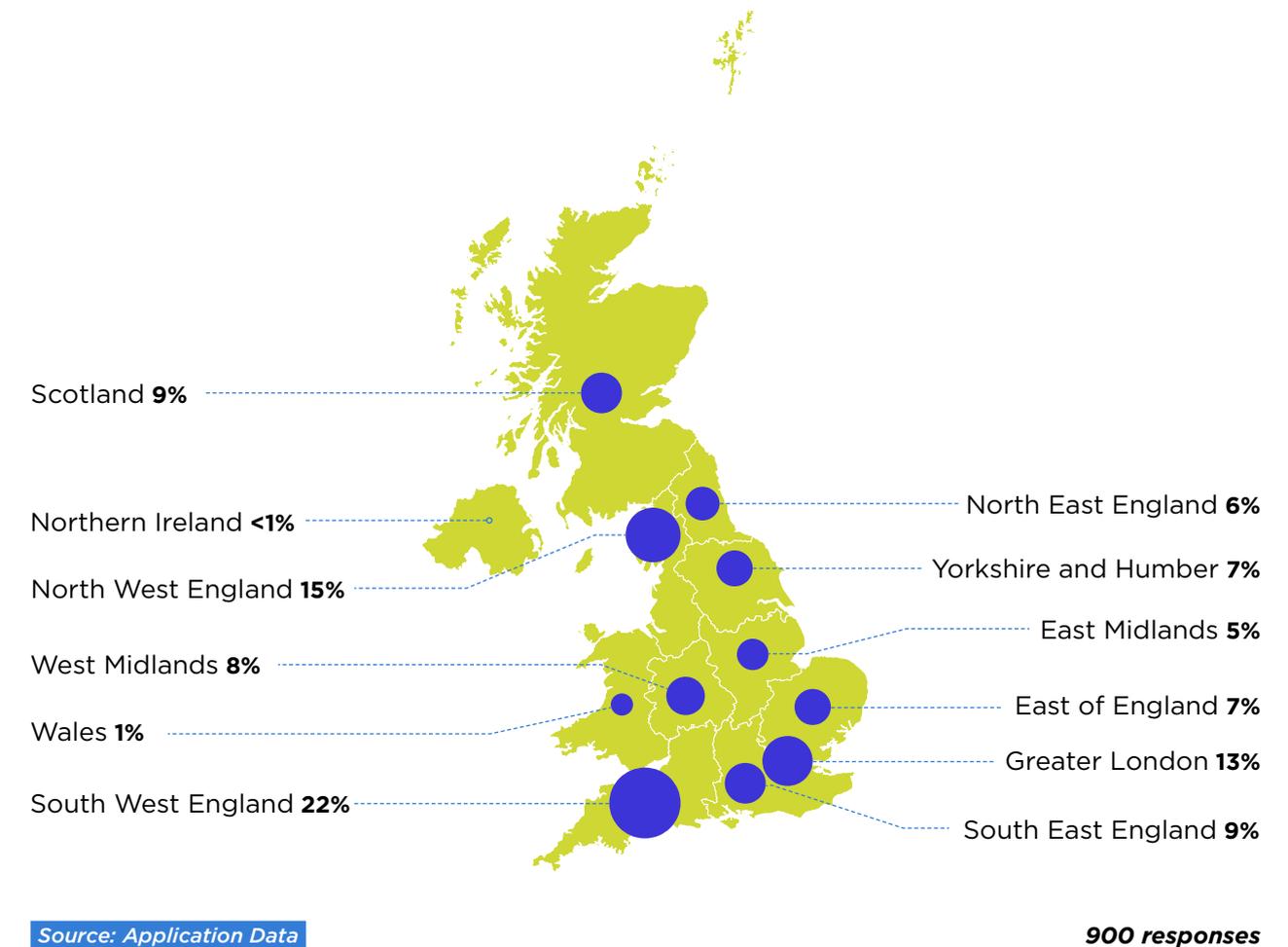
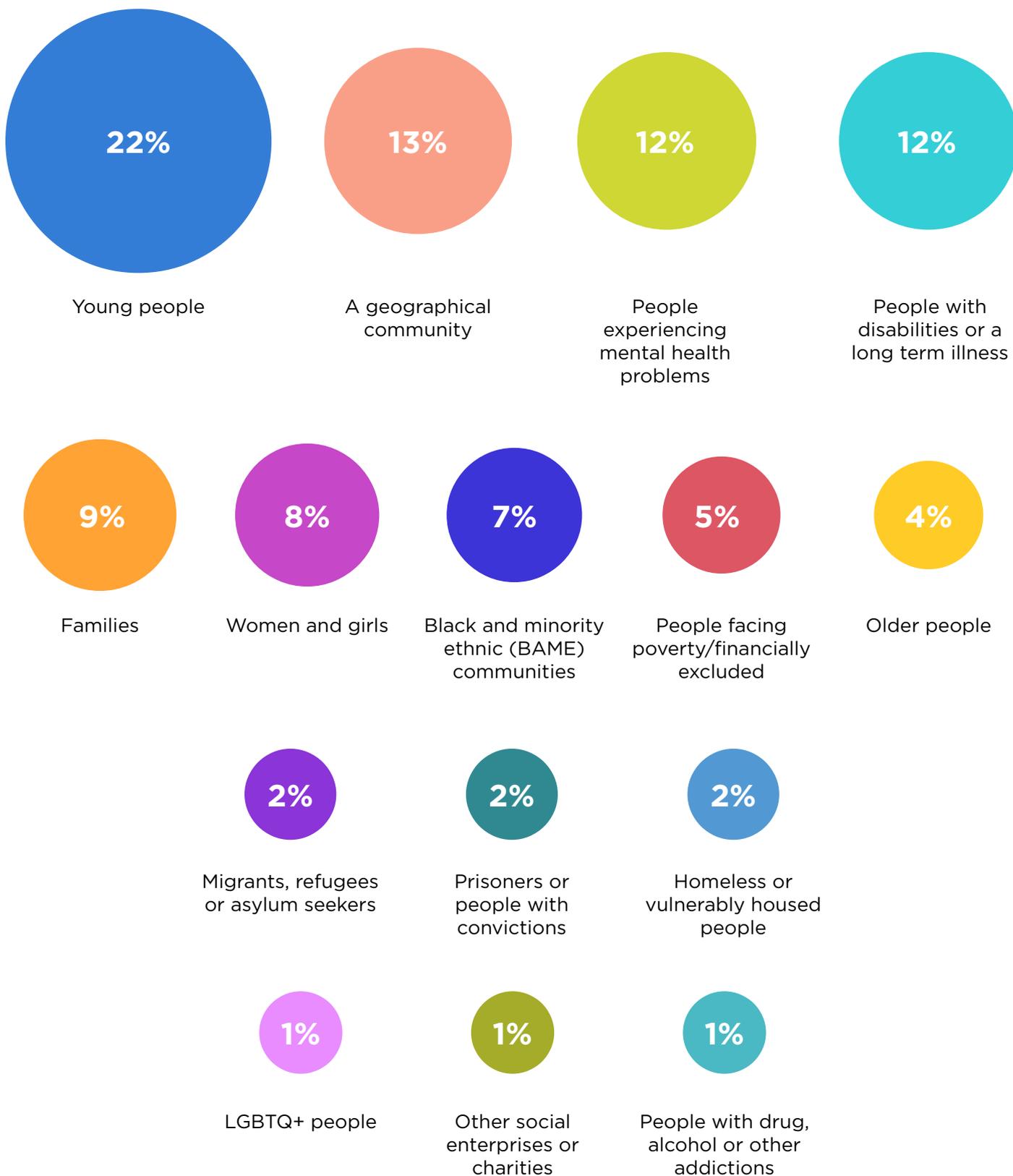


Figure 16: Proportion of programme ventures by primary beneficiaries category

Primary beneficiaries:



Source: Application Data

874 responses

5. Impact of the programme on programme fellows

Impact of the programme on programme fellows

This analysis draws from 21 indicators associated with skills and networks, assessed through self-evaluations submitted at the start (baseline) and end (endline) of the programme. Four core skill areas were assessed, each with their own indicators:

Business & Entrepreneurial skills:

- Business Planning
- Communication & negotiation skills
- Financial management
- Non trading income generation
- Trading income generation
- Project management
- People management
- Sales & marketing
- New product/service development
- Structure & governance
- Volunteer management
- Community engagement

Networks:

- Developing & making connections with other social entrepreneurs
- Developing and maintaining professional networks
- Developing and maintaining your support networks

Emotional resourcefulness

- Self-awareness
- Resilience/persisting in the face of adversity
- Managing work life balance

Social Impact Measurement:

- Are you currently measuring your impact?
- Identifying and articulating the impacts you intend to create
- Measuring your organisations impact appropriately

The 12-month programme tailored its support to develop these skills, deemed essential for any social leader or enterprise. Given the individualised nature of the support, each entrepreneur may focus only on a subset of these skills. All scores are self-reported, and datasets with missing baseline or endline scores were omitted from the analysis. The scores are based on a one to ten scale with one being the least skills in the area and ten being the most. The questions are framed on a rating system asking the individual to rate what they consider to be their current level of skill in the stated areas. The options range from 'I have no skills in this area' to 'I have highly developed skills in this area'. The response is converted to a skill score out of 10. This is done at the individual skill level and also aggregated to the 'core skill area' and 'total'.

As well as learning these skills through Study Sessions and Action Learning Sets, volunteers from Lloyds Banking Group acted as mentors. The mentoring offered was a blend of coaching and mentoring, with mentors asked, not necessarily to impart their own knowledge on programme fellows, but instead to focus on their needs. SSE guided them to use their knowledge, skills and experience to ask the right questions of the programme fellow to help them find their own path, rather than giving the answer. They acted as critical friends and gave a sounding board to help with accountability and moving forward.

Research in this section was framed around answering the following evaluation question: How did the programme impact the skills and networks of programme fellows? This is further broken down to the following questions:

- How did the programme impact the skills and networks of programme fellows?
- What elements of support are producing the greatest impact?
- What areas of support can be improved to ensure programme fellows have the necessary skills for success?

5.1 Headline findings

- 99% of the programme fellows improved at least 1 skill²⁰.
- The average (mean) skills improvement was 55% with a median improvement of 33%.
- Average scores for every one of the 21 skill indicators increased between baseline and endline.
- ‘Developing & Maintaining Connections with Other Social Entrepreneurs’ is a key area of strength in the programme support – this was not dampened by COVID-19 and the introduction of hybrid working styles.
- One of the greatest improvements in skills was made in ‘trading income generation’ – this is an important part of the support offer and the benefit of these improvements is enhanced by working in conjunction with Match Trading grants.
- Social impact measurement is an area where Start Up and Trade Up ventures begin their support at a relatively low skill base – the sector is focused on developing these skills for later stage ventures leaving a potential gap for additional support, tools and resources for early-stage ventures.
- Evaluating skills outcomes based on demographic data would allow SSE to assess the equity of their support offer and make changes if needed – improvements to data collection are needed to do this effectively.

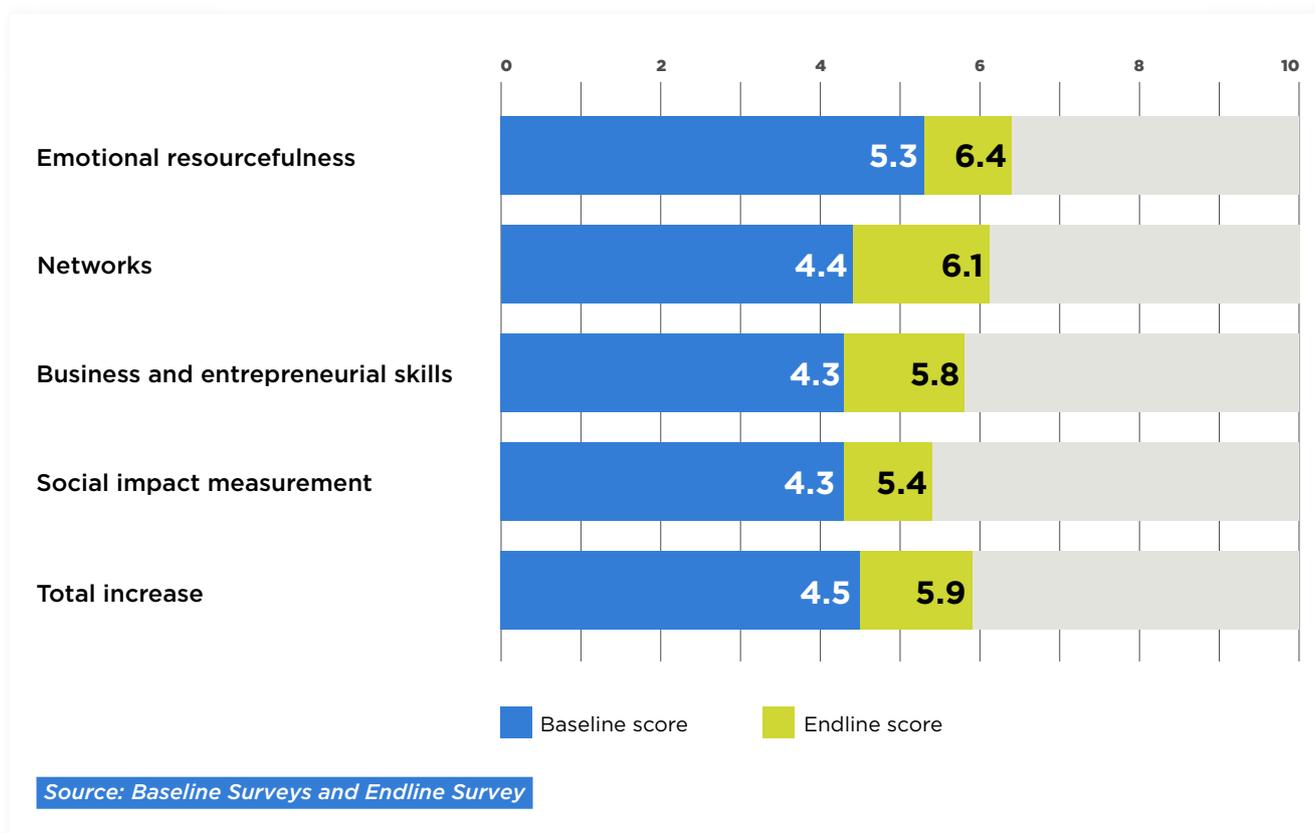


5.2 How did the programme impact the skills and networks of programme fellows?

Skills and network development of the 4 core areas

99% of programme fellows improved on at least one indicator²¹. The diagrams illustrate the average skill scores at baseline and endline, signifying the progress made. The average (mean) change in scores (from baseline to endline) was 55%, with a median change of 33%.

Figure 17: Average (mean) baseline and endline scores by core skill areas



Note: Total is the average (mean) of all skills areas (n=592); Business and Entrepreneurial skills is the average (mean) of the 12 skill indicators outlined above (n=589); Networks is the average (mean) of the 3 skill indicators outlined above (n=586); Emotional resourcefulness is the average (mean) of the 3 skill indicators outlined above (n=591); Social impact measurement is the average (mean) of the 3 skill indicators outlined above (n=568)

The highest growth in the core skill areas was seen in ‘Networks’ (64%). Emotional resourcefulness showed the least amount of growth of the 4 core areas, largely due to the programme fellows already having strong baseline scores in this area when starting the programme. This suggests that programme fellows often enter the programme with a high level of emotional resilience—likely a necessary trait for starting a social venture. Although some progress was noted (34%), it indicates that the programme fellows may be utilising other avenues beyond the SSE programme to develop these particular skills before, during and after the programme.

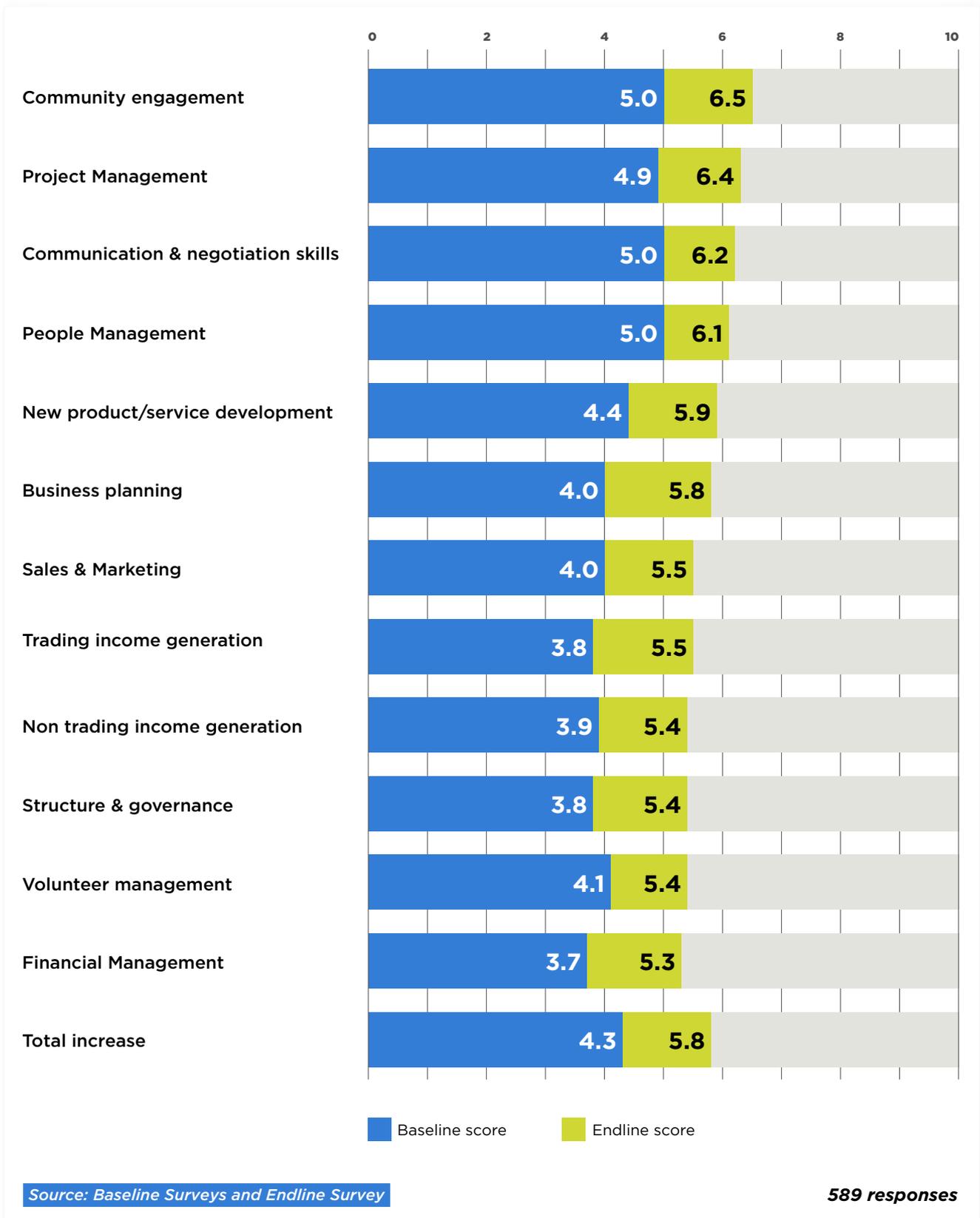
Figure 18: Mean baseline and endline skills score with absolute and relative changes between baseline and endline²²

	Baseline (mean)	Endline (mean)	Difference baseline & endline	Absolute change (mean)	Relative change (mean)	Relative change (median)
Business and Entrepreneurial skills	4.3	5.8	1.5	1.6	60%	38%
Networks	4.4	6.1	1.7	1.8	64%	40%
Emotional Resourcefulness	5.3	6.4	1.1	1.2	34%	20%
Social Impact Measurement	4.3	5.4	1.1	1.1	45%	25%
Overall	4.5	5.9	1.4	1.5	55%	33%

Detailed skill and network development

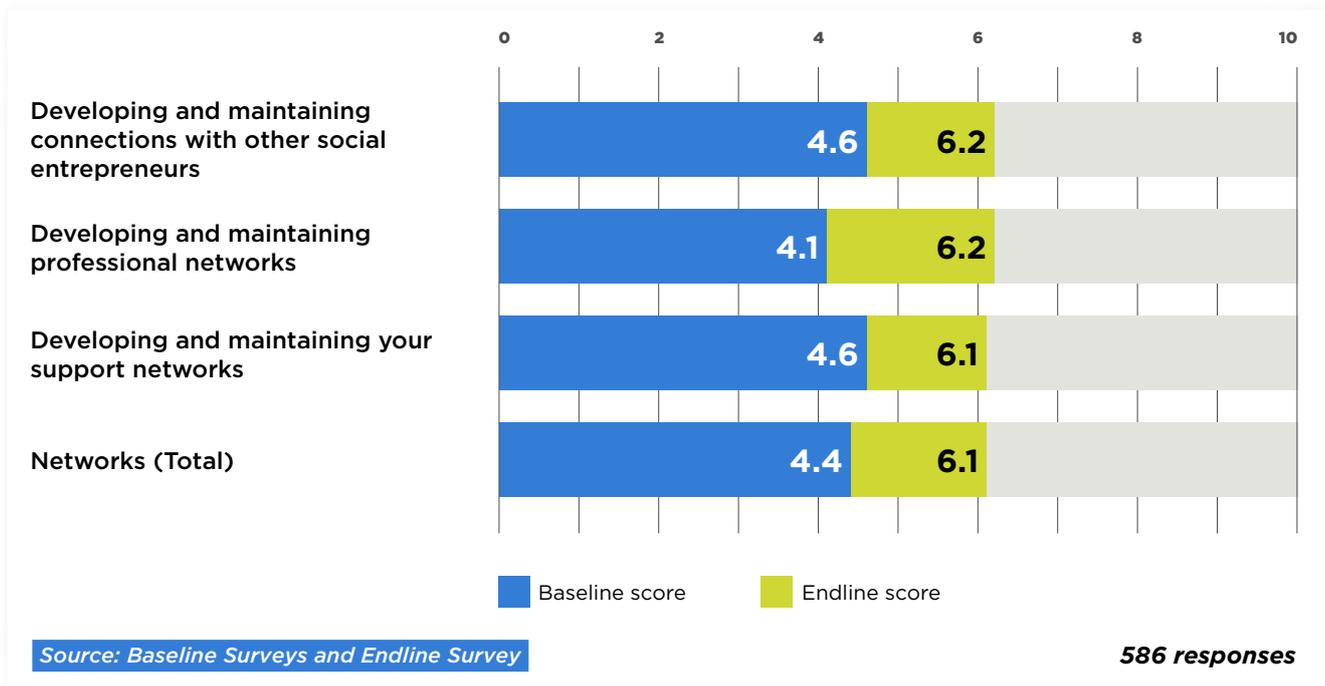
The individual skill indicators that make up each core skill category will be examined more closely in the following analysis to provide further insights. The total of each core skill category is included at the top of each chart for reference. Data analysis shows that average scores for every one of the 21 skill indicators increased between baseline and endline, a detailed analysis is presented below:

Figure 19: Average (mean) baseline and endline scores by skill for core skills area: 'Business and entrepreneurial skills'



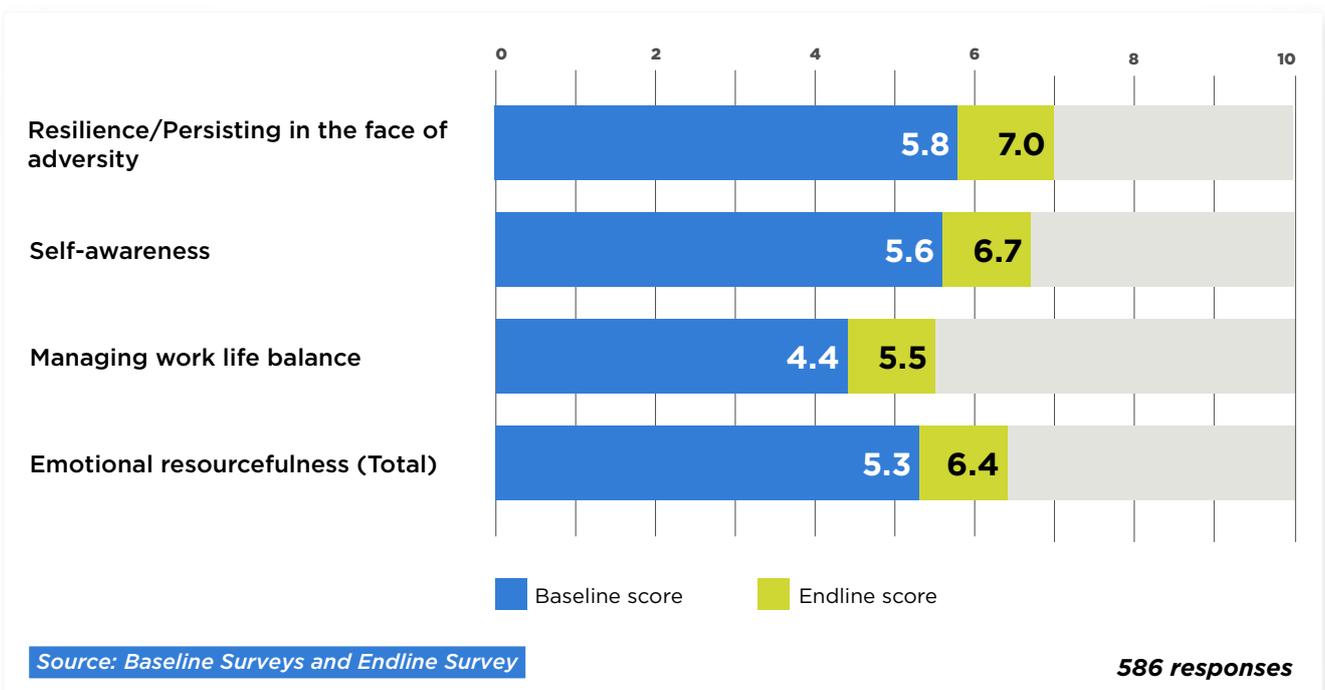
This shows the improvement of the individual skill indicators which make up the core indicator of 'business and entrepreneurial skills'. In total, these skills improved from a baseline of 4.3 to an endline of 5.8, a relative change of 55%.

Figure 20: Average (mean) baseline and endline scores by skill for core skills area: 'Networks'



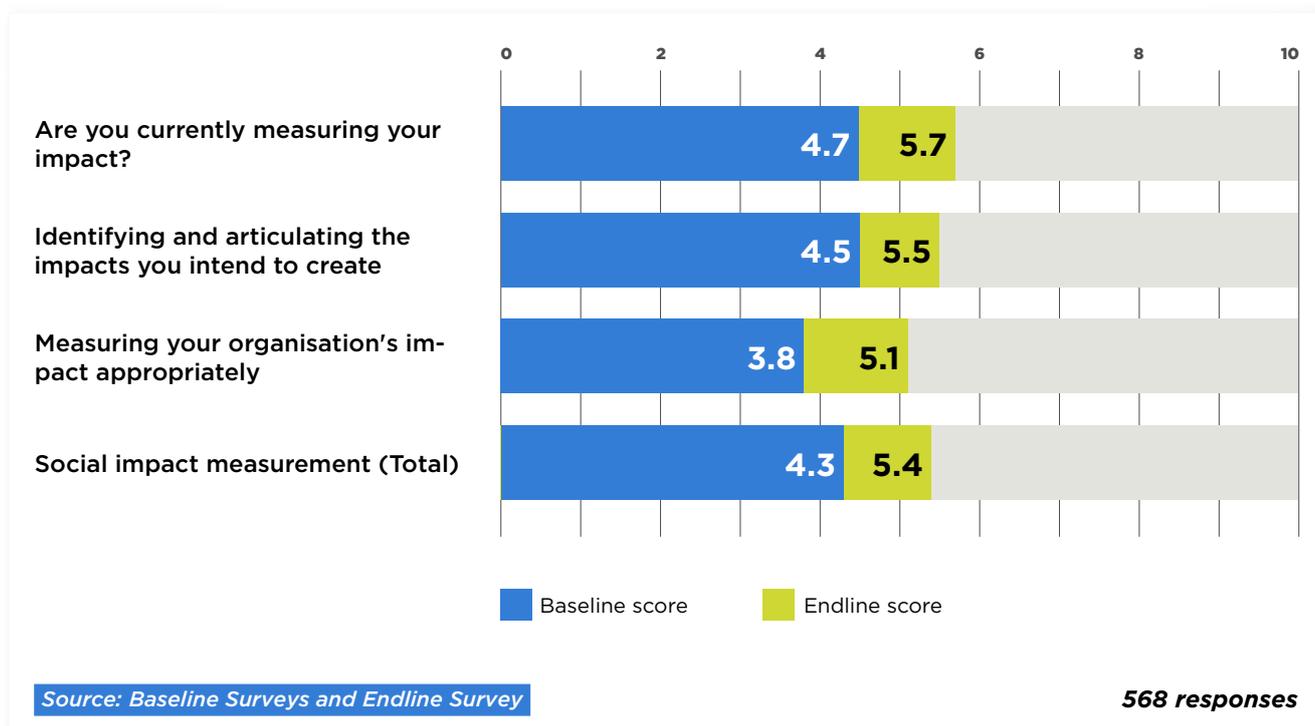
This shows the development of individual networking skills indicators amongst programme fellows. Collectively they improved from 4.4 at baseline to 6.1 at endline (a relative change of 55%), with the most notable improvement in ‘developing and maintaining professional networks’.

Figure 21: Average (mean) baseline and endline scores by skill for core skills area: 'Emotional resourcefulness'



The above demonstrates the growth in emotional resourcefulness individual skill indicators amongst programme fellows. In total, this improved from a baseline of 5.3 to 6.4 (a relative change of 34%).

Figure 22: Average (mean) baseline and endline scores by skill for core skills area: ‘Social Impact’



The ability of programme fellows to measure their social impact improved, from a baseline of 4.3 to 5.4 (a relative change of 45%).

The most significant skill gains were in ‘Developing & Maintaining Connections with Other Social Entrepreneurs’ and ‘Trading Income Generation’, with average (mean) increases of 86% (50% median) and 79% (41% median), respectively.

The areas showing the least improvement were ‘Resilience/Persisting in the Face of Adversity’ and ‘Communication & Negotiation Skills,’ both with an average (mean) increase of 16% (median 18% and 25% respectively). These lower rates of improvement can be attributed to the high initial skill levels in these areas, indicated by average baseline skill scores of 7.7 and 6.6 respectively. Even though some improvement was noted, these were not the primary area of improvement for most of the programme fellows.

The average endline skill scores are also a useful indication of the position at which the programme fellows leave the programme and a measure of how prepared they may be for common challenges as social leaders. The endline skill scores ranged from 5.1 in ‘Measuring Your Organisation’s Impact Appropriately’ to 7.0 in ‘Resilience/Persisting in the Face of Adversity.’ The score for ‘Measuring Your Organisation’s Impact Appropriately’ did increase by an average of 59% (38% median), but it started from a relatively low baseline (3.8). This is discussed further in the section below.

5.3 What elements of support are producing the greatest impact?

Building networks of programme fellows

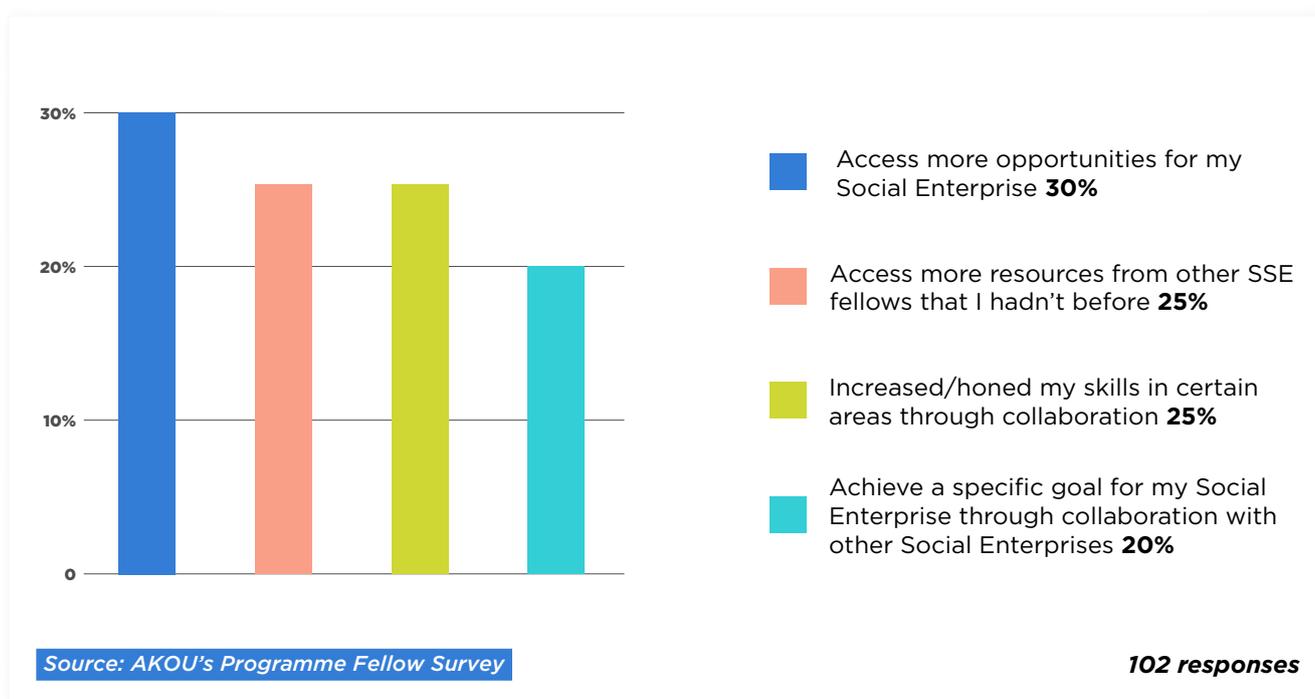
The area of ‘Developing & Maintaining Connections with Other Social Entrepreneurs’ experienced the most significant average (mean) growth, at 86%. Networking is central to SSE’s programmes, which typically comprise of place-based cohorts of about 20 social entrepreneurs. The programme utilises a cohort-based learning model, and the substantial growth in networking skills suggests this approach is effective.

Over the programme’s five-year duration (Phase 2), outcomes in networking have been consistently positive. The 2021 cohorts improved their networking skills by an average (mean) of 43%, exceeding the gains made by those who started in 2017 (23%) and 2018 (40%). This suggests that any modifications made to the support in response to COVID-19 did not adversely affect this aspect of the programme.

Given the proven effectiveness of this networking focus and considering the potential for increased social isolation due to ongoing COVID-19 impacts, it is important to incorporate this strength into future programme design.

On average (mean), programme fellows made 11 connections on the programme and reported that their time at SSE has been crucial in widening their professional networks. The relationships between programme fellows provided new perspectives, support, and skills to learn from and apply to their own social enterprise.

Figure 23: Number of programme fellows selecting their ‘Top benefits of collaboration’ (n=102)



Collaboration with other programme & wider SSE fellows provides access to more opportunities for programme fellows' social enterprises. Throughout the programme, 59% of respondents stated they have collaborated with other SSE fellows at least once²³.

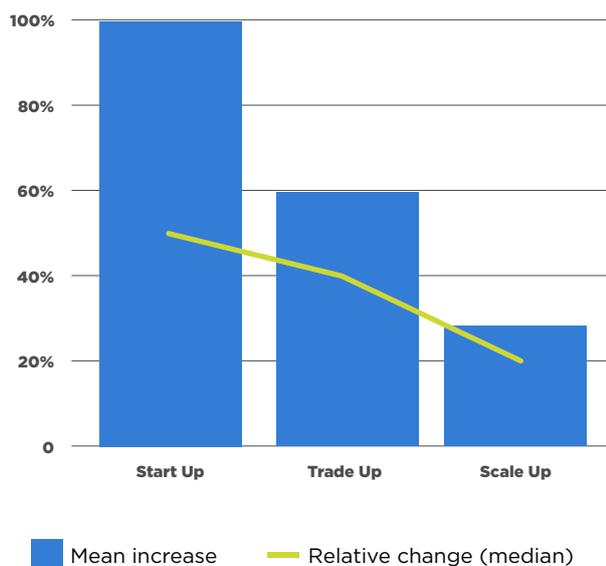
- 25% of respondents benefitted from access to more resources from other SSE fellows
- 25% of respondents also cited collaboration for increasing/honing their skills in certain areas
- 20% attributed achieving a specific goal for their social enterprise to the connections they have made on the programme

Boosting trading income capabilities

A significant area of skill development amongst programme fellows has been in 'Trading Income Generation,' showing an average (mean) increase of 79%, with a median of 41%. Enhancing the ability of the programme fellows to generate trading income is an important part of the programme and crucial for any social entrepreneur.

The gains in this skill are particularly pronounced for earlier stage ventures. The growth rates are highest for those in the Start Up cohorts (99%), followed by Trade Up (59%) and then Scale Up (28%). This pattern aligns with expectations, given that Scale Up ventures typically have a higher baseline level of skills. Encouragingly, all stages show growth in this area and deliver high endline skill levels.

Figure 24: Mean and Median relative change in 'trading income generation' skill score by cohort type



	Mean increase	Relative change (median)
Start Up	99%	50%
Trade Up	59%	40%
Scale Up	28%	20%

Source: Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

551 responses

Figure 25: Mean and Median baseline and endline ‘trading income generation’ skill score by cohort type (n=551)

Programme	Baseline (Mean)	Endline (Mean)
Start Up	5.4	6.5
Trade Up	3.3	5.1
Scale Up	4.3	6.0
Total	3.8	5.5

Source: Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

In 2017, Match Trading grants were incorporated into the programme, complemented by additional support aimed at boosting trading income for programme fellows.

Notably, the average increase in skills related to trading income has been on an upward trajectory since 2017. This trend suggests that the introduction of Match Trading grants alongside the accompanying support, which has developed over the last 5 years, has had a beneficial impact. The data underscores the programme’s effectiveness in elevating skills in trading income generation.

Figure 26: Mean and Median relative change in ‘trading income generation’ skill score by year

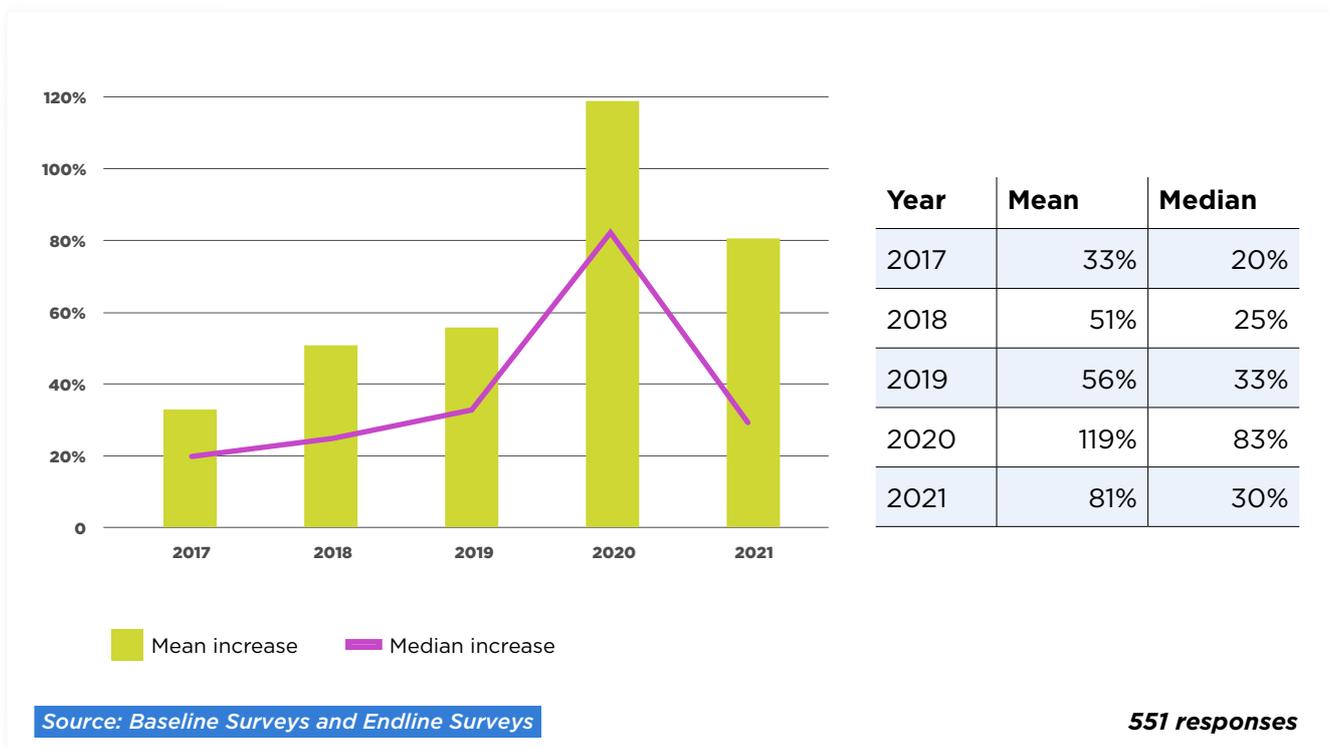


Figure 27: Mean and Median baseline and endline ‘trading income generation’ skill score by year (n=551)

Year	Baseline (mean)	Endline (mean)
2017	4.5	5.2
2018	4.0	5.2
2019	3.4	4.5
2020	3.5	6.5
2021	4.7	6.2
Total	3.8	5.5

Source: Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

Case Study:

Our Version Media – becoming less reliant on traditional grants

Our Version Media was founded by Southampton-born former TV news journalist, Veronica Gordon, in 2019. Our Version Media is a community interest company (CIC) dedicated to

amplifying black and marginalised voices by equipping individuals, communities and organisations with media skills to tell their own, authentic stories.



Driven by a desire for creative freedom and a genuine impact on the community, Veronica sought to establish a self-sufficient trading model, instead of being constrained by the rigid criteria of grant funders. This autonomy allows Our Version Media to have full control over the direction and priorities of their work and respond best to the needs of the communities.



Veronica was part of the Hampshire based Start Up cohort starting in 2018 and again on the Trade Up programme in 2021. During the latter, Veronica increased her 'Trading Income Generation' skills score by 11% and Our Version Media's trading income increased by 12%. These positive steps in generating trading income support Veronica and Our Version Media to continue to have a positive impact on the lives of those they work with.

“All of this has empowered me so that I can share the stories of my community, my life and my family. But overall I just love it. I really feel like I have a new skill.”

Beneficiary of Our Version Media

“I was able to get a stronger connection within the community I work for and with other charities. In my work, networking is key and thanks to this training I improved my contacts within the city!”

Beneficiary of Our Version Media

Mobile Storytelling workshops teach people how to create, film and edit videos using a smartphone, empowering them to share inclusive and impactful stories that reflect their real lives, neighbourhoods and communities. This boosts confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing, while counteracting the mainstream’s negative narrative at the same time. 96% of beneficiaries felt that Our Version Media had a positive impact on their community²⁴.

Through the provision of transferable skills in digital media and social media marketing, Our Version Media allows beneficiaries to access a skillset that they might not otherwise have access to. This increases employability and amplifies a set of community voices that are usually ignored. These digital skills are used by beneficiaries to draw wider community attention to struggles local people from marginalised backgrounds are facing.



“I feel more seen and represented, it makes me feel heard that people who look like me are given a platform to have their voices heard.”

Beneficiary of Our Version Media

Case Study:

Gateway Collective – increasing trading income whilst improving community wellbeing

Gateway Collective was founded by Ali Horton and Janet Hughes in 2015, in a local community garden in North Park in Bootle, Merseyside. It has quickly become a collaborative

and much-loved community hub, connecting the local community and fostering positive relationships amongst beneficiaries.

The Gateway Collective aims to help the local people and communities in Bootle thrive via the use of community gardening. Twice a week, the community garden in North Park opens to beneficiaries who attend the garden to learn new skills, socialise in a safe and supportive environment, and share lunch together, often with the food they grow.

Ali Horton started the programme in 2019 as part of the North West Trade up cohort. Ali was also originally part of an earlier Start Up cohort in 2013. The 2019 Trade Up cohorts received Match Trading grants and during the course of the programme Gateway



“It is a key stakeholder in the wider area and participates in joint activities to help improve [the] people of Bootle’s quality of life and is an ambassador as to how being kind and doing positive things helps people’s wellbeing and mental health. It is growing and therefore needs access to funding and opportunities to continue to make a positive impact for people [who are] lonely, vulnerable or in need of a hug”

Volunteer of Gateway Collective

Collective increased their trading income by 71%. These increases in trading income occurred in parallel to creating positive impact in the communities in which they work.

“The meals shared are often the only time during the week the beneficiaries eat a meal with others.”

Beneficiary of Gateway Collective

“Attendees have ownership... It is their project. People are fed. Attendees learn how to make the best of their budgets food-wise. There is a massive impact [and] improvement of mental health as the majority of attendees live alone.”

Beneficiary of Gateway Collective



For marginalised and socially isolated people in the community, Gateway Collective acts as a centre of social support, offering companionship and helping people make new connections with each other. Gateway Collective works collaboratively with other community regeneration projects and regularly donates to food banks in the Bootle area. They support other local businesses via networking and connections.

Through gardening, learning new skills and connecting with others, beneficiaries wellbeing improved. Gateway Collective helped beneficiaries to feel valued and hopeful by tending to their own green space and sharing experiences regularly. This helped them cultivate a sense of purpose and belonging, improving their mental health. Social isolation and loneliness reduce significantly in the community with a regular, safe space for local people in the community to meet and bond over shared interests and experiences.



5.4 What areas of support can be improved to ensure programme fellows have the necessary skills for success?

Evaluating Social Impact

Evidence demonstrates that 93%²⁵ of programme fellows reported an improvement in at least one of the three indicators used to assess their competency in approaching social impact measurement. However, despite these widespread improvements, the indicator with the lowest average skills endline was 'Measuring Your Organisation's Impact Appropriately'. Programme fellows began the programme with a relatively low baseline score of 3.8 and ended with an average score of 5.1. This represents a substantial improvement (59%) but the low starting point means there are some programme fellows ending the programme with this as an area that will require further development.

The endline skill level in this area varies according to the stage of the venture: Start Up cohorts averaged 4.9, Trade Up 5.2, and Scale Up 5.7. This suggests that it is the earlier stage ventures that may require further support in measuring their social impact appropriately. Whilst it is expected that programme fellows with more established ventures have a higher level of skill in this area, there are also benefits of developing these skills for early-stage ventures.

This finding mirrors findings of the evaluation of Phase 1 of the programme. This found that baseline knowledge of social impact measurement was low with only 14% and 27% of programme fellows at Start Up and Scale Up level respectively measuring their social impact in Q1 of the programme. This grew to 45% and 63% by the end of the programme, but the low starting point meant that even though knowledge and awareness had grown, only 56% were confident in social measurement by the end of the programme in Phase 1.

Social ventures often compete directly with private sector small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The capability to accurately measure and convey social impact can offer social ventures a competitive edge. This could be through sharing impact data with potential customers to stand out, or when applying for contracts or additional funding. However, the Phase 1 evaluation discovered that impact measurement often took a low priority versus focussing on developing, growing and scaling their ventures.

Current support structures for evaluating social impact are often aimed at larger, more established social enterprises and charities. Tools like Social Return on Investment²⁶ and Social Value²⁷ are designed for established ventures who have resources to dedicate to the area, but this may not be as applicable or accessible for smaller, emerging ventures. This suggests that there may be a gap in the tools and resources available to smaller enterprises, a gap that SSE can continue to try to address.

This could be an area for future development for SSE, which could not only benefit individual ventures but could also make a meaningful contribution to the sector.

Assessing Outcome Equity

The existing evaluation focuses on outcomes, taking into account different cohorts and stages of venture development. However, it doesn't examine variations in outcomes based on personal characteristics like gender, disability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Incorporating such an analysis would help SSE ensure that its support is equitable, not just in terms of who gets admitted to the programme, but also in the benefits they derive from it. Identifying any such disparities could enable SSE to adjust their programme design to eliminate potential biases.

At the moment, the available data is insufficient to conduct this level of analysis meaningfully. Information on key demographic characteristics is incomplete, ranging from 60% data availability for sexual orientation to 79% for gender²⁸. SSE should improve their data collection processes in relation to collecting demographic data. In the future SSE should also consider analysing outcomes by demographic data to ensure their support offer is equitable.

6. Impact on business resilience

Impact on business resilience

A key part of the programme's aim was to develop more sustainable businesses that are financially resilient and create employment. The programme was designed to achieve this through technical support and learning based on financial and business skills. Leveraging a cohort-based model, it also facilitated Action Learning Sets where programme fellows could discuss real-world business challenges.

Alongside this support, the programme offered financial assistance through grants:

Programme	Grant amount	Grant type	Number of programme fellows
Start Up	up to £3,000 in year 1, £1,000 in subsequent years	Traditional	789
Trade Up	up to £5,000 in year 1, £4,000 in subsequent years (except in Scotland where they were £5,000 in 2018 and £7,000 in 2020)	Match Trading	329
Scale Up	£10,000 in year 1, £7,000 in subsequent years	Match Trading	99

Programme objectives:

Collectively, the programme's objective was to improve the business resilience of these social ventures. To analyse the effectiveness in this aspect, we focused on following evaluation questions:

- How did the programme impact the financial resilience of the venture?
- How did the programme impact the level of employment of the venture?
- How did the programme impact the long-term sustainability of the venture?
- How does skills development impact business survival?

6.1 Headline findings

- Programme fellows receiving Match Trading grants increased their trading income by 41% over the duration of the programme.
- Trading income growth was broadly consistent across Trade Up and Scale Up cohorts²⁹ suggesting Match Trading grants were effective across ventures of different size and stage.
- Trade Back Grants introduced in response to COVID-19 (which mixed traditional grant with Match Trading grant) appear to have helped ventures to increase trading, with trading income for programme fellows increasing to 66% in the year following the pandemic's onset.
- Most programme fellows maintain stable employment levels, but some experience high growth, contributing to an average of a 21% increase in paid employment.
- 81% of the ventures of programme fellows were still operational 2 years after completing the programme, a performance which surpasses the UK's average two-year survival rate for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which stands at 73%.
- Survival rates appear to correlate with endline skill levels which suggests that by increasing skills, the programme contributed to higher survival.



6.2 How did the programme impact the financial resilience of the venture?

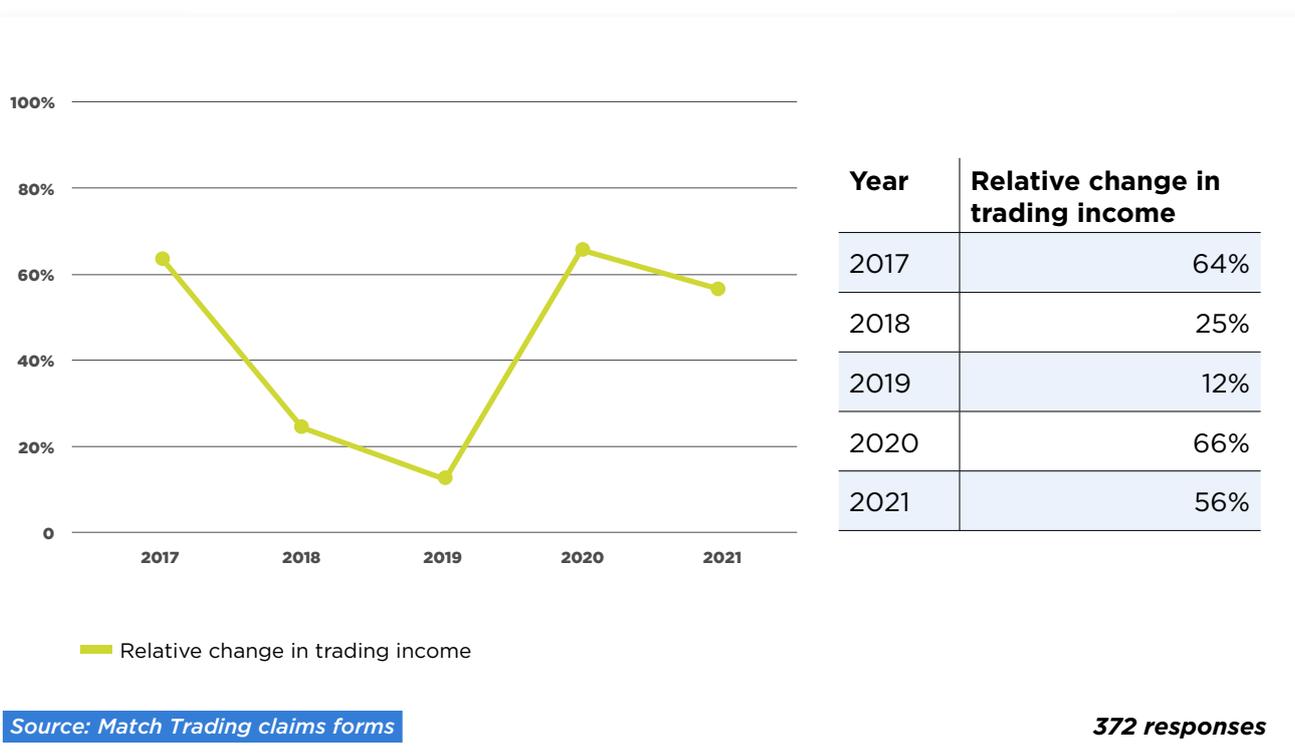
Match Trading is SSE’s grant-making innovation, created in 2017 with partners Lloyds Banking Group and The National Lottery Community Fund as part of this programme. Match Trading seeks to incentivise ventures to develop their trading base via customer acquisition.

The grant works by matching the ventures’ increase in trading pound-for-pound up to a capped amount. Unlike with a traditional grant, it encourages enterprises to be more self-sustaining by growing trading. If trading targets are not met, the full Match Trading grant cannot be claimed. Match Trading grants are given for the duration of the Trade Up and Scale Up programmes. Match Trading aims to encourage enterprises to be more self-sustaining by growing trading and reducing dependency on traditional grant funding.

Match Trading grants of up to £4,000 were available to Trade Up cohorts and £7,000 for Scale Up cohorts. Start Up cohorts received traditional grants of £1,000. The social entrepreneurs receiving Match Trading grants provided detailed financial information on a quarterly basis, including information on total income, trading income and expenditure. 372³⁰ ventures provided this detailed information which forms the basis for the analysis below.

The programme fellows have experienced an average (mean) increase in their total income of 31% and an average (mean) increase in their trading income of 41% over the duration of the programme. At the start of the programme the average proportion of income from trading activities was 56%. This increased to 60% by the end of the programme.

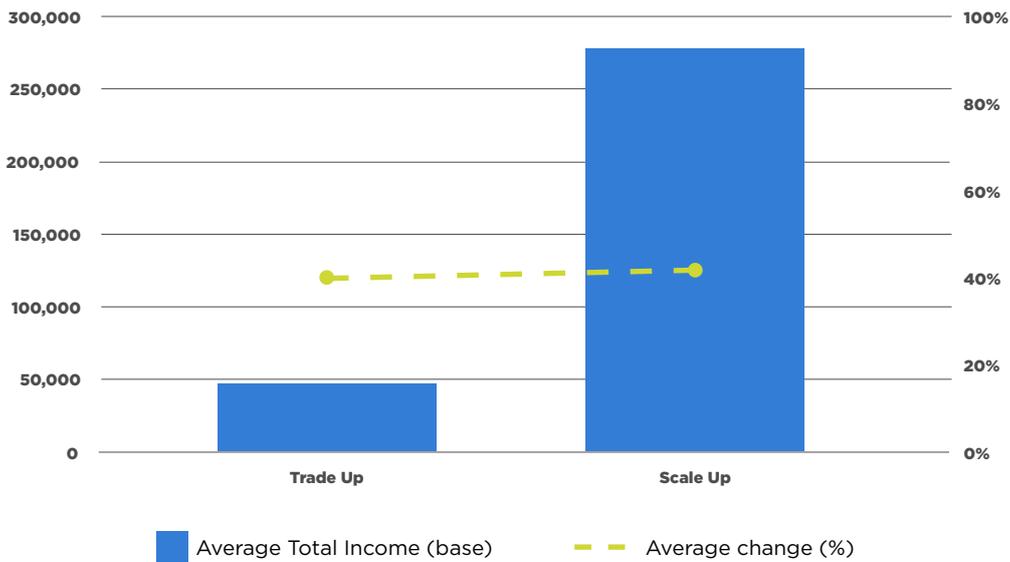
Figure 28: Relative change in trading income from baseline to endline by year (n=372)



When Match Trading was launched in 2017, participating SSE fellows saw a 64% increase in their trading income compared to the prior year. As demonstrated above, with many variables at play affecting outcomes, results fluctuated year by year. The 2019-20 cohort, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, marks the lowest percentage increase in trading income. However, this cohort still managed to achieve a 12% increase in trading income despite facing challenges such as extended closures and staff furloughs.

To counteract the economic instability brought on by the pandemic, SSE introduced the Trade Back grant. This initiative offered a modest traditional grant to aid recovery, along with an additional incentivised grant rewarding increases in trading income (for example, a Trade Back student was offered a £2,000 traditional grant. Then, if they increased their trading by £2,000 they could claim the remaining £2,000). This was first introduced to the 2020-21 cohort. The trading income for these programme fellows increased to 66% in the year following the pandemic’s onset.

Figure 29: Relative change in trading income (%) compared with mean baseline total income (£) by cohort type



Source: Match Trading claims forms

372 responses

The rise in trading income remained fairly consistent between the Trade Up and Scale Up cohorts, averaging 40% and 42% respectively. This indicates that the effectiveness of Match Trading grants isn't confined to enterprises of a specific size; initial trading incomes for these two cohorts varied significantly, ranging from £25,306 for Trade Up to £162,860 for Scale Up. This bodes well for the future allocation of Match Trading grants to a diverse range of venture sizes.

Between 2017 and 2019, SSE in partnership with Power to Change SSE conducted a comparative study featuring a control group of 59 ventures, that received traditional grants alongside those receiving Match Trading grants³¹. In this control group, the total trading income increased by 12%. While not a direct comparison due to programme differences, this result hints at the relative effectiveness of Match Trading in boosting trading income.

Additionally, the percentage of total income derived from trading has increased from the programme's start to its conclusion. Initially, the average (mean) proportion of income from trading was 56%, rising to 60% by the endline. The control group also started with a baseline of 56%, but ended at 51%. This suggests that Match Trading grants may be effective in nudging ventures towards a higher proportion of income from trading.

It's worth noting that the endline data currently includes the Match Trading grant, likely leading to an underestimation of the shift towards trading income. For more accurate future analyses, the Match Trading grant should be excluded from the dataset to provide a clearer understanding of its contribution to the proportion of total trading income.

Figure 30: Details of the financial outcomes of those that received Match Trading grants by cohort type (compared with a control group from a separate programme) (n=372)

	Trade Up	Scale Up	Total	Control Group of Traditional Grants (Trade Up on separate programme)
Ave. trading income (baseline)	£25,306	£162,860	£60,252	£57,709
Ave. trading income (endline)	£35,482	£231,012	£84,890	£64,632
Ave. change in trading income	40%	42%	41%	12%
Ave. total income (baseline)	£48,593	£279,701	£107,307	£101,417
Ave. total income (endline)	£67,023	£358,093	£140,573	£127,431
Ave. change in total income	38%	28%	31%	26%
Ave. % trading income (baseline)	52%	58%	56%	56%
Ave. % trading income (endline)	53%	65%	60%	51%

Source: Match Trading claims forms

6.3 How did the programme impact the level of employment of the venture?

The social ventures in the programme are diverse in terms of both delivery and business models, as well as size, which leads to varying numbers of employees. Although the absolute number of paid employees isn't a direct indicator of business sustainability (or programme success), an increase in this number over the programme's duration does signal operational growth, provided it's sustainable.

The programme fellows reported the number of paid employees that worked for their social venture (in terms of headcount) at the start of the programme (baseline) and at the end of their programme (endline).

Figure 31: Mean baseline and endline number of people in paid employment (headcount) and mean and median change by cohort type (n=532)

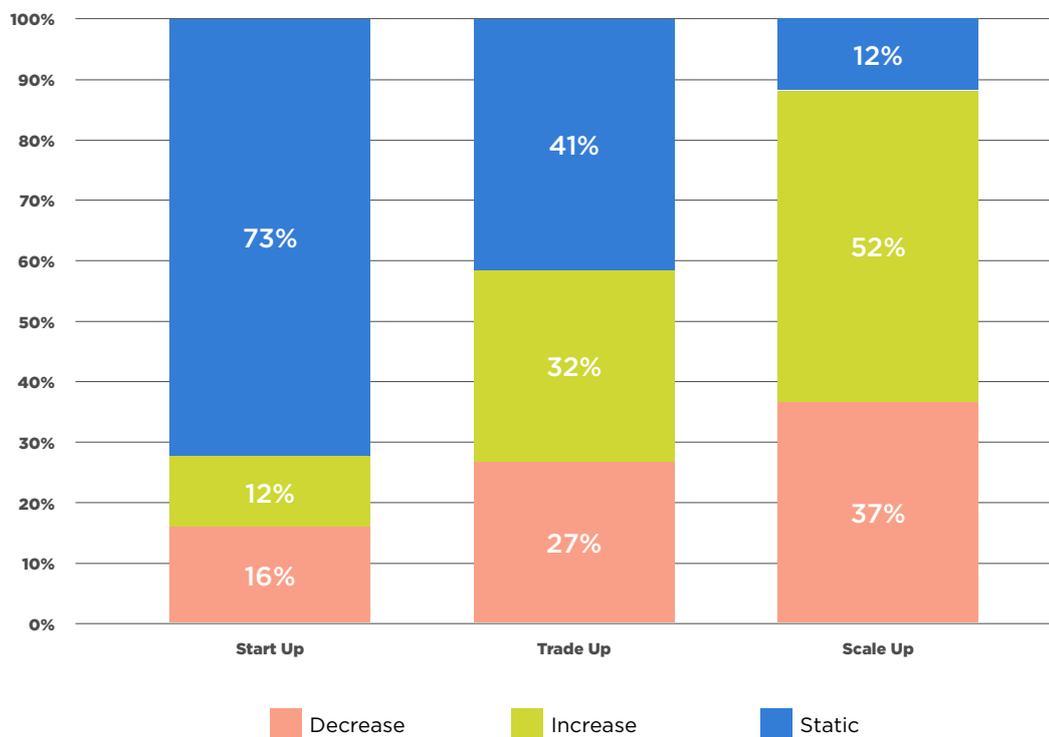
	Start Up	Trade Up	Scale Up	Total
Baseline number of paid employees (mean)	1.4	2.8	9.4	2.5
Endline number of paid employees (mean)	1.3 ³²	3.0	10.8	2.7
Relative change from baseline to endline (mean)	8%	33%	73%	21%
Relative change from baseline to endline (median)	0%	0%	15%	0%

Source: Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

By the end of the programme, the average SSE fellow employed 2.7 paid workers, marking a 21% increase in paid employment. However, the data shows considerable variability, seen by a median growth rate of 0%. This suggests that most social ventures maintained a stable number of paid employees throughout the programme, with a subset contributing to the high average (mean) growth.

Evaluation of the data comes with limitations. For example, one venture expanded from 1 to 20 employees. While this represents significant growth, the 2000% increase skews the mean, justifying further analysis. To understand further we have compared the ventures that increased their paid headcount against those that reduced or maintained it. The analysis focusses on direct paid employees. In addition to this, by the end on the programme the average (mean) SSE fellow employed 2.1 freelancers (headcount), growing from an average (mean) baseline of 1.6, representing an average (mean) increase of 16%.

Figure 32: Proportion of ventures, by cohort type, split by if their ventures headcount decreased, increased or remained static



Source: Match Trading claims forms

532 responses

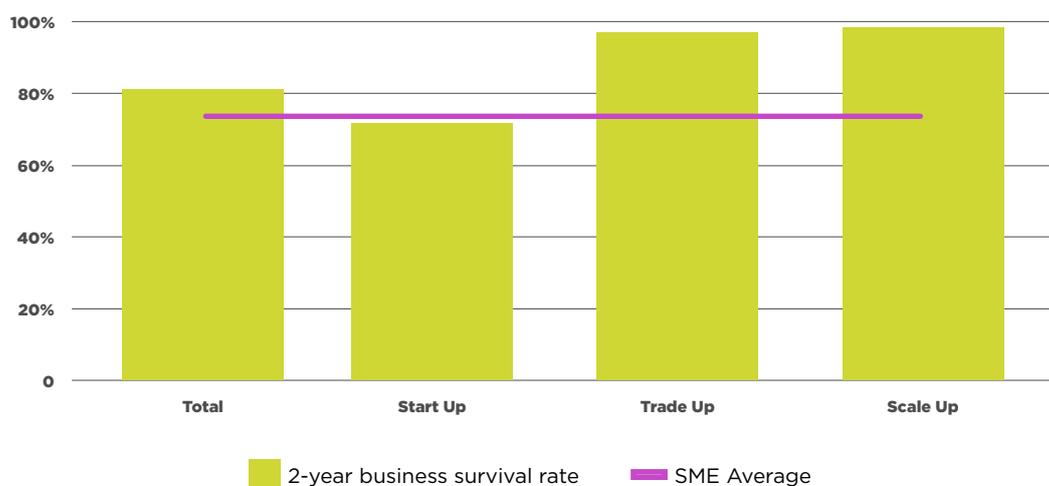
Over the course of the programme, on average, 58% of ventures had a static number of paid employees, with 21% increasing and 21% decreasing their numbers. This pattern varies by the venture stage. 52% of Scale Up ventures increased their paid employment, aligning with the expected growth trajectory of scaling ventures. Conversely only 12% of Start Up ventures increased their headcount.

There are a portion of ventures which decreased their headcount over the course of the programme (21%). Among ventures that downsized, 55%³³ also reduced their volunteer workforce, indicating an overall decrease in operational capacity. Conversely (of those that decreased their headcount), 29% increased their volunteer numbers possibly compensating for the reduced paid staff.

6.4 How did the programme impact the long-term sustainability of the venture?

To gain a deeper understanding of the programme's impact on business resilience, we examined the survival rates of social ventures two years after the programme's conclusion³⁴. Ventures from later cohorts that haven't yet reached this two-year post-programme milestone were not included in the analysis.

Figure 33: Proportion of programme ventures who were still operating 2-years after the completion of the programme (compared with SME average) split by cohort type



Source: Match Trading claims forms

747 responses

81%³⁵ of social ventures that completed the programme remained operational two years later. This performance surpasses the UK's average two-year survival rate for SMEs, which stands at 73%³⁶.

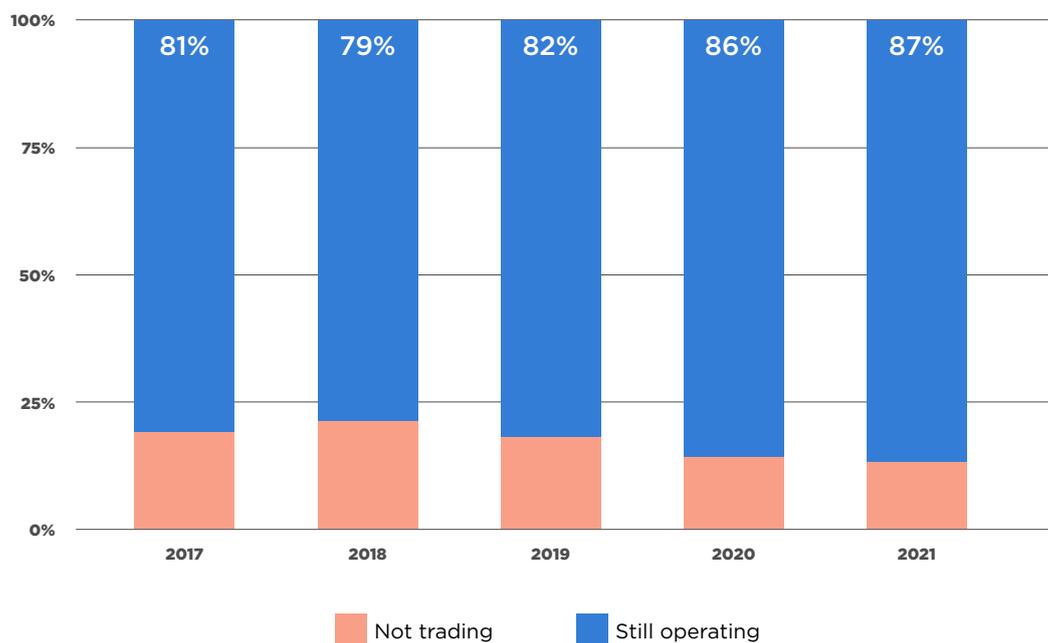
It's worth mentioning that the SME comparison is based on data from 2018 and doesn't reflect the economic challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the economic hurdles and the added complexity of delivering social impact, programme fellows have demonstrated sufficient business and financial resilience to outperform their counterparts in the traditional private sector.

Breaking it down by programme stage, the Start Up cohorts had a two-year survival rate of 72%, while the Trade Up and Scale Up cohorts boast impressive rates of 97% and 98%, respectively.

This analysis focuses on the cohorts that started the programme in 2017, 2018 and 2019. It excludes those cohorts who started the programme in 2020 and 2021 as at the time of writing this report, these cohorts have not reached two years after their programme completion. If those cohorts were included, then the survival rate increases to 83%. The analysis below includes all the cohorts in order to provide a larger sample size for the analysis.

Figure 34: Proportion of programme ventures who were still operating 2-years after completing the programme split by year



Source: Survival Rate Analysis

1,217 responses

Notes: Some cohorts have not yet reached 2 years post programme - they are included in this analysis based on the latest data available

The survival rate shows little variation by year, with cohorts that began in 2020 and 2021 displaying a slightly higher survival rate of 86% and 87% respectively. The higher survival rates for these years is expected, as they are yet to reach two years after the end of their programme. The consistency across years suggests that there has been little impact of COVID-19 on the benefit derived from the programme which is consistent with what has been found elsewhere in the report.

In the following section we compare the business survival rates with skills growth to gain a greater understanding of some of the drivers of business survival in ventures.

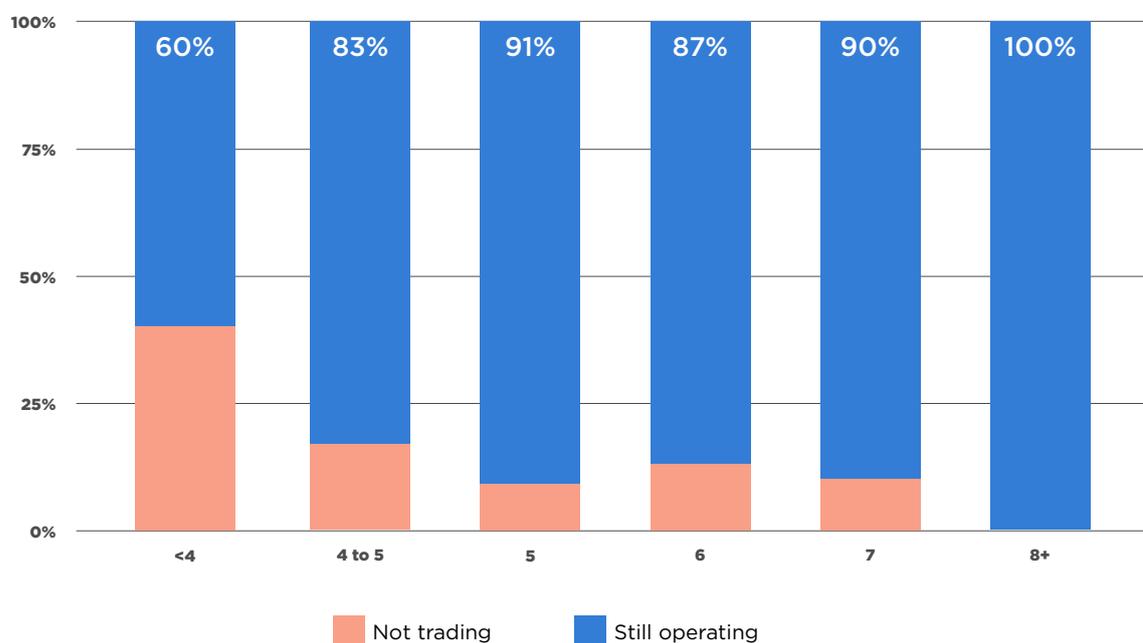
6.5 How does skills development impact business survival?

Our analysis on skills development indicates that social entrepreneurs enter the programme with an average skill score³⁷ of 4.5 out of 10 and typically exit with a score of 5.9, marking an average increase of 55%³⁸. This is the equivalent of a social entrepreneur moving from having ‘limited skills’ in an area to having ‘some’ or ‘good skills’ in that area. This skill improvement is beneficial both for the programme fellows as leaders and for the ventures they manage.

While it is challenging to directly correlate skill development with the long-term success of a social venture, the two-year business survival data offers insights into this potential relationship.

The skill score at endline gives an indication of the position the individual is in to successfully lead a social venture. While the leader alone is not the sole factor for success (or business survival), they do play a pivotal role. The hypothesis is that enhanced skills in programme fellows leads to better leadership and more resilient ventures.

Figure 35: Proportion of social entrepreneurs by average (mean) endline skill score grouping who are still operating 2-years after completing the programme



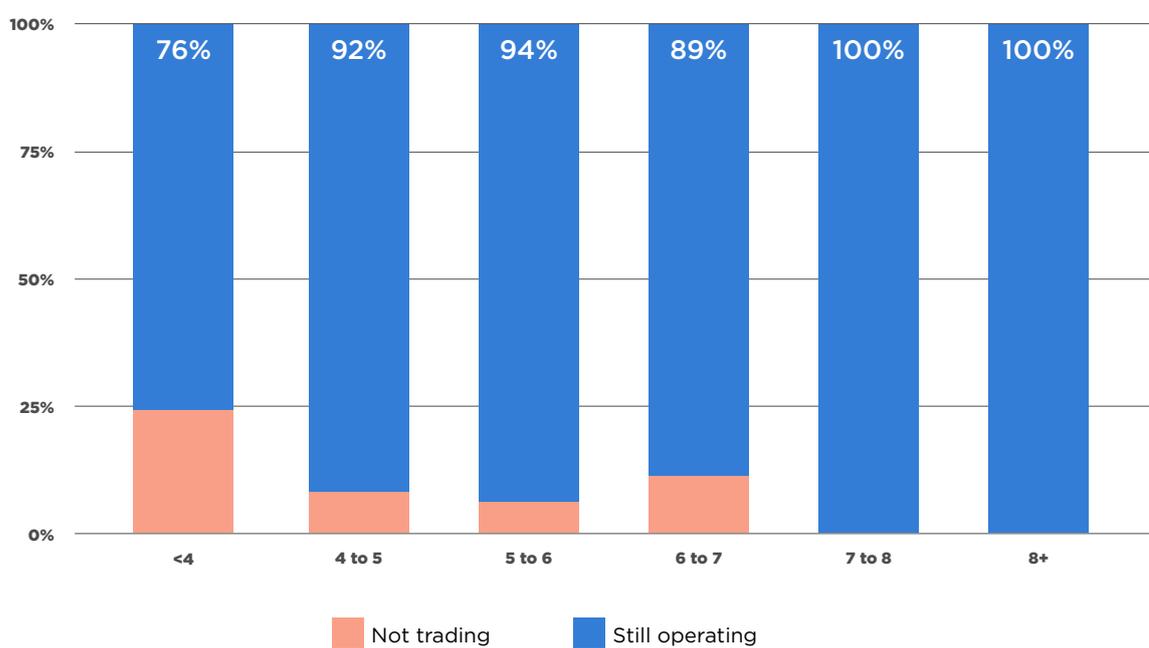
Source: Survival Rate Analysis, Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

456 responses

Notes: Some cohorts have not yet reached 2 years post programme - they are included in this analysis based on the latest data available

Our analysis examines survival rates in conjunction with endline skill data. The survival rate for those with an average endline skill score of below 4 is 60%. The survival rate for those with an average endline score of 8 or above is 100%. The survival rate broadly increases as the endline skill score increases. This trend supports the programme's rationale: improving the skills of social entrepreneurs enhances the resilience of their ventures. Although this finding aligns with expectations, prior evidence has been limited due to the long-term nature of the impact and the difficulty collecting this data.

Figure 36: Proportion of social entrepreneurs by average (mean) baseline skill score grouping who are still operating 2-years after completing the programme



Source: Survival Rate Analysis, Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

456 responses

Notes: Some cohorts have not yet reached 2 years post programme - they are included in this analysis based on the latest data available

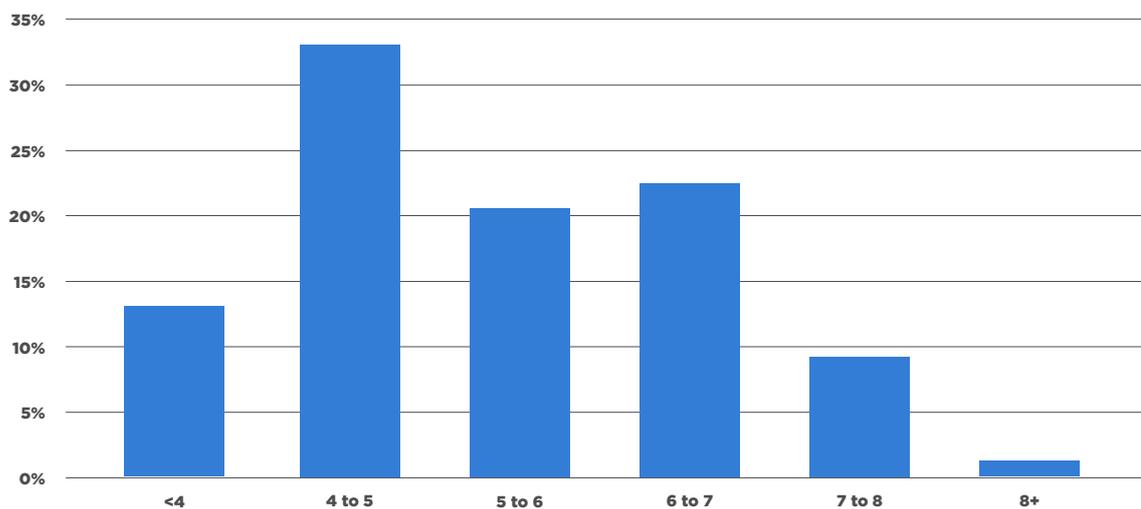
The trend is not as clear when considering baseline figures. Apart from the outliers (scores below 4 and above 7), the survival rates remain fairly consistent (89%-94%) for those with average baseline skills scores between 4 and 7.

This implies that for the core group of programme fellows (starting with an average baseline skill score between 4 and 7), the pivotal factor for long-term success isn't the initial skill level of the social entrepreneurs but rather their skill level upon completing the programme. In essence, social entrepreneurs with a broad range of starting skill levels have similar chances of success; what matters most is the effectiveness of the programme in elevating these entrepreneurs to a higher skill level.

The caveat to this is those starting the programme with an average skill score of less than 4. 35% of the programme fellows began the programme with an average skill score of under 4. Of that group, the majority were able to improve their average level

skill to above 4, increasing their likelihood of survival. However, there are a number who were not able to.

Figure 37: Proportion of programme fellows that started with an average (mean) baseline score of less than 4 split by their average (mean) endline score



Source: Survival Rate Analysis, Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

160 responses

The findings raise a pertinent question: what additional support, grants, or resources are needed for those entering programmes with a low skill base? Further assistance could potentially help these individuals attain higher skill levels, thereby increasing their chances of long-term success.

In a long-duration programme of this nature, pinpointing one element of support which enabled upskilling is challenging. It is very difficult to quantify whether a programme fellow successfully upskilling in business planning was the result of a strong mentoring relationship, impactful expert session, the support of peers in Action Learning Sets (or indeed, interaction with peers outside of formal programme sessions) or all of the above. In their evaluation of Phase 1 of the programme CLES found that expert and witness sessions were particularly highly valued by participants. The factors driving the success of the programme were many and included (as discovered by CLES): the process of shared learning, the programme design itself (i.e. the combination of programme elements, the long duration of the programme and the fact that the programme is anchored on the entrepreneur rather than the enterprise).

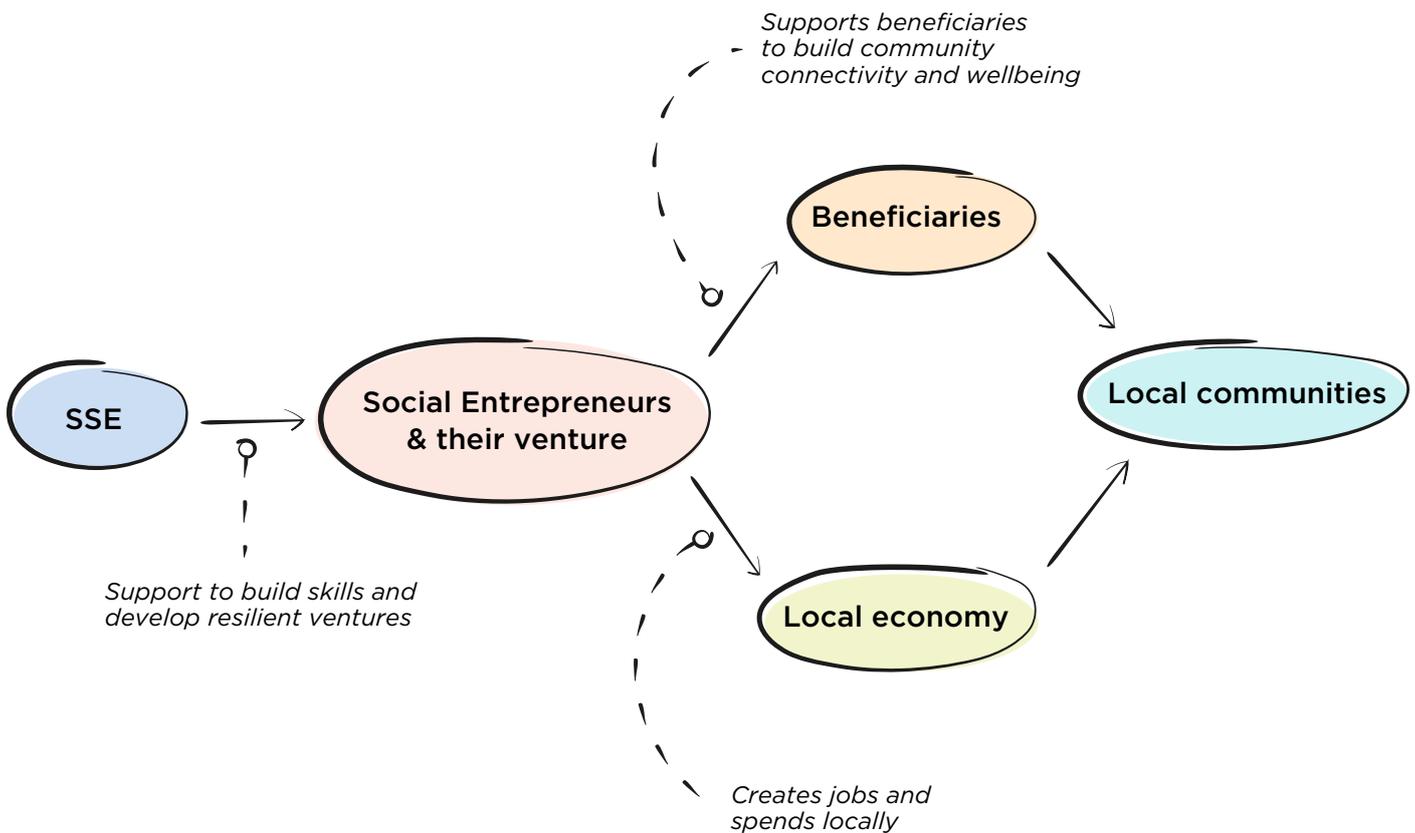
While these findings offer some evidence that skill development positively impacts long-term business resilience, the analysis has limitations. The data leans heavily on the Start Up cohorts, given the high survival rates of the Trade-Up and Scale Up cohorts. It is also acknowledged that significant external factors influence the survival rates of these ventures, beyond the skills of their social leaders. This area of research is relatively undeveloped in the social enterprise sector and would benefit from broader analysis across various programmes and venture stages.

7. How did the programme influence community impact?

How did the programme influence community impact?

SSE’s Theory of Change is built around the principle that supporting programme fellows has an indirect effect in delivering lasting and widespread community impact. By supporting social entrepreneurs to run sustainable ventures, SSE aims to also support them to bring benefits to their local community and its residents:

Figure 38: SSE’s contribution to impact at the community level



Understanding the number of people who were supported by programme fellows (herein referred to as beneficiaries) helps to highlight the breadth of impact programme fellows are having. However, it is just one aspect of the issue. To really understand community impact, it is also necessary to understand the depth of support offered to beneficiaries, and in turn, how that support impacted them. Going further, it is also helpful to understand the impact ventures have on the local economy directly through jobs and investment.

To understand the impact programme fellows are having at both levels, we needed to dig deeper. Evaluation questions framing this section were:

- How many beneficiaries were supported by programme fellows and how were their lives impacted?
- How are the programme fellows' ventures impacting the local communities they work in?

The development of skills and business resilience means that better equipped social leaders are running more resilient ventures. The reasonable assumption is that better skilled programme fellows, and more resilient ventures, are more able to deliver impact within communities.

Given our earlier findings that skills developed on the programme correlate closely with the survival rate of ventures we can reasonably infer that the development of skills might also have contributed to positive impact in the community. Herein, wherever possible we draw out key trends which highlight possible contributions.

7.1 Headline findings

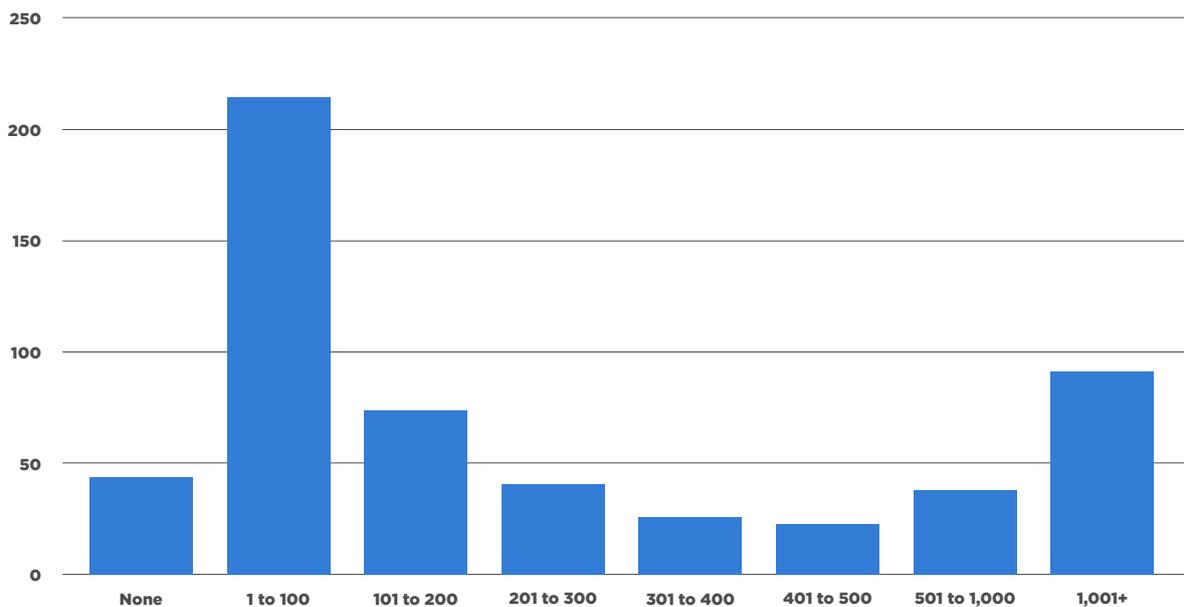
- Up to 1.8 million people were supported by programme fellows³⁹.
- Almost half a million additional beneficiaries were supported between the programme baseline and endline. This represents an average of 33% increase whilst on the programme (median).
- People reached by programme fellows experienced a range of positive impacts on their wellbeing and social capital.
- Social enterprises create local jobs⁴⁰, and programme fellows are no exception. In total programme fellows employ 3,270⁴¹ people in paid work.
- Ventures give back to the communities that they're in, spending £11.9m⁴² within their local economy.

7.2 How many beneficiaries were supported by programme fellows and how were their lives impacted?

The community reach of programme fellows grew between baseline and endline. At baseline the mean number of people reached by programme fellows was 1,049 (the median figure was 79) and at endline this was 1,451 (the median figure was 127). The large difference between mean and median goes to demonstrate the significant variation in the numbers of people reached by different ventures, a finding which is in line with earlier evaluations.

The graph below further illustrates this, with a wide variation between some ventures who are yet to begin supporting individuals in their community, and others supporting over 1,000 beneficiaries.

Figure 39: Number of programme ventures grouped by the number of beneficiaries they supported annually at the end of the programme



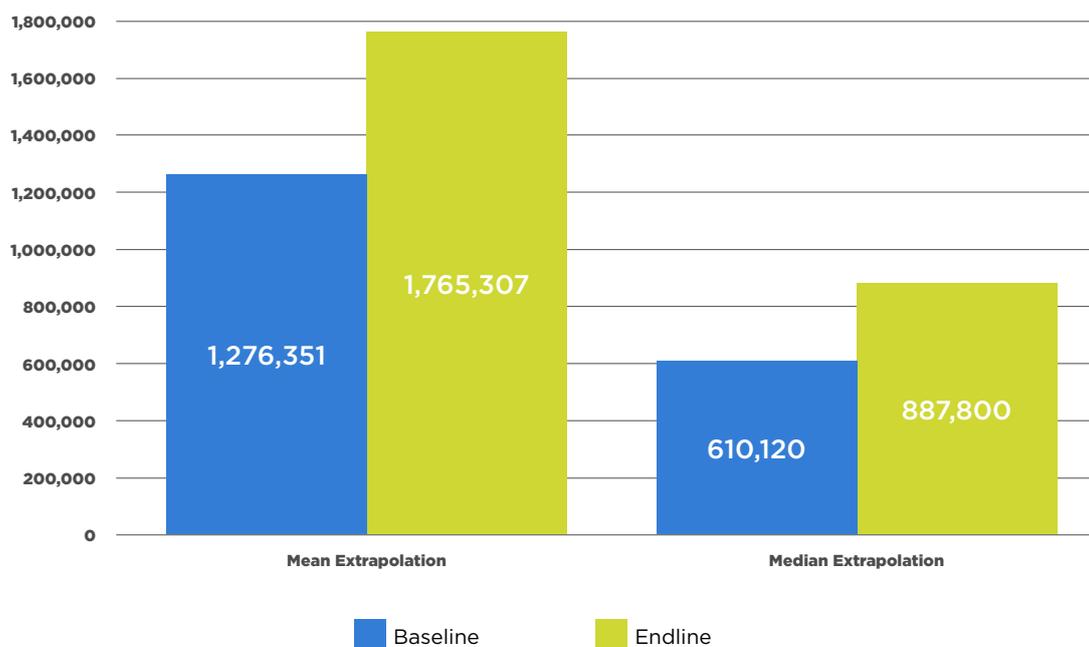
Source: Endline Surveys

554 responses

Notes: The data collection questions asked for those supported ‘over the last 12 months’

When these findings are extrapolated to the whole programme the breadth of impact of the social entrepreneurs is revealed. Even when using a more cautious extrapolation based on median figures, programme fellows reached almost 900,000 people across the UK:

Figure 40: Total amount of beneficiaries supported by programme ventures annually at baseline and endline - mean and median extrapolation



Source: Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys

554 responses

Notes: The data collection questions asked for those supported ‘over the last 12 months’

This constitutes an increase of 488,956 from baseline to endline (based on mean) or 277,680 (based on median) and a relative change of 418% (mean), or 33% (median). The large variations in number of beneficiaries between programme fellows is one of the drivers for large variations in relative change of number of beneficiaries. Hence the difference between mean and median. Due to these large variations, we believe the medium growth to be a more appropriate indicator of growth.

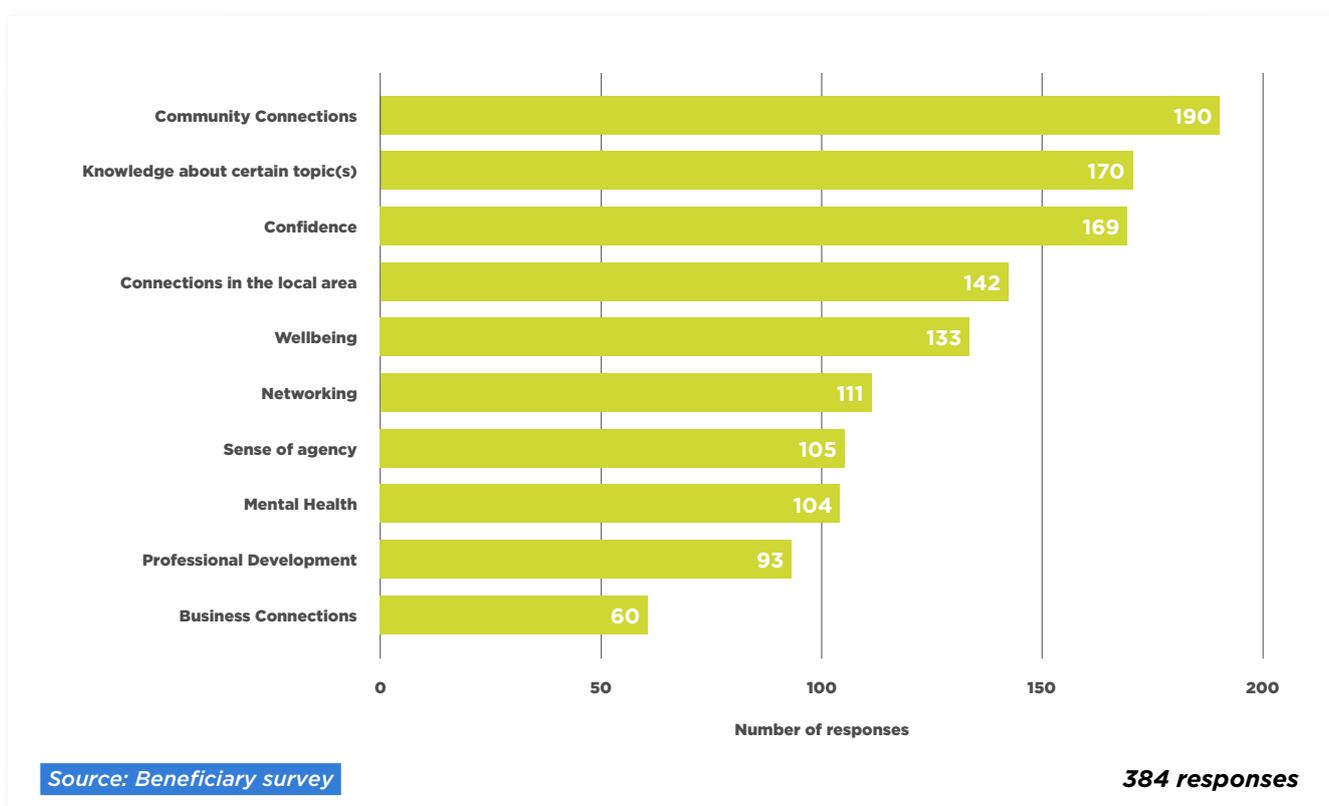
Whilst the number of beneficiaries grew from baseline to endline, understanding what precise proportion of that growth the programme contributed to is clearly difficult. Many of the skills improved by the programme are likely to be enablers to growth in beneficiaries, including: Community Engagement (where programme fellows exhibited a mean relative skill improvement of 49%) and new product and service development (where programme fellows exhibited a mean relative skill improvement of 63%⁴³).

Breadth of impact does not necessarily infer depth, and it is crucial to understand what impact programme fellows have on their beneficiaries. Given the scale of the programme, it is outside of the scope of this evaluation to seek to establish the impact of every venture. This evaluation instead sought to provide a snapshot using a group of Research Associates. Each Research Associate surveyed their own

beneficiaries to gain insights into their impact. There are limitations to this approach. Research Associates made up less than 1% of the social entrepreneurs who took part in Phase 2 of the programme and therefore results do not represent a statistically meaningful sample. However, their experiences paint a picture of the impact of the programme.

When asked to identify the most important of 10 key areas which have improved for them, since being supported by Research Associate’s ventures, beneficiaries highlighted connections with others, knowledge and skills and wellbeing. Community Connections was the most common area which was identified by 190 of the 384 respondents (49%).

Figure 41: The top 10 areas that have improved for beneficiaries since participating in this social enterprise - number of beneficiaries



Notes: Question asked: ‘Have any of the following improved for you since participating in X’s activities?’ (Multiple selection)

In many cases, the development of both hard and soft skills amongst beneficiaries improved their employability, with 7 out of 10 Research Associate’s ventures increasing the employability of their beneficiaries leading to paid employment⁴⁴.

Beneficiaries described that taking part in fellows’ activities made them feel: ‘Happy’, ‘Excited’, ‘Inspired’, ‘Empowered’ and ‘Accepted’⁴⁵ and 91% of respondents made connections as a result⁴⁶, with a variety of new relationships formed, predominantly friendships⁴⁷. This building of community connections, or social capital, in all its forms, is not only crucial to wellbeing but is recognised as vital to levelling up as infrastructure and financial capital⁴⁸. These responses are indicative of ventures who understand local need and their social mission well, and of ventures who effectively plan appropriate interventions, all skills which were embedded within the programme.

Case Study:

The Play Center Glasgow CIC – making community connections

The Play Center Glasgow offers children and adults of Drumchapel, a vibrant, safe space to learn, play, and connect. It was founded by Adekemi Giwa who was part of the 2021 Start Up cohort based in Scotland. Adekemi started the programme with high

level of skill in relation to ‘Community Engagement’ yet still managed to increase this skills level by 11%. At the same time, The Play Center increased their beneficiaries by 86% over the course of the programme.

“If the organisation were to stop operating, a number of children would lose a valuable communal spot. This would affect parents who make use of the clubs to keep their children occupied and safe while they have work.”

Beneficiary of The Play Center

The Play Center Glasgow provides a one-stop shop for their local community, Drumchapel, on issues around social inclusion, delivered through youth clubs, after-school clubs and family hangouts. The aim is to help the community thrive through the provision of mentoring and encouraging capacity building through skill development. In doing so, The Play Center Glasgow serves as a medium in assisting the government in tackling the concern of youth delinquency, vandalism and school absenteeism in the Glasgow community.



By providing a locally run and accessible space, beneficiaries felt more socially connected. The Play Center Glasgow provides beneficiaries with a chance to meet other families and individuals in the community. This reduces feelings of social isolation and helps them to make new friendships. 95% of surveyed beneficiaries felt that Play Center Glasgow had a positive impact on their community.

Through mentoring and workshops, beneficiaries learnt new transferrable skills and this improved their employability and encouraged career progression. Indirectly, this also increased their self-confidence, leaving them feeling more empowered and hopeful.

Through the provision of accessible youth clubs, The Play Center Glasgow also provides positive role models for children. Beneficiaries noticed that a regular, dedicated and safe environment for young people to socialise improved behaviour. It also allowed local families to connect and support each other

“I know I am learning and achieving more now than I could before thanks to the programme and guidance from staff. The children’s socialising ability and behaviour in my opinion is changing for the better”

Beneficiary of The Play Center

“I’ve witnessed the skills people, from all ages, have developed through the organisation and I also admire how children are given exposure to hobbies and opportunities they may not have had before”

Beneficiary of The Play Center

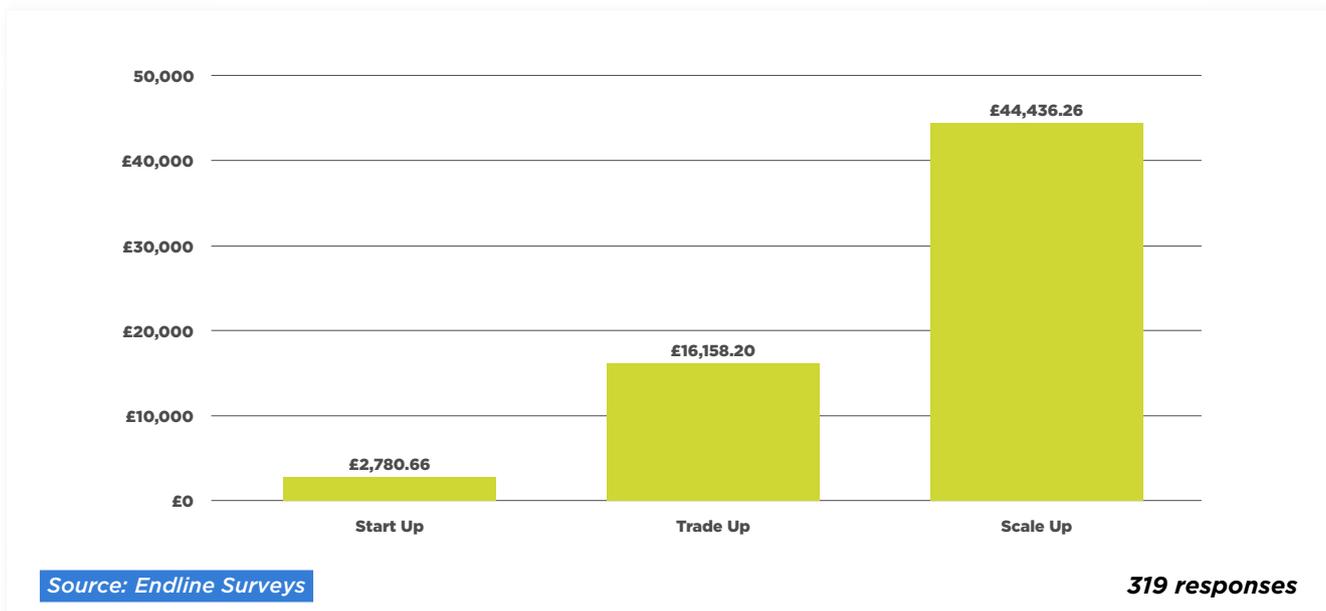
7.3 How are the social ventures impacting the local communities they work in?

86% of people reached by Research associates rate the positive impact of the venture on their community as high.⁴⁹ Beyond directly supporting beneficiaries’ wellbeing and social capital, ventures also provide routes into employment and bring much needed funds into their local area.

The benefits of employment at an individual level are well established, and existing research demonstrates that where social enterprises create jobs, they are overwhelmingly local jobs (particularly in areas of deprivation)⁵⁰. On average, programme fellows employed 2.7 workers each, which amounts to 3,270⁵¹ across the whole programme.

Beyond this economic boost to their local area, on average the ventures of programme fellows contribute £10,938 to the local economy each year via local spending. This amounts to £11.9 million spent in local economies between 2017 and 2021 upon programme completion and was higher amongst Scale Up and Trade Up ventures than Start Up⁵². Choosing to buy and spend with local businesses rather than larger national or international options could also be having an interesting ripple effect given that research demonstrates that those local businesses are likely to also buy locally⁵³.

Figure 42: Average (mean) local spend by programme fellows annually



Notes: Question asked: ‘How much would you estimate you have spent in the local economy (i.e. with local business rather than national/international or big brand products and services) in the last 12 months?’

Case Study:

Breadwinners – provide jobs in the local community

Founded in 2016, Breadwinners is a grassroots charity supporting young refugees into paid employment. They do this by delivering three employability programmes in London

and Brighton that provide jobs, work experience, training and mentoring at their market stalls and through their wholesale service selling baked goods.



Martin Cosarinsky Campos is the founder of Breadwinners and started the programme in 2020 as part of the London Scale Up cohort. During the programme, he increased his total skill score by 65%. Over the same period, Breadwinners increased the number of people they support by 123%.

Around 70% of refugees are unemployed in London despite being highly-skilled⁵⁴. Refugees face many barriers when looking for work in the UK: lack of in-country experience and connections, legal constraints and bias and discrimination against refugees. Beneficiaries felt that Breadwinners helped them access new opportunities in employment and work experience. The provision of training in skills like language and communication, business management, CV writing, and sales this improved beneficiaries' employability.

“We refugees and asylum seekers have no voice, no one can empower us like Breadwinners... Breadwinners gave us [a] voice and confidence. If they stop that power will be taken away from us, no organisation [does this] like Breadwinners.”

Beneficiary of Breadwinners

Connections made via Breadwinners also enabled beneficiaries to access other organisations and services for support. Continued social and financial support as well as training builds beneficiaries' confidence and allows them to work towards particular self-defined goals they decide.

Beneficiaries felt that Breadwinners helped them access new opportunities in employment and work experience. The provision of training in skills like language and communication, business management, CV writing, and sales this improved beneficiaries' employability. Connections made via Breadwinners also enabled beneficiaries to access other organisations and services for support. Continued social and financial support as well as training builds beneficiaries' confidence and allows them to work towards particular self-defined goals they decide. 80% of beneficiaries felt that Breadwinners had a positive impact on their community.⁵⁵



“With Breadwinners I built my confidence and connections. I got a lot of skills and now I have the ability to take actions to improve my life and help the others in my community to tell them about Breadwinners.”

Beneficiary of Breadwinners

8. Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion and recommendations

This research evaluated the second phase of a 10-year programme supporting social entrepreneurs at different levels of development across multiple locations. Learning from this programme can be applied both in SSE's future programmes, and more widely within the social entrepreneurship sector.

8.1 Conclusion

The research indicates that the programme has been effective in enhancing the skills of social entrepreneurs, with nearly all programme fellows (99%) seeing improvement in at least one skill area, and many experiencing significant growth in multiple areas. At the same time, the social ventures of these programme fellows have seen improvements in their business resilience, with average employment growth of 21% and a 41% average increase in trading income, over the course of the programme.

These ventures outperformed traditional Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with regards to their 2-year survival rate (81% vs 73%), and the data suggests a correlation between the enhanced skill levels attained by the end of the programme and the long-term sustainability of the entrepreneurs' ventures.

This enables the ventures to continue to deliver social impact in their communities. In other words, better-skilled social leaders are running more resilient businesses, enabling them to make a broader and deeper impact in their respective communities.

More leaders of these social ventures are from marginalised backgrounds than traditional SMEs. In addition, a large proportion of the programme fellows have lived experience of the issues they are addressing (94%). Diverse leaders bring diverse insight and solutions. Those affected by a problem are often best placed to resolve it. Therefore, programme fellows are often very well-equipped to meet the specific needs of their communities.

Learning support and Match Trading grants are effectively equipping and empowering social entrepreneurs to tackle their communities' most pressing challenges. To scale this impact and achieve transformational change, additional resources and funding are essential. This will further empower social entrepreneurs not just to initiate change, but to sustain it, embedding long-lasting benefits within communities across the UK.

Any further programmes should build off what has been learned from this study as well as studies of other programmes in the sector.

8.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be applied both in SSE's future programmes, and more widely within the social entrepreneurship sector.

Evidence suggests that the programme had a positive impact on programme fellows and improved their skills. However, more needs to be done to understand how this impacted different social entrepreneurs.

The development of skills was nearly universal amongst programme fellows, suggesting the programme was well suited to its audience. However, limitations to demographic data collection meant it was not possible to compare how the programme might have impacted social entrepreneurs differently. SSE should improve demographic data collection in order that in future it can more accurately pinpoint any possible weaknesses in meeting the needs of certain groups, and ensure positive equality, diversity and inclusion, in line with its aims.

The programme positively impacted on the business resilience of programme fellows' ventures. However, a better understanding of the programme fellows with the lowest skill levels at the outset could help find the best route for similar social entrepreneurs in the future.

A 2-year survival rate of 81% correlated strongly with the skill level of programme fellows. As skills improved, so too did the chances of their venture surviving. Further understanding of the reasons for ventures closing would help improve understanding of what is required for those ventures. This might reveal the additional support needs of those social entrepreneurs entering the programme with a particularly low skill base, or it may suggest alternative pathways for these social entrepreneurs.

We can reasonably infer that better skilled programme fellows, leading more resilient ventures delivered greater community impact, however, it is difficult to understand how much of this could be attributed to SSE.

Programme fellows are supporting a significant number of beneficiaries in their community, spending locally, and providing employment. They are doing so at a more significant rate at the end of the programme compared to the beginning. However, it was not possible to directly attribute this to the programme. This problem is not unique to SSE, or to this programme. The understanding of the impact that ventures have at the community level is important and SSE should further develop their stance on how this is treated when evaluating future programmes.

The use of non-traditional grants (Match Trading) grants does appear to have contributed to increased levels of 'traded income' amongst programme fellows however, it would be helpful to test this approach at different levels.

Match Trading grants at Trade Up and Scale Up level contributed to increases in traded income (of 40-42%). Applying Match Trading grants at a different level, or conversely to larger enterprises than supported by Scale Up could represent an opportunity to gather insights into whether this could be replicated for different audiences.

COVID-19 did not appear to significantly affect outcomes, indicating that mitigation measures (blended learning approaches and Trade Back grants) were largely effective.

Aside from observing a dip in trading income there were no noticeable negative trends for those programme fellows who took part in the programme during key COVID-19 years. The programme appears to have adapted well and been just as effective during these years as before and after. This should be qualified by noting that the analysis is not based on longitudinal data, and it is possible that elements such as networks that have been built virtually may not have the longevity compared to those built face-to-face.



9. Appendix

Glossary

Start Up: an entry-level to the programme, for social entrepreneurs with ventures less than two years old and with a turnover of less than £15,000.

Trade Up: a programme for mid-level ventures with a turnover of between £15,000 and £75,000.

Scale Up: a programme for social entrepreneurs looking to scale their venture and its impact. In phase 1 this included ventures with a turnover of more than £15,000, in Phase 2 this was narrowed to organisations with a turnover of greater than £75,000

The programme: this refers to all levels of the Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Programme as a whole.

Programme fellow: an individual (generally a founder of a social enterprise) who has completed the programme.

Social entrepreneur: an individual using their entrepreneurial abilities for a social or environmental purpose.

Venture: an organisation run by a programme fellow. We have purposefully not referred to these as 'social enterprises' as, in practice ventures took on a variety of forms.

Match Trading: a form of grant-making created in 2017 by SSE with Lloyds Banking Group and Big Lottery Fund to incentivise grant recipients on Trade Up and Scale Up programmes to develop their trading income. The mechanism matches a social enterprise's increase in trading pound-for-pound to a capped amount and encourages enterprises to be more self-sustaining by growing trading and reducing dependency on traditional grant funding.

Action Learning Sets (ALS): the basic philosophy underpinning action learning is that the most effective learning takes place when we are faced with a real problem that we are obliged to solve. Action Learning occurs in a small group, called an Action Learning Team. This group meets regularly to engage in a collaborative learning process through reflecting on real work issues, exploring possible solutions and planning for action.

Research Associate: a participant who has taken part in the active research element of this project with AKOU. A Research Associate is trained in evaluation and data collection methods to undertake self-directed research. All Research Associates are remunerated for their data gathering, research and training activities.

Grant funding: an amount of money (usually limited to a period of time and which is not paid back) offered for specific purposes linked to public benefit.

Trading income: money received in return for a service or product.

Beneficiaries: a person who derives an advantage from something, in this report we use the term beneficiaries to refer to those individuals who are supported or benefit from the work and activities undertaken by social enterprises.

Social capital: the connections, relationships and networks formed between people living and working in a particular community (not necessarily geographical) that allow it to function effectively. Social capital is underpinned by trust and cooperation.

Research Associate Programme

Collaborating with programme fellows to gather data

In alignment with AKOU's co-design, a core part of AKOU's research involved a participatory approach, training programme fellows as Research Associates to work on this evaluation. The aim of this Research Associate Programme was to train a selection of programme fellows on impact measurement and social research

methods. With this training, they set out to collect data about the impact they have on their beneficiaries and better understand the impact of the programme on themselves and their enterprise. Their role as Research Associates enabled them to also map the collaborations and relationships that make up their networks.

Research Associates application and selection process:

1. SSE team members and Regional Directors were invited to nominate programme fellows suited to this opportunity. At graduations in autumn 2022, programme fellows could also register interest in the opportunity.
2. Outreach to all 73 nominated and registered fellows, inviting them to apply for the opportunity
3. The application involved completing an online form, including DEI data and information on their venture and programme data. AKOU received 40 applications.
4. The shortlisting process reduced applicants to 18 programme fellows, considering their research experience, lived experience, and DEI. Then AKOU conducted 1-to-1 interviews with shortlisted candidates and ranked them.
5. In close cooperation with the SSE team, AKOU selected 12 Research Associates, ensuring a diverse representation of programme years and types, backgrounds, regions, ethnicity and lived experience.
6. All 12 fellows accepted the offer to work with AKOU as Research Associates. During the process, 2 fellows dropped out due to personal reasons.

Research Associate Programme:

AKOU met with Research Associates online on a regular basis over the course of two months (February-March 2023). Research Associates were paid for up to five days of their time spent on this work. Activities included:

1. Kick-off Session: Meeting the group of Research Associates and introducing the process, testing the survey used with beneficiaries to gather feedback from Research Associates
2. 1-to-1 support sessions with the AKOU team throughout the programme
3. Impact Workshop 1: Exploring local ecosystems, data & audiences and qualitative research tools
4. Impact Workshop 2: Relationships, social capital & network maps and additional qualitative research tools
5. Final Group Session and to share first insights, share learnings and feedback as well as discuss next steps

How Research Associates collected data for this report

The 10 Research Associates collected crucial insights for this evaluation in a unified but creative way. This allowed scope for the nuances of their social enterprises while also ensuring approaches were similar and data sets would be comparable. Outputs of the Research Associate Programme are:

1. Training of 10 programme fellows in research design and mixed methods data collection
2. Collection of insights from 388 beneficiaries via harmonised survey
3. 164 connections and collaborators have been mapped
4. Use of user journey maps to capture the impact story of beneficiaries
5. Developed methods and ideas for data sharing across programme fellows to the benefit of all - programme fellows and SSE
6. Individualised summary of data is shared back with Research Associates for their own use

Feedback from Research Associates has been overwhelmingly positive, emphasising the benefit of tackling impact measurement as a group and having support from experts as well as their peers. Several Research Associates mentioned that at first, they were hesitant to ask for feedback from the people they work

with, but this piece of work offered a good opportunity to reach out to people. Above all, many Research Associates and their colleagues felt a strong sense of motivation from reading the feedback they received from beneficiaries.

We would like to express our thanks to the Research associates for their participation:

Adekemi Giwa The Play Centre Glasgow CIC

Alison Horton Gateway Collective

Chris Paul Wythenshawe Community Media

Jayne Howard Arts Well UK CIC

Josh Allen Monty's Bike Hub

Martin Cosarinsky Campos Breadwinners

Nicole Robinson Edwards Her Path to Purpose CIC

Pauline Miller-Brown Restart Enterprise CIC

Veronica Gordon Our Version Media CIC

Vicki Ayton BizEd Projects CIC

Important note

This evaluation report was principally authored and developed by AKOU for the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE). AKOU led the research, data analysis, the Research Associate Programme, and the drafting and design of the report. SSE provided guidance on the report's structural outline and content and conducted a review to adapt language. The final report has been prepared by AKOU to meet the original objectives of the evaluation.

This report is intended for general informational purposes only; no responsibility can be accepted for its contents being used by any third party. The findings are based on the assumptions and data outlined throughout the report. While the sample sizes are sufficient for analysis, it should be noted that the responses do not cover every programme fellow; therefore, the reasonable assumption has been made that the results are representative of the total. The findings should be considered valid for a limited period and reviewed at regular intervals. All references and sources used in the development of this report are cited in the appendix or footnotes.

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Endnotes

- 1 Although the cohorts were based in England and Scotland, social entrepreneurs were able to apply from all regions of the UK
- 2 In both Phase 1 and Phase 2, Start Up referred to those in the early stages. They had an existing idea or project in place, with a turnover of less than £15,000. In Phase 1 Start Up ventures needed to be less than 1 year old, but in Phase 2 this changed to less than 2 years old.
- 3 Scale Up referred to those who were looking to scale an organisation from a solid foundation to create more impact. In Phase 1 they were required to have a turnover of more than 15,000. In Phase 2 they were required to have an income of over £75,000.
- 4 Trade Up was introduced in Phase 2, offering support to social entrepreneurs with a turnover of between £15,000 - £75,000.
- 5 'Evaluation of School for Social Entrepreneurs' Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneurs Programme & Fellowship Programme, Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research (CEEDR), Middlesex University Business School, 2015.
- 6 'Social Impact Review, Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme', Can Invest, Investing for Good, 2016 ([available here](#))
- 7 'Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme - Phase 1 Evaluation - Evaluation Report', Centre for Local Economic Strategies, 2018 ([available here](#))
- 8 Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme, 2017-2020 Phase Two Interim Evaluation', ERS, 2021, a summary report can be [accessed here](#)
- 9 ERS Research & Consultancy, 'School for Social Entrepreneurs Interim Evaluation of the Lloyds Bank & Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme (Phase 2), April 2021
- 10 Source: SEUK 'One Year On: The effect of COVID-19 on the social enterprise sector' accessible [here](#)
- 11 The outlook for charities and businesses alike is challenging. In a review of challenges and opportunities facing the charity sector CAF found that only 49% of charities surveyed in November 2022 felt confident that they have the funds to meet current service demand), with protracted levels of demand now overwhelming charities. Source: 'Key challenges and opportunities facing the charity sector', CAF
- 12 Source: Social Enterprise UK (2022) The State of Social Enterprise ([available here](#))
- 13 An evaluation of Phase 1 found this figure to be 20%. Source: 'Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme - Phase 1 Evaluation - Evaluation Report', Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), October 2018
- 14 Source: Parliament Research Briefing (2022), Business Statistics, December 2022 ([available here](#)) & SEUK, The State of Social Enterprise ([available here](#))
- 15 Source: 2021 Census (ONS) ([available here](#))
- 16 Source: Census 2021 (ONS) ([available here](#))
- 17 An evaluation of Phase 1 found this figure to be 10%. Source: 'Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland Social Entrepreneurs Programme - Phase 1 Evaluation - Evaluation Report', Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), October 2018
- 18 Combination of those that responded: 'Yes (other lived experience)' = 12%; 'Yes (through a friend/family member)' = 12%; and 'Yes (through personal lived experience)' = 70%

- 19 Research Associate Beneficiary Survey, Sample Size for this question: 17, Question asked: How would you rate the positive impact Her Path to Purpose has had on your community (e.g family/friends)?
- 20 Those that increased at least 1 skill score from baseline to endline relative to the total of programme fellows who provide a baseline and endline survey (n=623)
- 21 Those that increased at least 1 skill score from baseline to endline relative to the total of programme fellows who provide a baseline and endline survey (n=623)
- 22 The 'Absolute change (mean)', 'Relative change (mean)', and 'Relative change (median)' is calculated by taking the average (both mean and median) of all individual programme fellow's scores rather than comparing the mean and median aggregated baselines and endlines.
- 23 AKOU's Programme Fellow Survey (n=102)
- 24 Research Associate Beneficiary Survey, Sample Size for this question: 26, Question asked: How would you rate the positive impact Our Version Media has had on your community (e.g family/friends)?
- 25 Those that increased at least 1 skill score from baseline to endline within the core skill area of 'Social Impact Measurement' relative to the total of programme fellows who provide a baseline and endline survey in this core skill area (n=568)
- 26 'Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a methodology developed since 2000 by academics, voluntary groups and the UK Government. SROI provides a mechanism for undertaking cost-benefit analysis around social projects through identifying and attributing a value to all of the inputs and outputs' - local.gov ([here](#))
- 27 Social value a way to quantify how different interventions affect people's lives - the overall impact on people's wellbeing, or their quality of life. It is a way of measuring the positive benefits your work has on both individuals and communities' - Hact ([here](#))
- 28 Programme fellows which we had the relevant demographic data compared to all programme fellows
- 29 with 329 and 99 programme fellows respectively
- 30 Those who provided full Match Trading claims forms
- 31 Trading Up: Match Trading® for Community Businesses as a powerful incentive for regeneration post-COVID (Power to Change Study found [here](#))
- 32 The mean endline skills score for Start Up (1.3) is lower than the mean baseline skill score (1.4). The mean relative change from baseline to endline however is positive (8%). The relative change is calculated by taking the average (mean) of all the individual relative changes, not by comparing the mean baseline with the mean endline.
- 33 Source: Baseline and Endline Surveys (n=506)
- 34 By cross-referencing grantees with Companies House data and the Charity Commission, this analysis assessed the operational status of ventures two years post-programme. Criteria for survival included active company status, charity or FCA registration, and other tangible evidence of operational continuity
- 35 This is a conservative estimate as the methodology assumes that if not data can be found on if the venture is still operating after 2 years, it is assumed to no longer be operating.
- 36 Office for National Statistics - UK. (2019) Business demography, UK: 2018, Business demography ([available here](#))
- 37 This represents the average (mean) across all individual indicators)
- 38 The average is calculated by taking the mean of all individual programme fellow's scores rather than comparing the mean aggregated baselines and endlines
- 39 This figure is based on an extrapolation on the mean number of beneficiaries supported 'over the last 12 months' for programme fellows who completed the Endline Survey (mean number of beneficiaries = 1,451 (n=554), multiplied by total number of programme ventures, 1,217).

- 40 According to SEUK's State of Social Enterprise Survey (2021), on average 85% of social enterprise staff are drawn from the local community
- 41 This figure is based on an extrapolation on the mean number of paid employees (headcount) for programme fellows who completed the Endline Survey (mean number of paid employees = 2.7 (n=587), multiplied by total number of programme ventures, 1,217).
- 42 Source: Endline Surveys (n=506)
- 43 Source: Baseline Surveys and Endline Surveys (n=506)
- 44 Based on findings from AKOU's Research Associate Programme with 10 Programme Fellows
- 45 Research Associate Beneficiary Survey, 'How does taking part in this social enterprise's activities make you feel?' Sample size for this question: 328, multiple selection
- 46 Research Associate Beneficiary Survey, sample size for this question: 286
- 47 Research Associate Beneficiary Survey, sample size for this question: 296, question asked: How would you describe the nature of these new connections?
- 48 Social Capital is one of six capitals central to determining local growth and notes the strong correlation between low levels of social capital and high levels of deprivation. Source: Levelling Up the United Kingdom, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Feb 2022.
- 49 Research Associate Beneficiary Survey, sample Size for this question: 357, rating on 1-5 likert scale, rating of 4 and 5 counted as high.
- 50 Source: Social Enterprise UK (2022) The State of Social Enterprise (Available [here](#))
- 51 This figure is based on an extrapolation on the mean number of paid employees (headcount) for programme fellows who completed the Endline Survey (mean number of paid employees = 2.7 (n=587), multiplied by total number of programme ventures, 1,217).
- 52 Source: Endline Survey, question asked 'How much would you estimate you have spent in the local economy (i.e. with local business rather than national/international or big brand products and services) in the last 12 months?', sample size: 319
- 53 Research conducted and produced by Visa, the Centre for Economic and Business Research (Cebr) and Opinium Research in 2020 found that of every £10 spent with independently owned local businesses surveyed £3.80 was retained in the local area. The research can be accessed [here](#)
- 54 Data from Breadwinners [website](#)
- 55 Research Associate Beneficiary Survey, Sample Size for this question: 101, Question asked: How would you rate the positive impact Breadwinners has had on your community (e.g family/friends)?

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