

Theme: Community & Place

Location: Rotherham

Project: Open Arms

Rotherham's cost-of-living support project, delivered by Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), intervened to offer immediate help to the most in-need residents whilst also knowing that long-term solutions were required. To do this, VAR connected engagement activities with holistic, specialist support to prevent people from returning to crisis. The legacy of connecting smaller groups with specialist providers will continue to bring benefit. The building of community infrastructure in under-served areas enabled the project to reach the people who needed it most and has broader benefits, as these areas tend to be the highest priority for support on a range of issues. 75 drop-in sessions were delivered in 2023 and 441 people attended.

Case Study

The client came along first thing one Tuesday morning in Wath. She was very nervous and visibly anxious about being there. We offered her refreshments and spent some time chatting and getting to know her. It was very clear that she was living with mental health and was also very lonely and in need of support. We spoke about many things including her mobile phone contract issues and offered advice where we could. It was apparent that she didn't have the mental retention ability, so we had to take small steps. We referred her to Citizens Advice Rotherham and District (CARD) who were able to take up her case and they are in the process of working through her debt issues. Sarah often comes back to the library to see CARD and to have a drink and a chat.

We must never underestimate the time we give to listen and understand, Sarah said "you don't understand how insanely important it is to me that you took time to get to know me, no pressure, no judgement, and such lovely company. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Theme: Supporting Local Business

Location: Barnsley

Project: Goldthorpe's New Market

A new market, bringing hope of a bright future to Goldthorpe in South Yorkshire opened in October 2023. Taking place every Thursday, from 9am to 3pm, the market has been established following a feasibility study funded during year one of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding. The new market currently has ten regular traders signed up, with more to come, offering a wide range of general retail goods including baked goods, greeting cards, household goods and fresh food.

Case Study

One market trader said: "You have no idea how much this means to me: being part of something like this really is a new level. It will bring back a lot of memories from when I was a child and visiting the old market with my late grandma. Being able to trade on the new Goldthorpe Market is the start of something amazing for me and I'm proud to be able to build my business further with this opportunity."

Theme: Supporting Local Business

Location: Barnsley

Project: Regional Productivity and Digitisation Grant

Perfa, a Barnsley based blind manufacturer, has been awarded a grant of £12,332.39 from the UKSPF Business Productivity Grant to install a temperature-controlled chamber in its premises.

The company, based in Barugh Green, Barnsley has been facing challenges due to the extreme temperatures in the warehouse, which range from freezing cold in the winter to scorching hot in the summer – conditions which have been affecting the well-being of the staff and the quality of the fabrics.

Thanks to the Business Productivity & Digitisation grant, Perfa has seen many benefits to the newly installed chamber.

The grant provides 50% contribution for projects up to £24,999 for South Yorkshire SMEs to improve their productivity and digital innovation through the provision of capital or revenue grant, and to identify and address their business productivity challenges.

Piotr Lugowski, Managing Director of Perfa, said: “We are delighted to have received the grant, which has enabled us to install the temperature-controlled chamber in our warehouse. This project will not only improve the working conditions for our staff, but also the quality of our products and the efficiency of our operations. We are confident that this will lead to more growth and more jobs for our company and our community.”

Theme: Supporting Local Business (Rural SPF)

Location: Doncaster

Project: Capital investment for a visitor attraction

Doncaster-based Bawtry Paintball & Laser Fields is the biggest paintball and outdoor activity centre in the UK.

The project

The current laser tag guns were approx. 10 years old and virtually impossible to obtain spare parts and the software was no longer supported by manufacturers, which meant the working units were slowly shrinking, therefore reducing the capacity to accommodate larger groups. During a six-month period a total of 212 hours was spent on repairs and maintenance of laser tag equipment at a cost of £2862, hence the need for an upgrade. With new laser guns, there would be no repairs anticipated for several years, therefore saving in excess of £5000 per year to the business.

The solution

Thanks to the grant from The Rural England Prosperity Fund - a capital grant that supports activities that specifically address some of the challenges faced by our local rural businesses – it has enabled the replacement of the current fleet of laser tag equipment, with the latest CLG Cyclone system. The new laser tag guns also incorporate red dot sights and give real-time player feedback, which creates a much more immersive experience.

A £12,500 Grant was awarded to replace the old units in order to minimise time spent on maintenance and repair and increase productivity by freeing up time for the staff to spend on other tasks that often got neglected.

The new units reach full charge in just 3 hours and run on a single charge for 14 hours – 4 times faster charging and twice as long running time, thus resulting in less power consumption.

Bawtry Paintball & Laser Fields employ both full and part time staff from the local rural area, and new equipment meant that they could increase the sessions per day, resulting in more visitors and greater job security.

At least one full time job was at risk if the grant had not been awarded. During the summer months (the busiest period) there was many occasions where groups of participants had to be capped due to the number of available laser tag guns. Now with a full range of 50 laser guns, this will generate additional participants and the need for additional staff.

It is envisaged that visitor numbers can now increase capacity to approx. 1400 participants each year resulting in additional turnover of around £17500.

Theme: Community & Place

Location: Doncaster

Project: Citizens Advice Bureau – cost-of-living support

Issue

Faulty Smart Meter creating Huge bill

The client is a 41-year-old female living with her partner and two children; one is disabled. Client was with Bulb Energy until December 2022 when the client's account was migrated to a new company, at the time of this the client owed no money on either Gas or Electric accounts.

The client's gas meter remained working; however, the electric meter reset itself to zero and the client contacted the provider who said they would investigate the matter. This was resolved by rebooting the system, and the client's meter reading was correctly restored.

At the end of June 2023, the client received a bill for £7,698.58. The client contacted them, and they were insistent that the bill was correct and that this sudden increase was due to recalculation of estimated bills. In July, the client received a further bill totalling £7,705.13 even though the client continued to make monthly payments of £200 by direct debit. The client again contacted them and again they stated that this was correct and that the smart meter was sending them accurate information.

Advice

CAB contacted the energy company and went through the smart meter readings and related those to payments made by the client; January 2023 client was in credit of £310, there was no reading available for February, but the client's direct debit payment did show up. In March, the client was in credit £235.36. Then in April, the client owed £7,698.58, there was no reading available for May. In June, the client owed £7,705,13.

It became clear that there was an error, it was quickly identified that in April an extra digit had been added by the smart meter when it sent the reading, the meter "glitched" in May giving no reading at all and the June reading still had the extra digit.

The meter readings were then reset based on monthly readings with the correct digits.

Outcome

- Debt of £7,705,13 Removed from client's account
- New smart meter installed
- Clients account in credit of £361.92

The client was extremely happy and relieved, and also stated that without Citizens Advice this would never have got sorted.

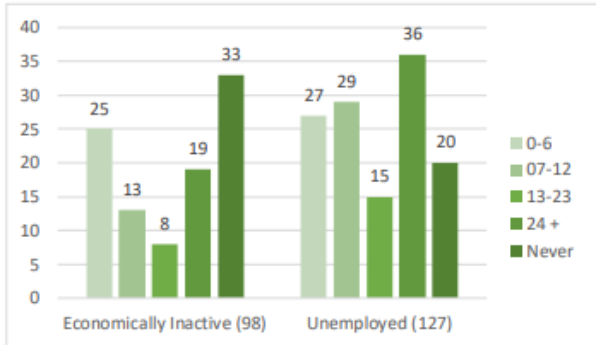
Theme: People & Skills

Location: South Yorkshire

Skills & Employability South Yorkshire (SESY) – Strand 1 Insights (Jan 2024)

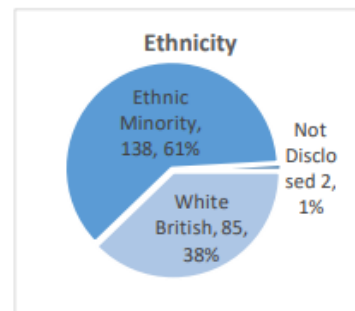
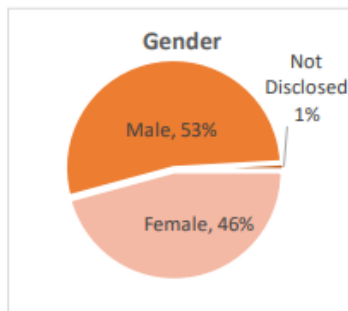
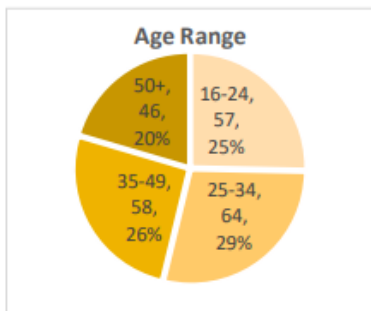
South Yorkshire-wide delivery on SESY ‘Ambition’ (Strand 1) commenced in January 2024, with Sheffield starting a month earlier in December 2023. By the end of January, **225** individuals had enrolled on-programme, with a further **82** in the pipeline and new registrations occurring daily. The enrolment profile for the end of Q4 2023-24 is **396** participants; **56.8%** has been achieved with just over a third of the Year 2 contract elapsed.

Labour Market Status of participants (by number of months out-of work)



- 53 (24%) of participants enrolled to date have never worked before
- Almost half (48%) have been out-of-work for more than two years, or never worked
- 44% were economically inactive at the point of registration, with 56% socially excluded unemployed
- 84% are ‘new’ participants, not previously engaged, with 16% having received ESF support pre-UKSPF
- More than 700 claimable cumulative outputs are in progress from the 225 enrolled participants.

Characteristics of participants enrolled



- Providers have successfully engaged with residents across all age groups, with a relatively even distribution across the 16-24 (25%), 25-34 (29%), 35-49 (26%) and 50+ (20%).
- Three-in-five (61%) participants are from an ethnic minority background, including those receiving support on commissioned projects targeted at under-served communities (e.g. in Sheffield, Somali men and Pakistani women).

Distribution of participants, by extent of multiple deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019)

- 40% of participants live in a 10% most deprived postcode area (IMD1) – a higher proportion than any other decile.
- 62.7% live in the 20% most deprived postcodes (IMD1 & IMD2), compared to 1.7% in the 20% least deprived.
- 74.7% live in postcodes in the 30% most deprived postcodes, compared to 2.1% in the 30% least deprived.
- This demonstrates effective targeting of residents living in underprivileged areas – those more likely to face social and/or economic barriers to the labour market.

