

Interim Report

The Social Impact of the Enabling Natural Resources Wales Project by The Outdoor Partnership 'Opening Doors to the Outdoors Wales'



October 2022

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Introduction

The Outdoor Partnership has commissioned Social Value Cymru to evaluate their Enabling Natural Resources of Wales project, Opening Doors to the Outdoors, which commenced in April 2021 and will run until June 2023. A full Social Return on Investment evaluation report will be published in July/August 2023 analysing the activities of the project. The purpose of this interim report is to review the outputs and outcomes of the project up until September 2022 and provide recommendations for the remaining 9 months of the project.

The Outdoor Partnership

Established in 2005, The Outdoor Partnership (TOP) is a registered charity (Charity Number 1149280) and company limited by guarantee (Company Number 07705219), based in North Wales and delivers services across Wales and beyond to inspire people to become involved in outdoor activities through participation, education, volunteering, and employment programmes.

Their vision for the next ten years is:

‘Enhancing people’s lives through outdoor activity’.

- people’s physical and mental health and wellbeing,
- the economic return (including employment),
- the social value through outdoor activity,
- grassroots participation in activities such as walking, cycling, climbing, canoeing, paddleboarding, sailing, mountain biking, and many more.¹

¹ www.outdoorpartnership.co.uk

The Project – Opening Doors to the Outdoors

The Outdoor Partnership was successful in attaining a grant from the Welsh Government Rural Communities, Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 fund. The aim was to take the learning from their North Wales delivery model and extend to other parts of Wales and focusing on the regions developed by Sports Wales which are:

- Mid Wales – Ceredigion and Powys
- Gwent – Newport, Monmouthshire, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen
- Central South Wales – Cardiff, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan
- Swansea Bay – Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Pembrokeshire

By recruiting Development Officers in each area, the aim is to inspire more people to engage in outdoor activities in order to reduce social exclusion, tackle poverty, and improve health and well-being. The Development Officers would initially do some research and gap analysis of what was needed in the area, and then they could roll out some of their North Wales services as needed. These projects include:

- **Pathways to Employment** – This is aimed at people who are new to outdoor activities and who want to develop their personal and professional skills.
- **Inclusive Adventure** -An initiative to get better access for disabled people in Wales to be active in the outdoors.
- **This Girls Adventure** - An all Wales initiative to get more Women and Girls to participate in the outdoors for health, social and economic reasons.
- **Community Development Programme** – The aim is to inspire children, young people and adults to take up outdoor activities as a life-long pursuit. They do this by offering taster sessions and events in order to give people the right experiences.
- **Volunteering Programme** – Affordable training for volunteers within local clubs.

Social Prescribing

A key part of the development work in the area was to identify and develop social prescribing approaches and utilizing the outdoor activities would be key to this. There has been much development with the social prescribing agenda in Wales over the last few years and currently the Welsh Government are running a consultation on a national framework for social prescribing in Wales.

“The Welsh model of social prescribing moves away from a medicalised approach, instead proposing social prescribing where the sources of referral are cross-sectoral and not limited to healthcare/primary care.”²

The Outdoor Partnership has already developed a social prescribing model up in North West Wales through their Healthy and Active project. This model focuses more on the green prescribing where research shows that spending time in the natural environment can result in positive changes in people’s mental and physical wellbeing.

One of the initial tasks for the Development Officers was to identify gaps in provision and understand what was already happening in the areas in terms of social and green prescribing.

Social Value and Social Return on Investment (SROI)

By explicitly asking those stakeholders with the greatest experience of an activity, SROI can quantify and ultimately monetise impacts so they can be compared to the costs of producing them. This does not mean that SROI can generate an ‘actual’ value of changes, but by using monetisation of value from a range of sources it is able to provide an evaluation of projects that changes the way value is accounted for – one that takes into account economic, social and environmental impacts. Social Value UK (2014) states;

‘SROI seeks to include the values of people that are often excluded from markets in the same terms as used in markets, that is money, in order to give people a voice in resource allocation decisions’

² [Developing a national framework for social prescribing | GOV.WALES](#)

Based on eight principles, SROI explicitly uses the experiences of those that have, or will experience changes in their lives as the basis for evaluative or forecasted analysis respectively.

Taking a more holistic approach to impact measurement means that positive, negative, intended and unintended changes can be accounted for on a constructed Value Map – and ultimately when these are compared to the relative costs of their creation, the SROI is identified.

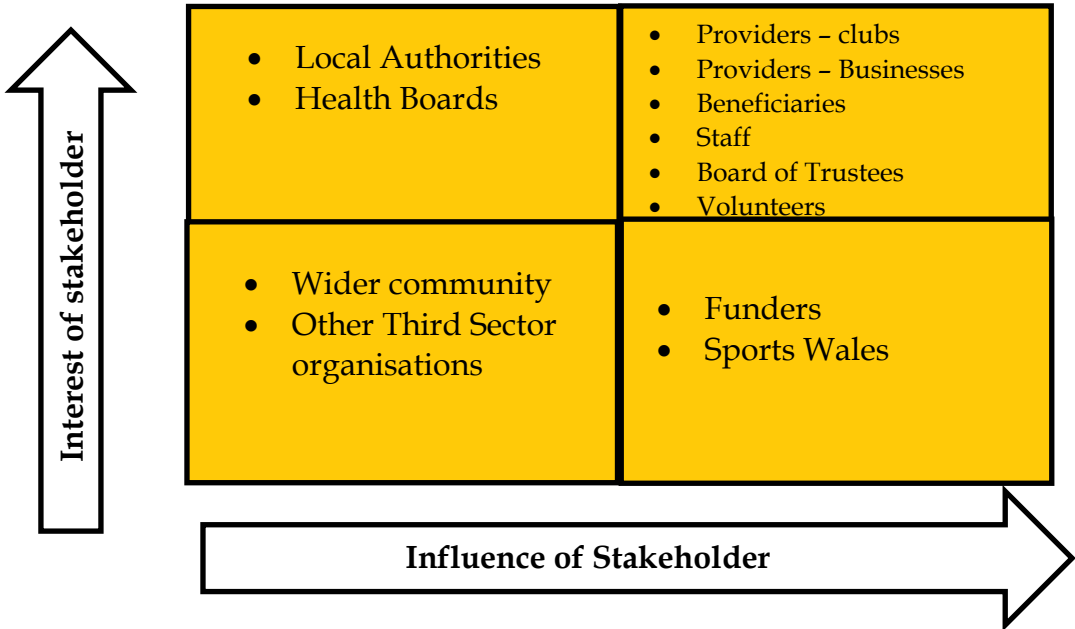
The principles of Social Value

1. **Involve stakeholders** – Inform what gets measured and how this is measured and valued in an account of social value by involving stakeholders.
2. **Understand what changes** – Articulate how change is created and evaluate this through evidence gathered, recognising positive and negative changes as well as those that are intended and unintended.
3. **Value the things that matter** – Making decisions about allocating resources between different options needs to recognise the values of stakeholders. Value refers to the relative importance of different outcomes. It is informed by stakeholders' preferences.
4. **Only include what is material** – Determine what information and evidence must be included in the accounts to give a true and fair picture, such that stakeholders can draw reasonable conclusions about impact.
5. **Do not over-claim** – Only claim the value that activities are responsible for creating.
6. **Be transparent** – Demonstrate the basis on which the analysis may be considered accurate and honest, and show that it will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders.
7. **Verify the result** – Ensure appropriate independent assurance.
8. **Be responsive** – Pursue optimum Social Value based on decision making that is timely and supported by appropriate accounting and reporting.

Mapping Stakeholders

Including stakeholders is a fundamental requirement of SROI. Without the involvement of key stakeholders, there is no validity in the results – only through active engagement can we understand actual or forecasted changes in their lives. Diagram 1 below shows all the stakeholders and how much interest and influence they have as stakeholders in the project.

Diagram 1



The focus initially has been on engaging with the staff, providers, beneficiaries and volunteers. Table 1 below shows how many people engaged with the process during this initial period. Over the next few months further conversations will happen with these groups but also consideration will be given to other stakeholders such as the health boards, especially in terms of potential cost reallocation.

Table 1 - Engaging with stakeholders

Stakeholder	Population to date	Method of engagement
The Outdoor Partnership	1	Meeting with the management team and with the Development Officers
Providers	73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 Phone interviews • 19 surveys completed
Volunteers	239	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Interviews • 1 focus group • 17 survey results
Beneficiaries	3.401	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Focus groups • 3 Interviews • 71 surveys completed

Key outputs

4 Full time employment created

24 Number of cooperations/partnerships supported

5 Networks established

170 Number of stakeholders engaged with

239 Number of volunteers trained

3,401 Number of beneficiaries supported

The results on outputs above demonstrates the project has already reached the targets that was set by the project and exceeded the target substantially in some areas. However, in order to understand the social value that's been created we need to understand more about the outcomes gained, the amount of change, the value and causality considerations.

The current total for beneficiaries includes everyone that's been supported over the initial 17 months of the project and includes those who have been on tasters as well as those who have had more in-depth support through programmes such as social prescribing and employment programmes. Although some breakdown is currently available for the figures in terms of which project they attended, **a clear breakdown would be beneficial over the next few months in order to understand the need but also to ensure no over-claiming of value.**

Mapping outcomes

Providers

Having engaged with the Development Officers and the Management team it was clear that there are two types of providers:

- Providers / Clubs – Those who run activities within the community and that the Development Officers are offering support such as advice and guidance, marketing, training etc. These are measured under Club Development and cooperations supported.
- Providers / Businesses - who are employed to run sessions. These providers are paid to run sessions.

Some will fall into both categories here where TOP employ them to run sessions as well as offer some support and guidance.

Following gathering some qualitative and quantitative data, a draft Theory of Change for providers was developed as seen in appendix 2.

The well-defined outcomes / Longer term outcomes for providers

Improved capacity

The providers that took part in the analysis explained how the Development Officers had offered them support and improved access to information about matters such as funding and training.

Many explained how the Development Officers had improved their access to funding and resources and as a result they had better access to equipment and / or able to offer more taster session in order to improve participation.

Many had benefited from more publicity as a club which had helped in order to recruit volunteers and get better participation. The project has paid for many volunteers to attend Coach Ed training courses which the clubs and volunteers explained took a lot of the pressure away in order to build capacity and develop skills within the clubs.

'TOP have acted like a catalyst for change'

Improved safety - more qualified instructors

During the qualitative interviews, many explained how they had benefited from training through the Coach Ed programme. This allowed them to have more qualified volunteers and instructors which meant they were able to have more participation, but that also having more qualified instructors in the area improved the overall safety.

In the surveys, only 23% said there had been some change here. This might be as many felt that they were already conforming to safety **and further data will be gathered in the next few months in order to test if this is a material outcome.**

Clubs more financially viable

85% said they had seen some positive change in participation, and 85% also said they have had more business as a result of TOP.

During the qualitative interviews, many explained how the Development Officers had given them advice and guidance on different funding pots for various things which included equipment, training and running sessions to gain more members. By building capacity and allowing them to have more volunteers and equipment they have been able to expand what they offer within communities which has meant greater participation. This was especially welcomed after the Covid-19 pandemic which meant many of the clubs had closed their doors for many months and had lost some staff members and volunteers as a result.

Clubs more inclusive

The programmes that are being developed in the area are all focused on removing barriers for people to engage in outdoor activities. The Inclusive Adventure programme is aimed at getting better access to disabled people in activities. Many providers explained how the Development Officers had supported them in getting access to specialist equipment which allowed them to provide more sessions and activities to different audiences. By funding some taster sessions this also helped to raise confidence within clubs to offer more such activities in the future.

Another barrier for many has been the costs of activities as well as the cost of the equipment needed. The different programmes had helped to break down some initial barriers and also change some perceptions that perhaps outdoor activities isn't for them.

Table 2 below shows the results of the survey for all the well-defined and intermediate outcomes with a distance travelled* percentage for the well-defined outcomes.

(*Distance travelled – average amount of change per person)

Table 2

Outcome	% Experiencing change	Distance travelled
We have been given more advice and guidance	69%	
We have improved our knowledge and skills	64%	
We have better access to funding	79%	
We have greater participation	85%	
We have had more business as a result of TOP	85%	
We have more qualified volunteers	50%	
We feel more able to offer better opportunities to different groups	92%	
We are more inclusive as an organisation	46%	35%
More opportunities to network	64%	
Greater Safety standards	23%	17%
Greater capacity	36%	32%
We are more financially viable now as a result of the support	69%	40%

Volunteers

During the qualitative interviews, it was apparent that many of the volunteers had also been or were beneficiaries and similar outcomes were identified for both. The same survey was shared for both volunteers and beneficiaries but with a question that allowed us to identify the difference.

The results demonstrated a positive change for those volunteers that took part in the analysis and further information about these outcomes will be shared below. Table 3 shows the results for the volunteers. **For the final SROI report, further analysis should take place in order to get further insights to the difference in results and to look at the materiality of these changes. Their financial input will also need to be considered for the SROI report.**

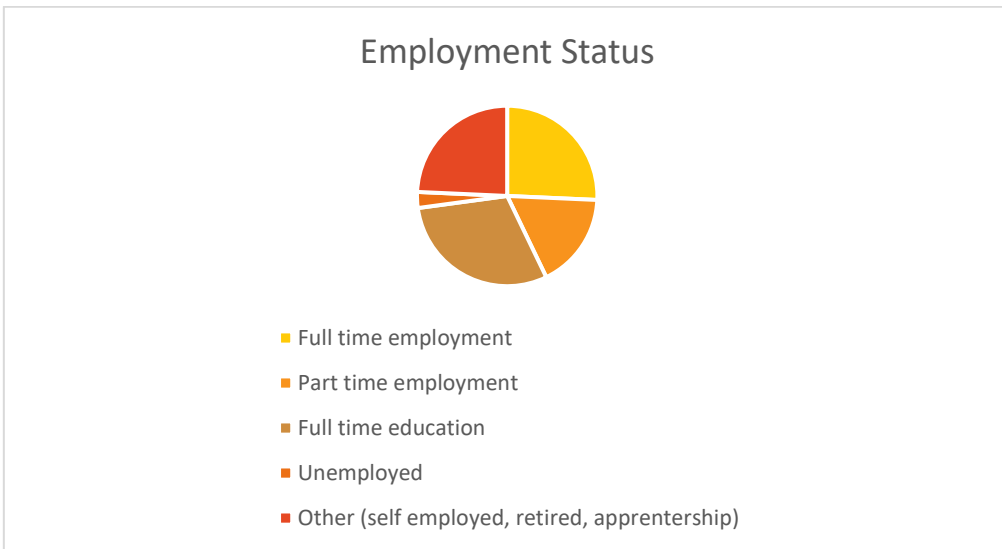
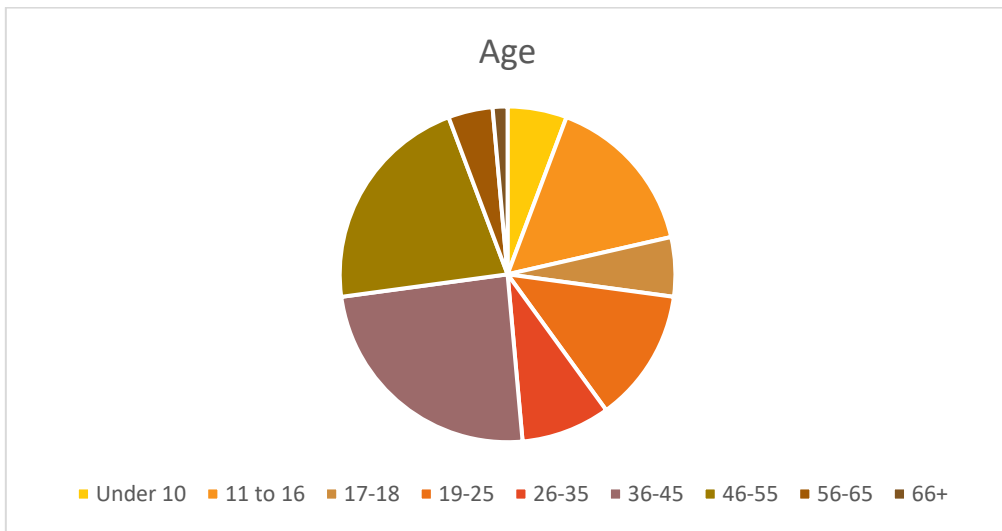
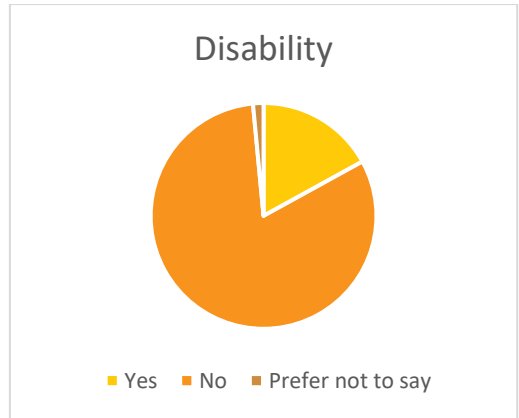
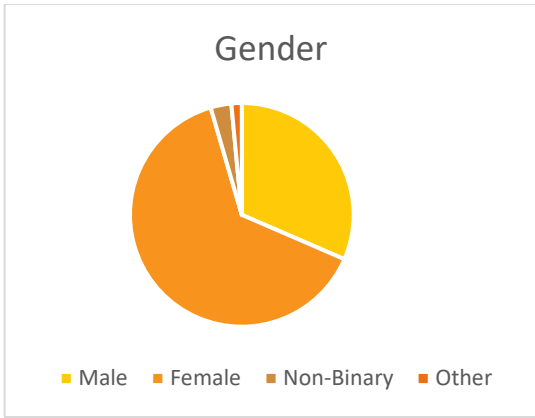
Table 3

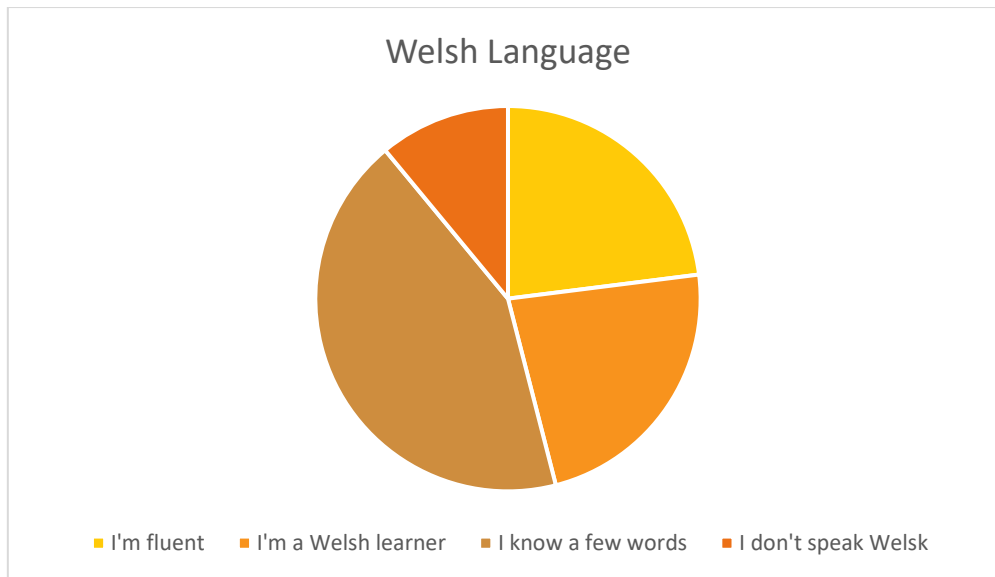
Volunteers	I feel empowered	My Mental health has improved	My physical health has improved
% of change	100	89	89
Distance Travelled	43	52	42

Beneficiaries

The Opening Doors to the Outdoors ENRaW project is bringing many of the projects developed in North Wales into other areas of Wales. Different projects and activities will target different groups within communities that need more support to pursue opportunities through outdoor activities and have been underrepresented in the outdoors in the past. This includes women, people with disabilities, people who are economically inactive and also activities available through the Welsh language.

The diagrams below show the breakdown of characteristics of those who took part in the analysis.





Across the four areas and all the different projects 3,401 people have been supported since April 2021. For the interim report, some understanding was needed about the outcomes, and we needed to ensure that we heard from a representative sample from each area and different projects.

Although there are undoubtedly variances across all projects, a theory of change was developed for all beneficiaries as seen in appendix 1 and Table 4 shows the results from the surveys.

Feeling Empowered

Some of the beneficiaries explained how taking part in the activities was a new experience for them and that initially they had some anxiety in taking part. However, the Development Officers and trainers helped them to feel reassured and helped to improve their confidence to take part. The realisation that they could take part in such activities really gave them a sense of achievement and increased confidence in their own abilities.

Some of the women who took part in the analysis explained how they hadn't previously felt comfortable or able to take part and that having sessions with just women and women leaders helped them to feel reassured and that the achievement gave them a sense of empowerment.

Beneficiaries on the Inclusive Adventure also discussed a great sense of achievement as having the right equipment and support gave them the opportunity to do an activity that they didn't feel was possible in the past and again a sense of empowerment.

"Brilliant opportunities for people who don't normally have a chance to take part in outdoor activities."

"They work really hard and are always up for a challenge to bring more people into the outdoor world and look after them whilst they find their feet."

"Happy to have the opportunity to take part in the groups I would not have done it otherwise it's too expensive for my family to let me try"

Improved mental well-being

The different sessions gave people an opportunity to experience a new activity and also to socialise with people with similar needs. Many commented on feeling part of a community and felt included as a part of the group. The Development Officers supported clubs to have additional resources and equipment which allowed them to open up more opportunities for different groups. One example was a group of Welsh speakers and Welsh learners taking part in an activity which allowed them to learn a new sport but also supported each other as a group.

Some of the beneficiaries explained that they hadn't previously explored many outdoor activities and that the sessions allowed them to have an opportunity to look at different ways of dealing with their own stress and anxieties and that the sense of achievement boosted their self-esteem and over time would improve their mental well-being.

"The Outdoor Partnership is an excellent organisation that has an important role in supporting young people. My children had brilliant experiences and they both improved in confidence and resilience."

"Really amazing for us to have an opportunity to do outdoor activities here locally and through the medium of a Welsh. We are a very deprived area when it comes to sport activities supplied locally and through the medium of Welsh compared to our neighbouring councils that get far more opportunities. These sports offered over this year have been amazing...more please."

Improved physical well-being

The Outdoor Partnership working in partnership with local providers has been able to raise awareness of different activities available in the outdoors and also break down some of the perceptions that some people have for example that some of the activities are usually attended by those of higher income. By coordinating activities and supporting with access to funding and resources, they were able to give an opportunity

for different groups to get a taste of some of these activities including women, disabled groups, people of all ages and those who are economically inactive.

The result in the table below demonstrates the results and how for example 77% of those that answered felt they were now more active as a result and 80% felt that there was some positive change in their physical well-being.

Also in the theory of change are outcomes especially for those who are parents. Many felt that it was a rare opportunity for them to take part in an activity together as a family.

“I'd just like to thank you for the wonderful mountain bike session that my two kids enjoyed!! They stayed for the whole session and would love to do it again. It was so nice that bike hire was included too as I appreciate that mountain bikes are very expensive and for that reason, it was an activity that we hadn't been able to take part in until that session. Now that my children know they enjoy the sport, I'll be much more likely to invest in mountain bikes.”

“Have never seen the opportunities, the experiences, the inclusivity and the passion in the vision which the ODP offer, anywhere, ever. The differences your programme is making to people in Gwent is huge.”

“My daughters and I have thoroughly enjoyed trying out things we are unlikely to have done without opportunities offered by TOP. The sessions for parents with their children were great for bonding - and we still chat about the Coasteering adventure. It was lovely to be in supportive, encouraging environments, with instructors who were professional at all times.”

Table 4

Outcome	% Experiencing change	Distance Travelled %
I feel that I have more confidence in my own ability to take part in activities	97	58
I have improved my skills	97	63
I feel a great sense of achievement	98	67
I have more opportunities to socialize	90	49
I feel part of a community	80	42
I feel empowered	95	52
My mental health has improved	86	47
I am more active now	77	47
My physical health has improved	80	42
I feel more included	76	44
My self-esteem has improved	87	45

Some analysis was done on the results based on different characteristics in order to identify any insights. The tables of these results can be seen in appendix 3. The key messages were:

- There wasn't any big difference between the different genders, however, there was a higher percentage of women that reported a positive change in feeling more empowered.
- The distance travelled for all three outcomes was a bit higher for those who had disability compared to those who didn't have a disability.
- The number of people who took part in the analysis and was unemployed was very low, however, for those that did answer they all experienced a 100% change and the distance travelled of the outcome of feeling empowered was higher than for the other groups.

Further data should be taken on a continuous basis for the next 9 months in order to gain further insights to the difference in results based on characteristics and different projects.

The relative importance of the different changes in outcomes

Where stakeholders experience more than one outcome because of your activity, we need to ask them about the relative importance of these outcomes. Otherwise, we will be assuming that the different outcomes are equally important and therefore be unable to choose between different options for delivering your product or service where the options have different mixes of outcomes. We need to understand where you are creating most value.

In the surveys, the providers and beneficiaries were asked to put these outcomes in order of importance. The results are demonstrated below.

Providers

1. Being more inclusive
2. Increased capacity
3. Being more financially viable
4. Improved safety and standards

Beneficiaries

1. Improving or maintaining mental well-being
2. Improving or maintaining physical well-being
3. Feeling more empowered / Feeling more confident in my own abilities
4. Feeling less alone and part of a community
5. Feeling included / sense of belonging

Causality

When assessing the social value created through a project or service, one of the considerations is how much of the change is actually caused by our activities. The main considerations are:

- Counterfactual – could this have happened without this intervention?
- Attribution – who else has helped?

The questions were asked during this initial qualitative and quantitative data collection; however, **further analysis will be done over the next few months.**

Initially, for both providers and beneficiaries, the response was that the service is unique and welcomed in the different areas and that there was a low to medium possibility that this change that was identified would have happened without TOP.

In terms of attribution, we asked stakeholders about who else has helped them to experience some of this change. Many felt that the change was because of TOP however some of the responses attributed some change due to support from the following:

- The local clubs
- Sports Wales
- Local County Voluntary Councils
- Local Authorities
- Diverse Cymru
- Canoe Wales
- Wild Swim Wales
- Scouts / Cubs
- Church Youth Groups

Many of these organisations are already working in partnership with TOP. There was a general response that the role of the Development Officer and TOP was unique and were helping to facilitate and coordinate networking and sharing good practice. **Further analysis of causality will be made over the next few months to be confident in the role of TOP in the impact created.**

Recommendations for the next few months

Data Collection - Ensuring we have a baseline data and having mid and end review is essential for us to understand if there is any change, but also how much change, and are there differences in what our clients require to recognise any change in their lives. It is therefore recommended that time is invested to measure the social value using the monitoring systems. Some of the projects are already collecting baseline data and review but there needs to be a process in place for all projects.

Social Value Cymru will work with the team over the next few months to gather data from providers, volunteers and beneficiaries. As an initial Theory of Change has been developed, further analysis is needed based on different characteristics and projects. Consideration will also be given to outcomes for other stakeholders, especially cost reallocation for health providers.

In the survey also, responses were low for some groups, especially those with a disability and those who are economically inactive. Consideration should therefore be given as to how to gather data from these groups and get their involvement.

3,401 of beneficiaries have been supported so far. 1,575 of these were through the Summer of Fun programme and others were also supported through the Winter of Wellbeing project. Additional grant funding was received for these programmes, however, without the Development Officers role to coordinate these would not be possible. We need to ensure that we are evaluating the impact of the ENRaW project specifically.

Key actions for data collection

- Breakdown the number of beneficiaries into the different projects i.e., social prescribing, community development, pathway to employment, inclusive adventure, this girls adventure and volunteering support.
- Gather data on an on-going basis. This already happened in some areas but we need consistency. A set of paperwork for the social prescribing project is already in place. We will work with the Development Officers to look at the data collection and discuss how they are gathered and stored.

- By doing the above we can get further insights into characteristics
- Further qualitative data collection will take place in 2023 and will look at different groups.

Communication – This service in the four areas is new with the Development Officers in post only since June 2021. One of the recommendations by stakeholders was that further communication and networking opportunities is needed. There was an understanding that this is a new service and that things will further develop over time.

More, more, more – Much of the responses when asking about anything that could be better was more activities, more dates and activities in more areas. Many were very complimentary of the Development Officers but felt some of the areas were too big for them to manage and felt that either more Development Officers or Administrative support would allow for further development and better networking across all areas.

“Greater awareness across all facets of community, but that will come in time. The Outdoor Partnership should have the key role in developing outdoor participation in Wales, the outcomes and drive are far more positive than other networks and organisations.”

“The outdoor partnership has a strong position to develop the partnerships needed to build and engage the future workforce of the outdoor activity industry. This is one area TOP needs to focus on in order to safeguard the development of safe enjoyable outdoor activities and access for all in the future.”

Sustainability – The results of this initial data collection shows that 85% of providers have greater participation now within their clubs and 77% of beneficiaries said that they are now more active. This just gives early indication that there is some sustainability in the changes identified. However, longer term impact needs to be understood and a clear exit strategy is needed to support people. The inequality of opportunities for young people to access outdoor activities has recently been raised by a member of the Welsh Government with a call for every child in Wales to have access to a week in an outdoor education centre³.

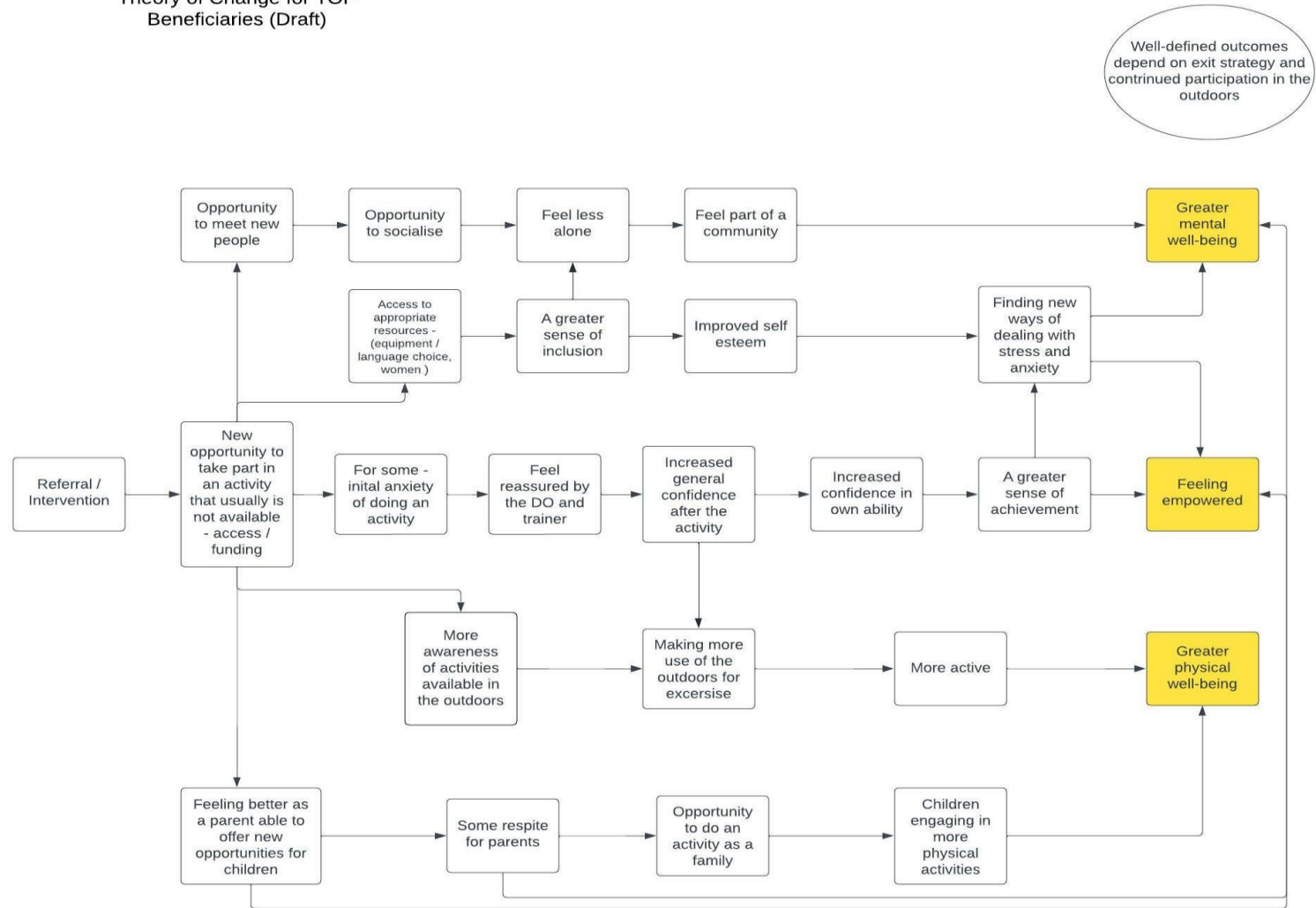
³ [Addysg awyr agored: ‘Mae’n ddrud i Mam a Dad’ - BBC Cymru Fyw](#)

Many attended taster sessions or short term funded projects. Although some activities can be continued at low cost, for example running, walking, wild swimming, some of the activities do have some costs attached to them and therefore considerations needs to given to how some could continue to benefit from these activities and overcome some of the usual barriers such as costs and transport.

Equipment also needs to be considered. Some clubs had been able to purchase equipment but some of the activities were organized and the Development Officers needed to deliver the equipment. This is not always going to be practical.

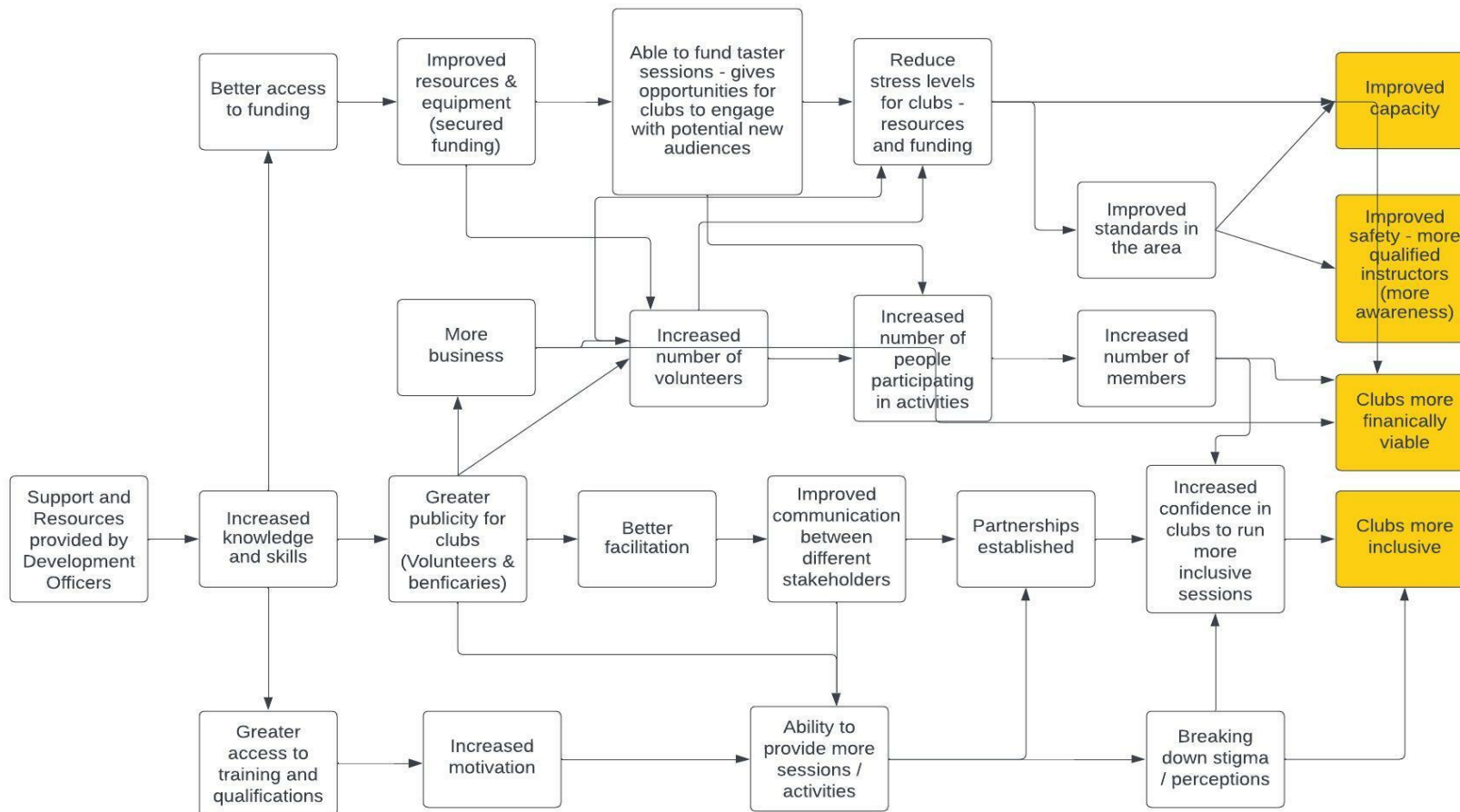
Appendix 1

Theory of Change for TOP Beneficiaries (Draft)



Appendix 2

Theory of Change Providers TOP (Draft)



Appendix 3 - Data by characteristic

Gender	I feel empowered	My Mental health has improved	My physical health has improved
Male - % of change	89	89	89
Distance Travelled	57	54	49
Female - % of change	97	89	81
Distance travelled	52	43	35

Disability	I feel empowered	My Mental health has improved	My physical health has improved
Disability - % of change	92	81	92
Distance Travelled	66	57	47
No disability - % of change	96	87	77
Distance travelled	51	44	42

Employment status	I feel empowered	My Mental health has improved	My physical health has improved
Full time - % of change	100	86	80
Distance Travelled	56	55	52
Part time - % of change	90	88	75
Distance travelled	39	44	38
In Education - %of change	95	85	89
Distance travelled	53	43	33
Unemployed % of change	100	100	100
Distance travelled	75	50	50

Volunteers	I feel empowered	My Mental health has improved	My physical health has improved
% of change	100	89	89
Distance Travelled	43	52	42