



Funded by
UK Government



Sunderland City Council – UK Shared Prosperity Fund
Final Evaluation Report
Project Case Studies

April 2025

Centrifuge Consulting,
The Core
Newcastle Helix
Bath Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 5TF

e: admin@centrifuge.coop

w: www.centrifuge.coop

Project Case Studies

Below is a selection of project level case studies to give an insight into some of the activities funded and delivered through the Sunderland UKSPF programme.

Communities and Place

Community Digital Health Hub				
Overview	This project embeds and develops social prescribing services within communities across Sunderland and further develop both the physical environment, digital accessibility, devices and activities and support programmes on offer within those 'Social Prescribing Hubs'. The project strengthens and embeds the social prescribing model into the built environment, across two stages: digital infrastructure; and activities.			
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	Funding			
	UKSPF Capital	UKSPF Revenue	Public Revenue Match	Total
	£691,129.08	£641,353.92	£458,837.24	£1,791,320.24
	Outputs include: 11,309 people reached; 1,526 attending training sessions; 6,614 households accessing support; 39 organisations receiving grants; 33 amenities created or improved. Outcomes include: 29 premises with improved digital connectivity; 295 volunteering opportunities created.			
Evaluation Learning	Building on learning to date and adapting the programme of activities from feedback from residents and their 'lived experiences', as well as the learning from the Better Mental Health Programme and the emerging Community Mental Health Transformation Programme the project enabled investment in the digital infrastructure and facilities in the City's community buildings. <i>'Involved setting up digital hubs in our communities. So that was improving some of the Wi-Fi, the digital infrastructure in our local community organisations to make sure that people could come into those areas and access digitally if they didn't have their own means to do so. We also recognise the fact that people might need support in that... We know that not everything that affects health happens physically. A lot of it is around factors such as unemployment, debt and social isolation can have a big impact on people's health. And NHS England found that 1 in 5 doctors' appointments were for non-medical reasons and social reasons.'</i>			

	<p>There was good evidence of communication between the various partners involved with regular meetings of steering group, stakeholder group and provider meetings. Project management appeared flexible and responsive and there was some scope for evolution of the evaluation plan in real time to reflect the complexity of the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting across the feedback was the sense of social value provided by the programme which was seen at both an individual and community level with the many and varied interventions working to enhance individual physical and mental health, act as rooted community centres of knowledge and improve peer relationships and community cohesiveness. • Overall, the need to support early intervention and prevention services at a community level was demonstrated. The UKSPF funding has had a positive impact on service users. Benefits are clear from both a health and social perspective and through increased digital inclusion. Benefits identified included feeling less social isolation, which is linked to improved mental health and can help to reduce the number of people accessing health services. This is also related to improved long-term physical and mental health outcomes for the user, suggesting that the benefits of the community offer could extend further than the initial engagement in the activities on offer. <p><i>'Users of the community offer reported feeling an improved quality of life, which could again reduce the reliance on more formal support, potentially further reducing the burden on health and social care services. Those using the digital hubs reported more confidence with IT and were better able to utilise online shopping and banking, apply for benefits and helping to get users into work. Digital hubs are providing access to the internet and technology for those who are less affluent.'</i></p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>The UKSPF funding of the community and digital hubs offer has impacted the lives of more than 10,000 Sunderland residents across more than 8,000 households. The ages of those involved has been from under 18s to a 90 year old and it has involved residents from a range of backgrounds.</p> <p><i>'It has particularly targeted those from the most deprived areas of the city (IMD decile 1 and 2) and has included the unemployed, the elderly, the disabled and those who are digitally excluded due to financial pressures... There have been approximately 500 hours per month of voluntary work delivered in Sunderland to support digital inclusion, through the Tech Mates programme which involved 116 new volunteers. At a rate of £12 per hour the estimated value of this is £72,000.'</i></p> <p>95% of users surveyed stated that they had achieved or made steps towards the goal they had when they set out to participate. Additional benefits provided by the digital hubs include access to education and training and many reported using them to seek employment opportunities.</p>

The Pavilion																							
Overview	<p>A project led by Pallion Action Group (PAG). The main objective of the project was to refurbish and re-open the derelict Pavilion for the purpose of an accessible community hub for residents, offering a wide range of activities for people of all ages and abilities, and addressing anti-social behaviour. The funding also supported a project worker.</p> <p><i>'The Pavilion has gone from strength to strength. It has attracted additional funding for activities for young people for dance, drama, and environmental work.'</i></p>																						
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="8">Funding</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>UKSPF Capital</td> <td>£217,000.00</td> <td>UKSPF Revenue</td> <td>£26,106</td> <td>Public Capital Match</td> <td>£60,000.00</td> <td>Total</td> <td>£303,106</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Outputs include: 103 people attending training sessions; 10 organisations receiving non-financial support Outcomes include: 5 jobs created; improved perceptions of safety; increased footfall of 1,242; decrease in reported crimes.</p>							Funding								UKSPF Capital	£217,000.00	UKSPF Revenue	£26,106	Public Capital Match	£60,000.00	Total	£303,106
Funding																							
UKSPF Capital	£217,000.00	UKSPF Revenue	£26,106	Public Capital Match	£60,000.00	Total	£303,106																
Evaluation Learning	<p><i>'The initial consensus from residents and local dog walkers was that "you are wasting your time" "the kids will ruin it before its even finished", These sentiments were echoed for months by the vast majority of adults. The young people were abusive to staff and bragged about the damage they had done to the building...it was a long process to gain trust from the young people. '</i></p> <p><i>'While the (development) was happening outreach work was being undertaken by staff from PAG to engage with residents and young people. '</i></p> <p>The approach included the implementation of a zero tolerance policy, working with Sunderland City Council Anti Social Behaviour Team and the Neighbourhood Police Team to encourage positive behaviours.</p> <p>One approach was to organise a corporate volunteering event to improve the outside space. The event concentrated on the exterior of the building and greenspace attached.</p> <p>It is estimated that over £30,000 worth of work was completed over two days with volunteers from: Gentoo; Sunderland City Council; Re-Gen; National Lottery; Wise Group; ATW Landscape; Beacon of Light; Northumbria Police; Tyne and Wear Fire Service; and Parker Trust.</p>																						

<p>Impact</p>	<p><i>'Activities have included: a February half term holiday club, Psychic night which residents asked for, a live theatre show from Cultural Start and we have obtained a music licence for future events. We have advertised and successfully recruited a new manager for the Pavilion, and we are continuing to grow our offer of projects and services for the wider community.'</i></p> <p><i>'We have also been successful in renting out space one day a week for Football practice for a girls' team. ParkPlay has continued to grow on a Saturday, and we have introduced free football sessions on a Sunday which now means that the building is open 7 days a week for different activities for residents. There are also one-off community events such as a VE Day celebration on 8th May 2025. '</i></p> <p>Other activities include: contract café; holiday clubs; bereavement groups; Halloween party; Park Play; football sessions; Healthwatch</p> <p>Additional funding that has subsequently been attracted includes: £20,000 from Ballinger Charitable Trust; National Lottery £500,000 (5yrs running costs, including a manager post).</p> <p><i>'The initial target was anti-social behaviour by young people – now includes everyone... (also) introducing new group of people from 'up the road' - now a highly sought after venue.'</i></p> <p><i>'145 young people regularly attended over summer holiday – 30-35 a day – 500 local people at opening day alone.'</i></p> <p>There has been an 80% reduction in anti-social behaviour through the activities and engagement around the building.</p>
----------------------	---

St Georges Church						
Overview	<p>This comprised the construction of a new annexe and entrance onto the church building to enable a permanent community cafe (<i>'Table Café'</i>) and provide a kitchen, toilets and an accessible, flexible space to better enable community and church activities to take place. This also included a new entrance and office so that community activities can continue uninterrupted when the church is needed for other uses. The annexe aligns with the church's broader mission to <i>be 'in the heart of the community, with the community at its heart.'</i></p> <p><i>'I think every community needs somewhere to have a focal point. And if you could have all your frontline services in one location, it enables people to come in and find a safe place, a welcoming place, an inclusive place. We work with the local food bank, (and) try to support people in need. We also work with the NHS.'</i></p>					
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	Funding					
	UKSPF Capital	UKSPF Revenue	Public Capital Match	Private Capital Match	Private Revenue Match	Total
	£117,133.00	£22,774.25	£254,999.00	£630,965.86	£2,211.50	£1,028,083.61
	<p>Outputs include: 272 volunteering opportunities; 135 local events supported; and 420m2 of public realm improved Outcomes include: 1 FTE job created; 0.6 job safeguarded; increased footfall of 2,705</p>					
Evaluation Learning	<p>Lessons included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phasing: The requirement to phase the project due to budget constraints, requiring flexible planning and prioritisation; • Infrastructure: Delays related to power supply and building control approvals emphasised the need for proactive management of regulatory and infrastructure requirements; • Professional team challenges: appointing the right team is essential. Being willing to cut someone early one when they do not work out is a lesson for the future as the project was let down by initial appointments; • Financial Management: The project was initially impacted by unexpected cost overruns which the initial professional team did not raise in a timely manner, emphasising the need for better communication. • Contractor: the main contractor did a job, let down by the poorly chosen subcontractor. When it was obvious they could not do the job action was required sooner to change them. <p><i>'There were times where we thought we'd have to pull the plug. But again, you know, the UKSPF funding really helped us move and deliver this project, and the community appreciate it.'</i></p>					

Impact	<p><i>'Building is just going to enable 50 years of work here - changing people's lives.'</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Impact: The café has become a point of connection for people of all ages, providing space for conversation, belonging, and even new opportunities to connect with other groups or church activities.• Strong Volunteer Culture: The Table is powered by a team of committed volunteers whose hospitality is central to its warmth and effectiveness.• Effective Leadership: After a difficult start with the first café manager, an interim manager provided stability and direction. The recent appointment of the former head baker at Alnwick Castle has significantly elevated the café's quality and reputation.• Footfall: Serving 700+ customers per month is a clear indicator of relevance, reach, and resonance within the community. <p><i>'It's been tortuous at times. It's been a privilege. It's been very hard work. And it's not finished yet.'</i></p>
---------------	---

Supporting Local Business

Business Growth Fund ¹					
Overview	A capital grant scheme to help improve and drive business growth and job creation. It was delivered by UMi and funded as a Sunderland focussed part of a wider Growth Fund partnership between Sunderland, the former North Tyne Combined Authority and Gateshead.				
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	c.£1.085m of UKSPF grant funding				
	Indicator		Target	Actual	
	Outputs	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support		22	22
		Number of businesses receiving grants		14	13
	Outcomes	Jobs created as a result of support		114	0 ²
Jobs safeguarded as a result of support		18	0 ³		
Evaluation Learning	<p><i>'It was an innovative, approach from three local authorities being [the former] North of Tyne Combined Authority, Gateshead and Sunderland City Council. Sunderland City Council worked in a partnership approach with the other local authorities to ensure, a regional wide growth fund each with their own capital entitlement to support businesses in their local authorities. But it gave greater efficiencies, across the piece, and it made more sense than having three localised small pots of funding.'</i></p> <p><i>'By working with us as a partner and the three local authorities, we could bring best practice to the funds, and ensure that maximum efficiencies were met...meant that we could distribute more money than we could have done otherwise. But it also really increased the experience for the clients. We cut away, unnecessary bureaucracy, and we tried to deliver this project as efficiently as possible.'</i></p> <p><i>'Having funds like the Business Growth Fund, allows companies to go that much further than they would have done on their own. It accelerates employment in the area and it accelerates the economy...'We've been able to support a much wider range of businesses and change the scheme guidance and rules accordingly. The areas we've been working in by working with Sunderland City Council and their internal teams, we've made sure that we can deliver what Sunderland actually needed.'</i></p>				

¹ All quotes are from programme evaluation team interviews with project representatives and a beneficiary.

² While zero were recorded by project end 6-month monitoring post March-2025 agreed as part of procurement to monitor & report jobs following support.

³ As above.

Impact

'We've helped projects that wouldn't have happened without this funding. We target businesses, and support businesses who have an idea of a growth plan and are ready to take the next step in their journey, but unfortunately, due to finances or the risk that's associated to that project, they just can't do it alone.'

Beneficiary example: *'We were moving two factories into a single site in Sunderland, which needed quite a lot of love and needed a big refurb...it had been left empty for eight years. So, there was quite a lot of damage to the building, but the main thing was we needed a whole new roof.'*

'So, we had a chat with Dave and Anita from UMi who spoke to us about funding options and with their help we were able to go down the route of a whole new roof which has transformed the factory, and which was key. We could do it before we moved in...there was literally no halt in manufacturing, which is been perfect, to be honest...'

'The funding from the Business Growth Fund, was about 20% of the overall project and it was fundamental in being able to do what we needed to do... getting the site up and running ready for manufacturing.'

Wear Together					
Overview	<p>Social enterprise growth and development project which provided a range of support through one-to-one mentoring, workshops, networking and grant funding for start-ups and established social enterprise. This included support develop business growth or innovation plans to explore the development of new products and services, enter new markets or secure funding.</p> <p><i>'The goal of the project was to continue to grow and develop the social economy across Sunderland.'</i></p>				
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	£312,170 UKPSF grant funding				
	Indicator		Target	Actual	
	Outputs	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support		50	51
		Number of businesses receiving grants		40	32
		Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready		50	51
		Number of people attending training sessions		51	56
	Outcomes	Jobs created as a result of support		14	4
No. of new enterprises created		20	30		
Evaluation Learning	<p>Key learning identified within the project evaluation report⁴ included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'One to one support is key' • 'Grant support helped to get new things going' • 'Workshops were helpful' • Social enterprises rated the networking opportunities very highly. 				

⁴ NE BIC (2025) Wear Together Final Evaluation

Impact

'General feedback's been fantastic, and everybody's been really happy with the support that we've delivered. We've managed to grow, a number of businesses and allow them to have long term sustainability goals and continue to deliver those. We've also helped to start up a number of businesses. So, across the programme there's been multiple businesses that have registered, six co-ops and other entities.'

'Projects like this are really, really important for a city like Sunderland, where we know we have a number of different challenges on a number of different levels. These projects allow the organisations really at the root of the problem to delve in and speak to the people who really need that help and support. And it's fantastic to see some of the results that we've seen so far.'

Beneficiary example – *'So going through the Wear Together project's been great for us...historically we would really concentrate on larger grants, but we focus a lot on sustainable business through contracts, and the revenue comes in, but we always need that little bit of extra help. Especially if we're trying to grow or pilot new things... enabled us to pilot some new, workshop opportunities...testing new things, trying to come up with new frameworks for sessions and workshops and short courses, etc. based on what our community's interest and the individuals we target want and tell us that they want. We don't like to tell our beneficiaries what they want. We like to ask them and work with them and do co-production and ensure that this funding has allowed us to explore that and come up with some great outputs at the end of it'*

'The Wear Together grant helped us to pilot some new activities, which we could then almost, act as a proof of concept to then use that in a more sustainable way going forward for either other funding pots or contractual, opportunities. And it's really enabled us to do that...not just the actual pounds and pence of the grant, but a little bit of business support...there's some great advisors there...also open us up to new networks and just new opportunities because it's an ever-changing landscape.'

BREEZ						
Overview	Grant scheme providing up to 50% of the costs of energy efficiency measures to support Sunderland based enterprises and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to reduce their carbon emissions and energy costs.					
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	£600,000 of UKSPF grant funding					
	Indicator			Target	Actual	
	Outputs	Amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure completed			1	1
		Number of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed			67	67
		Number of enterprises receiving grants			67	67
		Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support			122	105
		Number of decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support			122	85
Outcomes	Estimated Carbon dioxide equivalent reductions as a result of support			499.82	333.00	
Evaluation Learning⁵	<p>Key learning identified by the project level⁶ evaluation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project provided a tangible impact for supported enterprises and organisations over a determined period of time with payback criteria ensuring that this was the case for each grant. • The project struck the right balance between funding a large number of small-scale interventions/installations across multiple beneficiaries and a small number of larger scale energy generation focussed interventions/installations across a small number of interventions. • Partnering with Gentoo to utilise their Empower Sunderland Local Community Fund as match funding for VCSE organisations was critical to enabling a number of these projects to go forward. • SCC have built a strong track record in this field. Following what is effectively 5 years of delivery (through this and the predecessor project) BREEZ is arguably now a recognised brand among these beneficiary groups and its delivery through the local authority is a core strength with the project benefitting from the Council’s extensive networks and service touchpoints with target beneficiaries. • The lessons above demonstrate how the project has benefitted from local delivery. Such localism has also positively impacted on the local business community as suppliers and installers of the carbon reduction measures funded through the project. 					
Impact	The project level evaluation demonstrated a positive impact. Importantly all of those receiving a grant will benefit financially with the conditions of the project meaning that all investments have a payback period (the time it takes for full costs of the installation to be paid back in recouped in savings on energy costs) of seven years or less. The evaluation also demonstrates that the project successfully:					

- Enabled businesses and VCSE organisations to invest in reducing their energy use and carbon emissions;
- Enhanced supported businesses and organisations understanding of how they can reduce their energy use;
- Initiated behaviour change and acted as a catalyst for some of those supported businesses and organisations to take further measures to reduce their carbon footprint and investing more or planning to invest more in such measures in the future.

The funded projects are also forecast to generate a significant amount of carbon savings with data provided to the evaluation team suggesting the funded measures will generate actual carbon savings per year of 333 tonnes of Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)⁷. There will also be energy cost savings in each project. This data is not currently available, but it is estimated that, once all projects are completed, this will be in the region of **£700,000**.

In addition, the evaluation highlights employment benefits through the installation and maintenance process. *'The capital works of £1.13m are estimated to support 80 weeks' work, or 1.5 annual jobs (0.15 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs⁸), or 0.32 after multiplier effects⁹). The median weekly wage in Sunderland is £552.80¹⁰, suggesting the generation of local wage income of £44,224 over the project period, the equivalent of £60,273 after multiplier effects.'*

Beneficiary example – *'Our energy bills will be reduced by over £12,000 (net) a year. The system will pay for itself in 3 years. It will reduce our carbon footprint by over 8 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) each year... It's still early days, but yes, the team are absolutely more aware of where we can use our energy wisely.... Having got the much-improved heating system that we needed, we are keen to build on this with other energy efficiency and low carbon technologies...'*

⁵ Identified within the project level evaluation

⁶ Centrifuge Consulting (2025) Business Energy Efficiency and Renewables Sunderland: Final Evaluation

⁷ Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) covers a wide range of greenhouse gases (GHG) that have an impact on climate change resulting from the specific UKSPF intervention. Decrease in tonnes of CO₂e should be measured using BEIS Conversion Factors for calculating resulting primary energy savings. The estimate is based on the amount of CO₂e saved in a given year, i.e., a projection of estimated savings of either one year following project completion or the calendar year after project completion through a methodology agreed by project appraisers.

⁸ On the basis that an FTE is equivalent to 10 years' work.

⁹ **Indirect** jobs are those created in the supply chain. Employment created by the additional personal spending by both direct and indirect workers are **induced** jobs.

¹⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofworkbylocalauthorityshetable7>

Beneficiary example – *'We used the funding for the hot water system, replacing inefficient, non-condensing water heaters with to a new kind of high-tech condensing water boilers... The reason behind us choosing to do that was the increase in energy prices that we've seen in the last 4 to 5 years. We saw at one point an increase of our per unit rate by 300%... The funding helped us do work now rather than waiting further down the line where we would have had the excess budget to do it. It gave us the motivation there to spend the money on the project, as this might have been a project that we looked at 2 or 3 years down the line. By having the funding there, it promotes us to do that. By doing it now, we get the cost savings immediately. We're pumping money into the local economy. We used our local contractors to do the work, based in Sunderland... We've only been open running the new system for about two months now, but just from replacing the two water heaters we've seen around about a 25% drop in our gas consumption. Which is huge for us. You know, we spend upwards of £2,000 to £3,000 pounds a month alone on gas.'*

People and Skills

Relational Mentoring ¹¹				
Overview	The Relational Mentoring program supported economically inactive residents with multiple barriers to help them move into or towards employment, training or volunteering. The project was designed to offer holistic support tailored to the customer's needs with the project assessing and providing support across 15 different areas of need. Customers were matched with an experienced mentor and provided access to the support they needed to progress.			
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	c.£1.25m of UKSPF grant funding			
	Indicator	Target	Actual	
Outputs	Number of people supported to engage in life skills	477	273	
	Number of people supported onto a course through provision of financial support	68	125	
	Number of people supported to participate in education	68	176	
	Number of volunteering opportunities supported	272	28	
	Number of people taking part in work experience programmes	272	28	
	Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support	409	176	
	No. of people receiving support to gain employment	341	372	
	No. of socially excluded people accessing support	511	752	
	Outcomes	Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support	272	590
		Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF	511	174
		Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support	409	283
		Number of people in supported employment	102	38
		Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	341	263

¹¹ All quotes are from programme evaluation team interviews with project representatives and a beneficiary.

	Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services	409	576
	Number of people engaged in job-searching following support	613	160
	Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support	170	43
	Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months	153	33
	Number of people in education/training following support	102	175
	Number of people with basic skills following support	333	163
	Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	545	202
	Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support	409	262
	Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	172	278
	Number of people with proficiency in pre-employment and interpersonal skills	545	246
	Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months	153	33
	Number of people familiarised with employers' expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace	409	174
	<p>In terms of project performance the project level evaluation¹² states that the <i>'main reasons why output numbers were below target in respect of a number of indicators appear to be: the loss of four months of delivery time due to a delayed start; the loss of delivery staff towards the end of the programme period; the skewing of demand for support towards individuals with especially complex needs; and possible under-reporting of outputs by at least one of the delivery partners.'</i></p>		
Evaluation Learning	<p><i>'Projects like this are really important because a lot of the customers that come to us, it feels like they've fallen through the gaps in provision that are out there that nobody else has picked up. These are people who are economically inactive with multiple barriers and to give them the opportunity to address these barriers with professionals. So, for example, with the counselling, with Citizens Advice, with our functional skills tutors, and to be able to access this support quickly and effectively and help them move on with their journeys is really, really important.'</i></p> <p>Key learning highlighted within the project level evaluation report, includes:</p>		

¹² ERS (2025) Evaluation of Sunderland Relational Mentoring UKSPF Project and Related NLCF Projects

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project <i>'filled gaps in provision and met a real need amongst local people. Delivery was effective, partnership working largely worked well, and it was evident that there was plenty of demand for support.'</i> • <i>'Relatively high representation from 16–19-year-olds which appears to be linked to the absence of other support for this age group'</i> • <i>'Majority of the outcomes relate to motivation, confidence building and wellbeing.'</i> • <i>'Although there were relatively few jobs outcomes, this was reflective of a far higher proportion of participants than was anticipated presenting with multiple and complex barriers to employment. As such, they were far too far away from the employment market to realistically be capable of getting a job within the project timeframe.'</i>
Impact	<p>Beneficiary example – <i>'I got involved in this project through the GP Alliance referral from my GP and they referred me to social prescribers, and from there I was allocated a mentor [from the Relational Mentoring project]. I got involved because I was going through a little bit of a tough time. Had problems with addiction and other things...the support was absolutely amazing, instead of waiting 78 months on the NHS, I had a referral for ten weeks therapy within seven days [of signing up to the project].'</i></p> <p><i>'Working with them [the project] has been really simple, quite smooth, no complications or lengthy forms or anything to fill in. And once, you know, you got allocated a mentor it opens up opportunities...For me, the counselling was the big thing. I did some training courses, which tapped into skills that I did in the past; so team management, also did a health and safety qualification and also things like Citizens Advice support to help with filling in forms for like the DWP and that sort of thing...health and wellbeing side of it, which really, really helped with my mental health...Encouraged me to be a bit more social because isolation through addiction and the problems I had with my mental health was quite a big thing. But obviously, [my mentor] encouraged me to go out and meet up for coffee to do our meetings...helped with my confidence and obviously my anxiety by being on the health and wellbeing programme. Now looking after myself and a little bit of self-care and given time for myself to help with my health...The training courses that I've been on have helped pave the way for me to have the confidence... vision to know, where I can be in the future when I'm, you know, I'm feeling a lot better.'</i></p>

Training for Growth					
Overview	Developed in response to priorities highlighted in the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan, Training for Growth is a pilot project which provided funding to support technical level 3 apprenticeships within advance manufacturing SMEs in Sunderland.				
Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes	c.£142,000 of grant funding				
	Indicator			Target	Actual
	Outputs	Number of people receiving support to gain a vocational licence		18	17
		Number of enterprises receiving grants		10	10
	Outcomes	Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support		18	17
		Number of people in education/training following support		18	17
Number of economically active individuals engaged in mainstream skills education and training		4	17		
Evaluation Learning	<p><i>'Within two weeks of the launch, we had ten SMEs committed to the project that provided opportunities for 17 young people coming into employment to access level three apprenticeships, which really will give them a fantastic platform to build their careers as they move forward. I do believe training for growth, although it was a pilot, has the opportunity to be scaled.'</i></p> <p><i>'Feedback we've had from SMEs has been fantastic. They've got some great examples of SMEs who've taken on apprentices for the first time. And these apprentices have transformed their business. They've come in typically younger than the average age of employees across the businesses, and they've added new life into the business as well... from an apprentice perspective as well, we've had some really good feedback that it's great, they've gone into business, they've been able to learn and at the same time, and they see themselves really as having a great foothold within a business. And they've now got a fantastic career opportunity as they move forward.'</i></p>				
Impact	<p>Identified a clear demand for this support among engineering SMEs with the project level evaluation demonstrating positive impacts for both employers and apprentices.</p> <p>Beneficiary example – From the employer's perspective - <i>'We've got a very good, close working relationship with the Northeast Automotive Association, absolutely brilliant people and incredibly passionate about what they do... fantastic at bringing together different stakeholders within that automotive cluster...have been enormously, enormously supportive. So, they recommended that we took on an apprentice in order to fast track what we're doing.'</i></p> <p><i>'we followed their advice and it's really been an enormous benefit. And yeah, we want more, frankly... as a new business and pre pre-revenue, it's not easy to take on stuff as simple as that. And so, this little leg of it has been a complete game changer for us. It's</i></p>				

taken a little bit of pressure off us. It's enabled us to take on someone who fits our agenda perfectly and whilst he's helping us enormously, you know, I very much hope we're helping him as well.'

'programmes like this, incredibly important for small businesses like ourselves, because in order for us to achieve our ambitions... The process of taking on the first apprentice has been really seamless. You know, I've been spoon fed everything by Sunderland College and the Northeast Automotive Association together. They give me CV's, they've told me which forms to fill out and I've just followed the guidelines...without that help, it would have been an absolute nightmare.'

'He's really been thrown in at the deep end with us to be quite frank, you know, we're a small company with a lot of ambitions so we have to make use of all the resources we have, which is basically a few people...so he is pushed from pillar to post to doing all sorts of things...done a fantastic job.'

'Not only is he adding huge value, but I think it helps him to see how all, all pieces of the cog connect. No companies succeed with one silo of ability. It takes all sorts to come together to make it work. And so his exposure here hopefully has seen that there are multiple aspects, of the company.'

From the apprentice's perspective – *'I'm an engineering technician apprentice...I've been doing it for about six months or so now. And it's been going great...Allows me to get on the job experience while also learn at the same time and also just to get more practical skills and experience out of this than what I would otherwise get in a college... It is a brand new business so I'm at the core of it, I suppose you could say... from the get go, to be here from the beginning and to see it grow and work forwards and, really have a deeper understanding of all the, all the processes and everything that actually happens... having apprenticeships in place means that you can have people transition in the industry, rather than just being a wall there for ability and lack of skill. Which just makes applying for the jobs that bit harder because at the end of the day, you don't have the experience that you would have had otherwise by just getting qualifications.'*