

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

49/2017

PUBLICATION DATE:

22/08/2017

# Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture Programme

## Second Year Review

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

# **Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture programme**

## **Second Year Review**

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Full Research Report: K., (2017). *Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture programme. Second Year Review.* Welsh Government, GSR report number 49/2017.

Available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/research-fusion-creating-opportunities-through-culture-programme/?lang=en>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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## Glossary of acronyms

ACW	The Arts Council of Wales
CF	Communities First
GSR	Government Social Research
KAS	Knowledge and Analytical Services
LA	Local Authority
LDBs	Lead Delivery Bodies
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
MALD	Museums, Archives and Libraries Division
NEET	Not in Education Employment or Training
TPAP	Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012- 2016

# 1 Introduction

1.1 In April 2017, Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales (Amgueddfa Cymru) and the Welsh Government's Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) commissioned a Government Social Research (GSR) report outlining the findings of a review of the second year of the Fusion programme's pilot phase. The review was undertaken by Welsh Government social researchers within Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS), and a social researcher at the Amgueddfa Cymru, based within the Learning and Engagement Division. The findings from this review will contribute towards the evidence base on culture and tackling poverty in Wales which in turn will inform the development of the Fusion programme.

1.2 The two key objectives of the review were:

- To obtain the views of a wide range of cultural stakeholders participating in Fusion Partnerships to assess the impact of the programme on their own organisations.
- To obtain more detailed views on the impact of the programme from a small sample of cultural stakeholders.

1.3 This report is based on the findings from an online survey, sent to a sample of 190 stakeholders from participating Fusion Partnership organisations, and qualitative interviews with 10 cultural stakeholders. The second year review builds from the findings of a pilot year evaluation which was published in March 2016.<sup>1</sup>

1.4 This report acknowledges that the scope and design of the review did not make it possible to estimate the counterfactual,<sup>2</sup> therefore it is

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government. (2016). *Pioneer Area Programme Pilot Year Evaluation Final Report*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-pioneer-areas-pilot-year/?lang=en> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017]

<sup>2</sup> According to the Magenta Book (HM 2011) attempts to estimate the counterfactual provide a measure of the extent to which any observed changes in an outcome of interest were caused by the policy - that is, what would have happened to the outcome of interest had the policy not taken place - by controlling for other factors which might have caused the observed outcome to occur. See: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/220542/magenta\\_book\\_combined.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220542/magenta_book_combined.pdf) [Accessed 11th August 2018]

difficult to assess the extent to which the changes reported by stakeholders can be attributed to the Fusion Partnership pilot. The subject of cultural impact is complex and wide-ranging, as reflected in wider methodological debates on measuring the value of culture (see for example the Warwick Commission 2015<sup>3</sup> ).

1.5 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- The rest of this chapter outlines the review's context;
- Chapter 2 outlines the methodology and explains how this study was undertaken;
- Chapter 3 outlines the findings from the online survey and the qualitative interviews;
- Chapter 4 summarises the conclusions of the research.

### **Context**

1.6 The role that arts, culture and heritage can play in building people's capacity and skills, and actively helping to address tackling poverty objectives and support community regeneration, was recognised by the Welsh Government's *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012- 2016* (TPAP) (Welsh Government 2013, p. 16, 19).<sup>4</sup> The TPAP was published in July 2013 and provided the overarching framework for coordinating anti-poverty action and programmes across Wales.

1.7 Under TPAP, improving educational attainment, tackling poverty and supporting people living in deprived communities were highlighted as Welsh Government priorities, and remain so under the overarching framework of the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*

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<sup>3</sup> The Warwick Commission. (2015). *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth*. Coventry: The University of Warwick. See: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick\\_commission\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_final_report.pdf) [Accessed July 13th 2017]

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government, (2013). *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/socialjustice/120625tackpovplanen.pdf> [Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017].

and the Welsh Government's current programme of government, *Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021*.<sup>5</sup>

- 1.8 A key element of the Well-being of Future Generations Act is developing a strategic approach to policy-making based on a framework of long term outcomes. These are referred to as the "well-being goals", which are accompanied by high level "national indicators" used to measure Wales' progress against these goals. The Act provides the overarching national vision and strategic direction for policy-making in Wales. It establishes statutory Public Service Boards with greater responsibility for poverty prevention and cultural well-being according to local priorities at a strategic level. For the Welsh Government, well-being, in its widest sense, is a key outcome of arts and cultural activity (Welsh Government 2016b, p. 11).
  
- 1.9 In 2013, the then Minister for Culture and Sport commissioned a review into how cultural and heritage bodies across Wales "could contribute more effectively to reducing poverty and raising ambition" (Andrews 2014, p. 1). The review was led by Baroness Kay Andrews OBE.
  
- 1.10 Andrews' final report, titled *Culture and Poverty: Harnessing the Power of the Arts, Culture and Heritage to Promote Social Justice in Wales* (2014),<sup>6</sup> was published in March 2014 and identified "access to and participation in the arts, culture and heritage as an aspect of social justice itself and a powerful weapon against poverty, in all its manifest forms" (ibid). It called on the Welsh Government, local government, cultural organisations, community bodies and schools across Wales to collaborate more effectively in order to maximise the benefits cultural participation could have for individuals living in Wales' most deprived communities.

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<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government (2016). *Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/about/programme-for-government/?lang=en> [Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017]

<sup>6</sup> Andrews, K., (2014). *Culture and Poverty: Harnessing the Powers of the Arts, Culture and Heritage to Promote Social Justice in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/140313-culture-and-poverty-en.pdf> [Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017].

- 1.11 Andrews' final report built upon and complimented the findings and recommendations of an earlier report titled *Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales* (Smith 2013)<sup>7</sup> by Professor Dai Smith, which considered the role of the arts in formal educational contexts. Commissioned by the Welsh Government, Smith's independent report explored the relationship between the arts and education sectors in Wales and argued that the arts and creativity can, and should, be central to school life in improving educational attainment.
- 1.12 The agenda for providing greater opportunities to utilise culture within the school day has been taken forward via the *Creative Learning through the Arts* Action Plan for Wales.<sup>8</sup> There is growing evidence that the programme is improving attainment, increasing opportunities and enabling learners and teachers to develop their skills and creativity. Professor Graham Donaldson praised the approach in his influential *Successful Futures* report which reviewed the national curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales.<sup>9</sup>
- 1.13 In response to the Baroness Kay Andrews report, which, whilst recognising the good practice and efforts to date, made a compelling case for joint working to guarantee culture is accessible to all, regardless of their background and where they live, the Welsh Government established *Fusion: Tackling Poverty through Culture* (the Fusion programme). As a fundamental element of the Fusion programme, in a

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<sup>7</sup> Smith, D., (2013). An independent report for the Welsh Government into Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130920-arts-in-education-en.pdf> [Accessed 15th May 2017].

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government. (2015). *Creative Learning through the Arts – An Action Plan for Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: [http://www.arts.wales/c\\_engagement-and-participation/action-plan-creative-learning-through-the-arts](http://www.arts.wales/c_engagement-and-participation/action-plan-creative-learning-through-the-arts)

<sup>9</sup> Donaldson, G., (2015) *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150225-successful-futures-en.pdf> [Accessed 3 August 2017].

plenary statement dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism announced the establishment of six ‘Pioneer Areas’ across Wales. The Fusion programme is managed by MALD and aims to encourage and empower people to take an active part in the arts, culture and heritage at a local community level. Within each Pioneer Area, cultural organisations, local community groups and education institutions linked with Communities First clusters to collaborate in developing opportunities for increasing participation in cultural activities; in particular, amongst those individuals, groups and communities who would not normally engage with these types of activities.

- 1.14 Published in December 2016, the Welsh Government’s vision for culture in Wales, *Light Springs through Dark*, asserts that culture is a priority for the government.<sup>10</sup> It recognises the role culture can play in “developing confidence, skills, and employability” (Welsh Government 2016b, p. 2) and references the Fusion programme as playing a key role in the following terms:

*“Our ‘Fusion Programme’ is showing how culture can empower disenfranchised and alienated people, and gives them a voice. This programme is breaking down barriers, and identifying new ways to encourage people to visit and participate in cultural sites and projects... This is a radical new way of focussing our cultural investment on those most in need.”*

- 1.15 A strategic Cultural Inclusion Board has been founded to oversee the Fusion programme. Its remit is to drive forward change across a broad range of Welsh Government departments, sponsored bodies, and cultural and community organisations across the local authority (LA) and third sectors.

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<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government, (2016). *Light Springs through Dark: A Vision for Culture in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/arts/a-vision-for-culture-in-wales/?lang=en> [Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017]

- 1.16 National culture and heritage delivery bodies, including Amgueddfa Cymru, Arts Council Wales (ACW) and the Welsh Government's historic environment service, Cadw, support the management of the Fusion programme and also act as delivery agents and key partners at a local level. The relevant local authority is also a major partner, along with a wide range of national, regional and local cultural organisations.
- 1.17 The definition of culture adopted by the Fusion programme is that of the Andrews report, where culture is understood "as not just the arts, but also heritage and the historic environment, including the contribution of museums, libraries and the media" (Andrews 2014, p. 3).
- 1.18 During the pilot phase of the Fusion programme, which ran over the first and second year of the programme (from April 2015 until March 2017), Pioneer Areas worked exclusively with Communities First clusters. The Communities First programme is the Welsh Government's community-focused tackling poverty programme. The programme has a geographical focus, concentrating on the most deprived communities in Wales, ensuring that vulnerable individuals, families and groups in those communities are supported. There are 52 Communities First areas in total, known as clusters, comprised of groups of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Each cluster has a Delivery Plan to meet local needs and to ensure each cluster contributes to tackling poverty and that residents are being helped and supported. A framework of outcomes and performance measures has been developed for the programme. More information about this framework can be found at Section Three and Appendix Five of the Communities First Programme Guidance 2013 (Welsh Government 2013).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Welsh Government (2013). Communities First Programme Guidance 2013. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/comm/130905cfprogramme13en.pdf> [Accessed 19th May 2017].

1.19 In October 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Children and Communities launched an engagement exercise on the Welsh Government's future approach to building resilient communities. In January 2017, it was confirmed that the Communities First programme would be phased out by March 2018.<sup>12</sup>

1.20 In the first year of the Fusion programme, six Pioneer Areas were established across 15 Communities First clusters to pilot the approach. These Pioneer Areas were:

- Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil (together, comprising one area)
- Gwynedd
- Newport
- Swansea
- Torfaen
- Wrexham

1.21 Key objectives for each Pioneer Area included implementing programmes of activity that responded to the Andrews recommendations and met the Communities First outcomes; providing a mutual learning and information exchange; identifying and sharing good practice; and contributing to the evaluation of the Fusion programme as a whole, by providing the relevant reporting and monitoring data (Welsh Government 2016b, p. 4, 5).

1.22 For the second year of the Fusion programme, which ran between April 2016 and March 2017, the number of Pioneer Areas taking part was increased by four to 10 in total, across 25 Communities First clusters, to include the following local authorities:

- Caerphilly
- Carmarthenshire
- Conwy
- Flintshire

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<sup>12</sup> For more information see: <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitiesfirst/?lang=en> [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017]

- 1.23 Maps outlining the participating areas and Communities First clusters over the second year (from April 2016 to March 2017) can be found at **Annex A**.

### **Evaluation of the first year of the pilot phase**

- 1.24 A critical element of the pilot phase of the Pioneer Area approach was to ascertain the success or otherwise of the approach in increasing the number of young people, adults and families living in Communities First areas to actively participate in culture, arts and heritage activities in ways that could help them gain in learning, skills and confidence. With this in mind, an evaluation of the pilot year of the Pioneer Area approach was commissioned. Amgueddfa Cymru took the lead on the research, with support from KAS. A senior researcher was funded between Amgueddfa Cymru and the Welsh Government to coordinate the evaluation, with assistance from KAS.
- 1.25 The literature review undertaken as part of the Pioneer Area Programme Pilot Year Evaluation (2014, p. 14-28) highlighted the diversity of the cultural sector and the correspondingly complex research agenda building up around it. There is research which demonstrates the impact of culture in promoting a range of social and economic goals, in the areas of health and wellbeing and education for example. However, read as a whole, there are considerable gaps in the evidence base relating to the social impacts of culture (see, for example, Taylor et al. (2015) and TFCC (2015) for a discussion on the areas of heritage, museums, libraries and archives), in terms of both the quantity and the overall quality of studies. Within the evidence base, the barriers to participation in cultural activities have been recognised as presenting a key challenge to gaining an understanding of the value and impact of culture. This was recognised by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value<sup>13</sup> (The Warwick Commission, 2015, p. 8) for example, which undertook a comprehensive and holistic investigation into the future of cultural value. The work of the commission, together with that of the Arts

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value see: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/> [Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017]

and Humanities Research Council funded Cultural Value Project,<sup>14</sup> has contributed to a mainstreaming of the methodological debate on the value and impact of culture in the UK over recent years.

1.26 Following the pilot phase, the Fusion programme has been refreshed to reflect learning from the pilot phase and the changed context of the Communities First programme. The Fusion programme remains focussed on utilising culture to tackle the effects of deprivation, and remains aligned to wider Welsh Government policy by using three Fusion themes of employability and skills; supporting the early years; and supporting health and well-being. The programme is being refreshed as *Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture*, and the term 'Pioneer Area' has been replaced with 'Fusion Partnership', now that this model of working has been established. In line with these changes, the remainder of this report refers to the 'Fusion Partnership' to describe what was previously referred to as a 'Pioneer Area'. To support the programme, a new strategic Fusion Challenge Grant fund was launched in February 2017.<sup>15</sup>

### **Encouraging a more robust approach to monitoring**

1.27 Following the recommendations of the pilot year evaluation, a key goal for participating Fusion Partnerships during the second year of the pilot phase was to administer a more formal and robust approach to the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. This was because an assessment of outcomes across Fusion Partnerships in the first year of the pilot phase was hindered by the shortage of consistent, robust and comparable monitoring information. As a result, an aim during the second year of the pilot phase was to make an assessment on the contribution the Fusion programme has made towards Communities First performance measures.

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded Cultural Value Project see: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/research/fundedthemesandprogrammes/culturalvalueproject/> [Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017]

<sup>15</sup> Welsh Government (2017). Fusion Challenge Grants 2017 – 18. Cardiff: Welsh Government. See: <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/170203-fusion-info-applicants-en.pdf> [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017]

- 1.28 This work on improving the monitoring information provided by LDBs to the Welsh Government was taken forward by officials based within MALD. Each LDB reported their overall progress and performance against outcomes and submitted case studies to MALD through an interim monitoring report (covering 1 April to 30 September 2016) and an end of year monitoring report (covering April 2016 to 31 March 2017). In addition to formal written reports, monitoring visits took place between each LDB and Welsh Government officials (MALD's Strategic Project Adviser and a social researcher from KAS) during December 2016.
- 1.29 All 10 participating LDBs in the second year of the Fusion programme were required to report outcomes achieved against the Communities First Performance Measures Framework, which contains 101 indicators across three themes:
- Prosperous;
  - Learning; and
  - Healthy Communities.

Each LDB was responsible for collecting data on behalf of their partnership using the existing reporting mechanisms of Communities First. The data in the table at Annex B is a sample of some of the most commonly utilised performance measures across the programme together with total numbers of individuals reported as meeting the desired outcome. The sample provides an illustration of the contribution made by the programme against the Communities First performance framework. For some Fusion activities, more than one outcome was reported against an individual for the same activity.<sup>16</sup> The partnerships collected and reported the monitoring information in different ways. These limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting the data.

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<sup>16</sup> For example an adult receiving a qualification may also have reported more positive attitude to learning or reduced social isolation.

1.30 Further breakdowns of the monitoring data are available on request from the Fusion team.

1.31 The information provided by areas over the pilot phase has been reported in an infographic that presents a general overview of the Fusion programme's reach over its first two years. An overview of this work and a copy of the infographic can be found at **Annex C**.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The infographic is also available at: <http://llyw.cymru/topics/culture-tourism-sport/tackling-poverty-through-culture/?skip=1&lang=en> [Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017]

## 2 Methodology

**The Purpose of the Research** The overarching aim of this review was to assess the extent to which delivery bodies have aligned services and projects to meet Fusion programme objectives. The research sought to understand participating cultural organisations' views of how the Fusion Partnerships worked in practice, including what worked well and what could be improved, so as to contribute to the continued development and improvement of the Fusion programme. Building from the findings of the pilot year evaluation, this second year review on the pilot phase of the Fusion programme had two main objectives:

- To obtain the views of a wide range of cultural stakeholders participating in the Pioneer Area programme and to assess the impact on their own organisations.
- To obtain more detailed views from a small sample of cultural stakeholders.

### **Scope of the review**

- 2.2 Whereas the focus of the pilot year evaluation was on Lead Delivery Bodies (LDBs) and on the value of establishing the Pioneer Area approach more generally, this review of the second year of the pilot phase focussed in more detail on the wider Fusion Partnership network and more specifically, on the views of participating cultural organisations.

### **Methods**

- 2.3 The methods used for this research was an online survey with a variety of stakeholders from the Fusion Partnerships followed by semi-structured qualitative interviews with stakeholders representing cultural organisations. The rationale was that a survey allowed for the collection of information on the perspectives, priorities and experiences of participating stakeholders across the Fusion Partnership network;

whereas the interviews enabled stakeholders' views and experiences of the Fusion programme to be explored in more depth following an analysis of the headline survey results.

### **Sample**

- 2.4 The survey sample was identified by LDBs. Separately, the 10 LDBs from each of the Fusion Partnership areas submitted the contact details (name and email address) of their respective Fusion Partnership partners or members to MALD. The details were then amalgamated into one list of stakeholders, and duplicates, alongside Welsh Government officials participating in Fusion Partnership networks at an operational level, were excluded from the sample. The final survey sample was 190 stakeholders. The survey sample for each of the 10 partnerships included cultural organisation and local authority services. The time frame for responding to the survey was extended due to the initial low response rate. From the survey sample, 64 responses were received in total, giving a response rate of 34 per cent.
- 2.5 A purposive approach was used to identify a sample of 10 stakeholders representing a cultural organisation to take part in the qualitative interviews. The key aim underpinning the sampling strategy was to obtain diverse perspectives on the programme from each of the 10 participating Fusion Partnerships. The sample was selected to include organisations across a range of cultural sectors and geographical areas. To this end, the sample consisted of organisations which were local authority, commercial, charity, not for profit and revenue funded, with a delivery remit at either local authority, regional or national level. Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of the sample by funding source and geographical remit. Five of the 10 organisations sampled had participated in the initial pilot year of the Pioneer Area programme. The sample included a mix of organisations that had been involved with a Fusion Partnership to various extents. For example, some organisations had delivered activities, others had just attended networking meetings, and others were known to have had difficulty in engaging with their respective partnerships. The aim was to obtain a range of perspectives

from stakeholders. Welsh Government officials who were involved in Pioneer Areas were excluded from the research.

2.6 The sample was selected from the list of stakeholders which comprised the survey sample (see Section 2.4). Those selected for interview were sent an email inviting them to participate in the research. All ten stakeholders originally selected for interview agreed to take part in the research.

**Table 2.1: Sample breakdown - Number of interviewees**

Remit	Funding source			
	LA	Commercial	Charity	Not for profit
National			1	
Regional	2	1		
LA based	3*	1	1	1

*\* Two of these 3 organisations tour nationally and are also in receipt of revenue funding*

### Survey

2.7 A Welsh Government social researcher sent an invitation to the sampled stakeholders to participate in the survey, alongside a link to the online survey, by email on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017. A reminder email was sent on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The survey closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

2.8 The survey included questions on topics around attitudes towards the Fusion Partnership programme, its legacy, any benefits, challenges and critical success factors. A full list of the questions asked in the survey can be found in a copy of the questionnaire, at **Annex D**.

2.9 In terms of the composition of the online survey respondents, the highest numbers of respondents identified themselves as part of the Torfaen (n. 15 out of a survey sample of n. 24) or Cardiff (n. 14 out of a survey sample of n. 38) partnership. The lowest number of respondents identified themselves as part of the Wrexham (n. 2 out of a survey sample of 14) or Gwynedd (n. 4 out of a survey sample of 10)

partnerships. To give an indication on the spread of survey responses, the 64 responses received in total is broken down by Fusion Partnership at Table 2.2, below. Some respondents worked across more than one Fusion Partnership, hence why the total adds up to more than the number of responses.

**Table 2.2: Composition of survey respondents**

<b>Fusion Partnership</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Sample</b>
Caerphilly	11	11
Carmarthenshire	6	37
Cardiff & Merthyr Tydfil	14	11
Conwy	11	37
Flintshire	10	26
Gwynedd	4	10
Newport	6	11
Swansea	10	39
Torfaen	15	24
Wrexham	2	14

2.10 Just over half (n=34 respondents) represented an organisation who had participated in a Fusion Partnership during the Fusion programme's initial pilot year.

### **Interviews**

2.11 A Welsh Government social researcher conducted 10 interviews from 28<sup>th</sup> April to 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017. All of the interviews were conducted by telephone. Stakeholders were given the option of taking part in Welsh and English. All of the interviews were conducted in English. The duration of the interviews ranged from 25 to 60 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded, and informed consent was sought from all participants.

2.12 A semi-structured interview guide was developed (see Annex E). The areas covered at interview are set out in the guide and responses probed further so as to obtain a more in-depth understanding of stakeholders' views and experiences. In summary, topics identified for inclusion at the interview included:

- The role of cultural organisations in tackling poverty
- What worked well and what could be improved about the Pioneer Area programme
- Impact of the programme on stakeholders' ways of working
- The effectiveness of the programme
- The benefits and challenges of participating in the programme

2.13 The questions were tailored as necessary at interview for stakeholders depending on the nature and level of their involvement with the Pioneer Area programme, to focus on their individual experiences.

### **Analysis**

2.14 The survey was downloaded from the Questback online survey software into Microsoft Excel for analysis. The themes and survey results are discussed in this report and charts have been included in the discussion to highlight key findings.

2.15 Interviews were transcribed verbatim and transferred into MAXQDA qualitative analysis software, where a coding system was developed based on a combination of the topics covered at the survey stage of the analysis and the interview guide and themes that emerged inductively from the data. The themes and subthemes are discussed in this report and example quotes have been included to illustrate key points.

## **Limitations**

- 2.16 As noted earlier, data was collected using an online survey and semi-structured interviews with cultural stakeholders participating in a Fusion Partnership. As well as advantages however, there are also disadvantages to the use of these methods, and the research is subject to a number of limitations as a result. In terms of the online survey, the research is exposed to sampling issues. The survey sample was dependent upon the details provided by LDBs. The results provide a snapshot of a single point of time from a self-selected group of respondents. In addition, there was a relatively low response to the survey. Coupled with the particularly small number of responses to some of the questions, the low response rate means that care should be taken not to overstate the findings of the survey. For example, the views and answers of respondents may differ from the answers of those who did not reply to the survey. These limitations inhibit the ability to make generalisations about the survey results, and as a result, care should be taken in their interpretation. Findings are indicative and not necessarily representative of all stakeholders.
- 2.17 With the semi-structured interviews, the focus was on gaining an insight into the perceptions of cultural organisations. Because the emphasis was on data collection for comparative purposes, an interview topic guide was developed. This allowed for the use of probes; however care was taken to ensure stakeholders were able to communicate their perspective independently from those of the researcher. This meant avoiding the use of leading questions. In addition, due to the time frame of the research, the interviews were conducted over the telephone, thus it was not possible to establish a rapport with interviewees to the extent possible at a face-to-face interview.

### 3 Findings from the survey and interviews

- 3.1 This chapter presents the findings of the online survey and the qualitative interviews. A total of 64 survey responses were obtained. However, not all survey questions were compulsory. As a result not all of the survey results for individual questions add-up to the overall survey response rate of 64 respondents. For clarity, the total number of responses to a particular question is stated in full when the findings are discussed. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with a stakeholder representing a participating cultural organisation from each of the 10 Fusion Partnerships. The survey and interview findings were analysed separately as two distinct tasks, and the results drawn together to form the discussion presented in this chapter. In this discussion of findings, people who responded to the online survey are referred to as survey 'respondents', and for the semi-structured interviews, those who were interviewed are referred to as 'interviewees'.
- 3.2 A specific focus on the Caerphilly, Gwynedd and Newport Fusion Partnerships can be found in the case studies at **Annex F**.

#### **Understandings of the Fusion approach**

##### *The Fusion programme's aims and objectives*

- 3.3 The semi-structured interviews presented an opportunity to explore understandings of the Fusion programme's aims and objectives amongst cultural organisations. There was a strong understanding of the Fusion programme's objectives. Interviewees noted that tackling poverty is at the heart of the programme and the collaborative ways of working it seeks to encourage between cultural organisations, local authority services and local community agencies working within deprived communities. The programme was viewed as being aimed at facilitating a more multi-agency, coordinated approach. Towards this end, it was described to be about developing partnerships between stakeholders and a more joined-up, strategic approach towards the delivery of activities. Fusion was perceived to be about widening access by making

cultural activities more accessible and by creating or increasing the amount of opportunities available for people to get involved and try new experiences. This was seen as an end in itself by some interviewees, whilst others referred to educational, health or employment outcomes as key objectives of the programme. The interviewees were overwhelmingly positive about the Welsh Government's efforts to use an approach to tackling poverty that encouraged cultural participation amongst individuals from some of Wales' most deprived communities. However, regarding how the approach played out in practice, views were more varied. These views are referred to at various points in this chapter.

#### *Responsibility to help tackle poverty*

- 3.4 A majority of nine interviewees felt cultural organisations had a responsibility to play a role in tackling poverty. Most framed their answer in terms of altruistic considerations, with providing cultural opportunities for harder to reach groups seen as intrinsically the right course of action to take because access to culture should be universal. Cultural organisations were viewed to have a social responsibility to ensure culture is available for all, so that everyone has an opportunity to participate in activities regardless of their background or where they live. Some interviewees made reference to the Andrews report, and several noted that because their organisation was in receipt of public funding they had a social responsibility to reach all members of society with their programmes. . Engaging 'harder to reach' audiences to access cultural and heritage resources and helping or empowering people see their communities in new ways were also cited as responsibilities by some interviewees:

*"...because we get public funding, and because I think it's a social responsibility... we do have a responsibility, and we should be doing all that we can to make sure that everyone has an opportunity... it's absolutely right that we should be addressing poverty and deprivation and breaking down barriers for people to be able to access the arts and cultural activity."*

*“We have historical gems, and we need to be open to the community... we are curators of very special places, and making a contribution to the community to make sure that everybody is included is a good thing.”*

*“Our services are there to be used by all, across the board. There is a perception that museums are places for the middle class and the academics, and we’ve got a responsibility as a cultural organisation to try and engage our hard to reach audiences.”*

- 3.5 Conversely, an interviewee argued that artistic interventions should be aimed at all individuals, not just those living in deprived areas; although a need to engage individuals within these areas was acknowledged:

*“[The] arts should be for everyone. We shouldn’t be saying “well, we can only use it over there for people who are in areas of deprivation”, but at the same time, absolutely those people have a right to take part in culture and arts activities and take part in that dialogue; that kind of widening of access, that widening of horizons.”*

- 3.6 One interviewee did not think cultural organisations had a fundamental responsibility to help tackle poverty. Instead, in their opinion, it depended on whether or not the organisation has been set up as a purely commercial enterprise, designed to make a profit. However, this interviewee emphasised the added and symbiotic value of cultural organisations being able to build new links with different audiences, whatever the professional status of that organisation. This was viewed as of mutual benefit both to organisations working within deprived communities and to those participating in their activities:

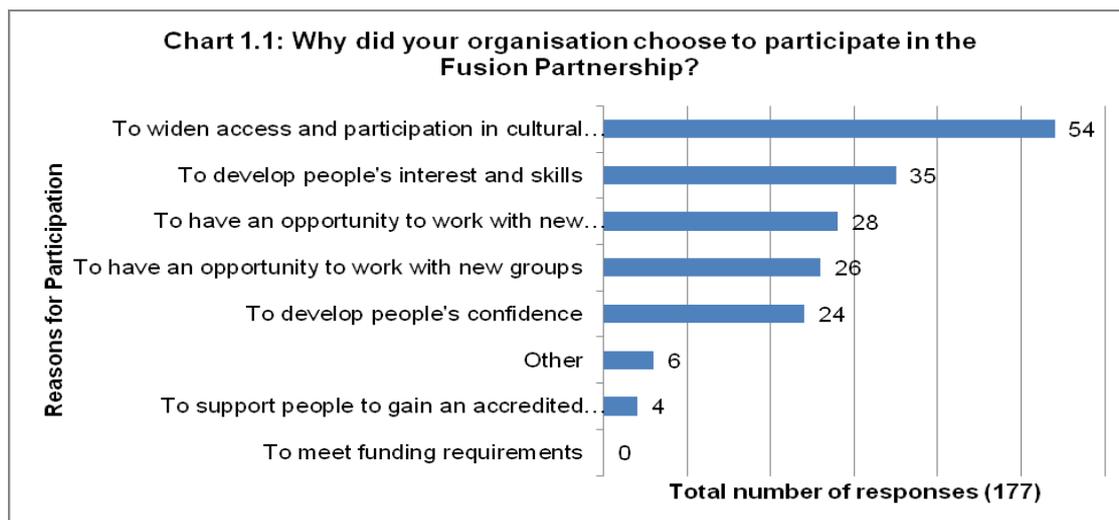
*“I don’t think they [cultural organisations] have a responsibility... some are purely for entertainment and making money for themselves as an organisation, and some see it in other ways. [However] a lot of organisations now have community links because they understand the value of community involvement. And it goes around in a circle... you help people and support them, and they might come and see your*

*shows and impact your work, and then you go back into the community and you support them.”*

### **Motivation for participating in a Fusion Partnership**

3.7 The survey and interviews included a number of questions aimed at exploring motivations for participating in a Fusion Partnership. Online survey respondents were asked to select from a list of response options the three main reasons “why their organisation choose to participate in the Fusion Partnership”. The results to this survey question are summarised below and illustrated at Chart 1.1.

- *Widening access and participation in cultural activities*  
By some margin, the one response selected by most respondents (n=55) was to widen access and participation in cultural activities.
- *Improving people’s abilities*  
A cluster of the survey responses (n=64) about motivations for participating in a Fusion Partnership centred on the desire to improve people’s abilities, namely: on the development of people’s interests and skills (n=35); to develop people’s confidence (n=24); and to support people to gain an accredited qualification (n=5).
- *Opportunities for the organisation*  
Another cluster of survey responses (n=54) in relation to motivations for participating in a Fusion Partnership centred on opportunities for the organisation, namely: for the organisation to have an opportunity to work with new groups (n=26); and to have an opportunity to work with new communities (n=28). The results to this survey question are illustrated below, at Chart 1.1.



3.8 No respondents selected the response that “their organisation choose to participate in the Fusion Partnership” to meet funding requirements.

However, one of the four open ended responses received to the *other* response option did state their organisation’s participation was “*a requirement*”.

3.9 At the semi-structured interviews, when asked directly about their main motivation for joining a Fusion Partnership network, most interviewees focused on opportunities to share experiences and hear best practice at the networking meetings. This was closely followed by the possibility of finding opportunities to work with new groups and within different communities. To a lesser extent, the opportunity to collaborate with other organisations on the design and delivery of projects was described as a motivation for participating in their respective Fusion Partnerships. One interviewee specifically framed their response in the altruistic terms of “*making a contribution to the community*”.

3.10 A few of those interviewed felt that a main benefit provided by the Fusion Partnership approach was the opportunity to network with a mix of stakeholders across the cultural sector, local authority services, and with local community agencies operating through the Communities First programme. These interviewees appreciated having this the forum for sharing ideas, skills and good practice, whilst raising the profile of their

organisation in the process. When raised as a topic by interviewees, the input from other organisations at the meetings was portrayed positively.

*“...we haven’t really ran any specific activity... but it’s kind of more about people working and sharing similar good practice, that sort of thing... it’s about skill sharing, supporting organisations, sharing information, making organisations aware of opportunities that exist in this venue, and I don’t think that we would have been able to do that without the Fusion partnership existing.”*

*“We attend the partnership meetings and bring our body of practice with us, and share that with partnership members there. I have an opportunity to learn from others around the table, but hopefully they’ve been able to take something from [us] as well.”*

*“We want to have a voice.... it’s always good to have your profile in there so that you’re working with the network, working with the partners that are in the [locality].”*

- 3.11 Some cultural organisations had been engaging with target communities prior to the launch of Fusion, and found the Fusion Partnership provided an opportunity to both strengthen existing relationships with organisations and make new ones.

*“...for us mainly it was trying to see what sort of new partnerships we could make from it and trying to target new audiences really, those are the two main reasons.”*

- 3.12 From one interviewee’s perspective, the Fusion network provided opportunities to target new ‘non-traditional’ audiences and harder to reach groups in collaboration with other organisations:

*“...it’s a good way for us to get access to our hard to reach audiences, and working with other organisations that deliver offers to these audiences as well... we’re working towards the same outcomes.”*

### **Ways of working**

3.13 The survey and interviews included a number of questions aimed at exploring perceived changes to ways of working, as a result of the Fusion Partnership approach.

#### *Collaborative working*

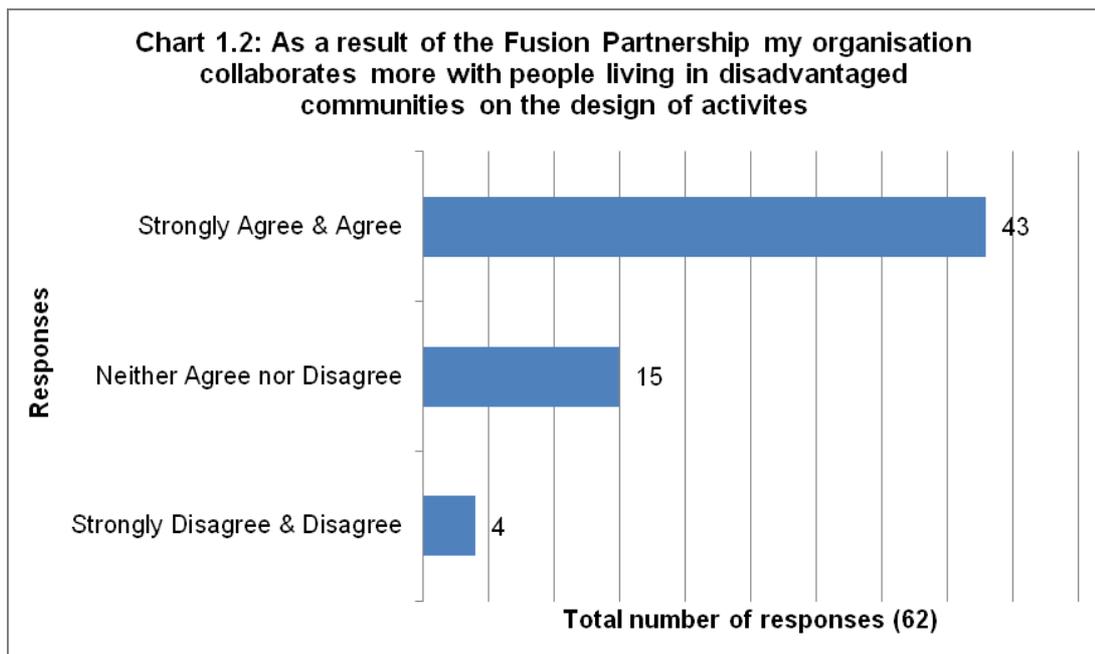
3.14 Survey respondents were asked to reflect on the collaborative ways of working that the Fusion programme seeks to foster. The survey included a series of questions on the extent of respondent's collaboration with different stakeholder groups, namely:

- people living in disadvantaged communities;
- other cultural organisations;
- local authorities; and
- local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities.

3.15 The survey included a question on the extent respondents agreed or disagreed that, as a result of the Fusion Partnership approach, their organisation "targets activities more effectively at people experiencing poverty". Nearly three quarters of respondents (n=46), accounting for 72% of responses, either *strongly agreed* (n=21) or *agreed* (n=25) with this statement. Eleven respondents (17%) *neither agreed nor disagreed*, only a small proportion of five respondents *disagreed* with the statement, and no respondent *strongly disagreed*. There was less polarity across the range of response options with this question than with some of the other survey questions. The vast majority of respondents identified with the assertion that their organisation is targeting activities more effectively at people experiencing poverty as a result of Fusion.

3.16 Survey respondents were also asked about the extent of their organisations collaboration on the design of activities with people living in disadvantaged communities. The majority of respondents, comprising sixty seven percent of responses (n=44), either *strongly agreed* (n=20)

or *agreed* (n=24) with the statement that, since participating in a Fusion Partnership, their “organisation collaborates more with people living in disadvantaged communities on the design of activities”. However, over a fifth of respondents (n=15; 23%) *neither agreed nor disagreed* with this statement. In addition, despite representing a small proportion of the survey responses, four respondents *disagreed* with the statement; although no respondents selected the *strongly disagree* response option. Thus, overall, the responses to this survey question indicate that as a result of the opportunities presented through Fusion Partnerships, the majority of those who responded to the online survey felt they have collaborated to a greater extent on the co-design of cultural interventions with individuals and groups from deprived communities. The results to this survey question are illustrated below, at Chart 1.2.



3.17 When asked whether their organisation “collaborates more effectively with other cultural organisations” as a result of participating in a Fusion Partnership, the vast majority of respondents either *strongly agreed* (n=25) or *agreed* (n=22), accounting for nearly three quarters (73%) of responses. A fifth of respondents (n=13; 20%) *neither agreed nor disagreed*; only three respondents *disagreed* and no respondents *strongly disagreed* with the statement. The results for this question suggested that in the main, survey respondents perceived more effective

collaboration between their organisation and other cultural organisations as a result of Fusion; again, with less polarity across the range of response options than with some of the other survey questions.

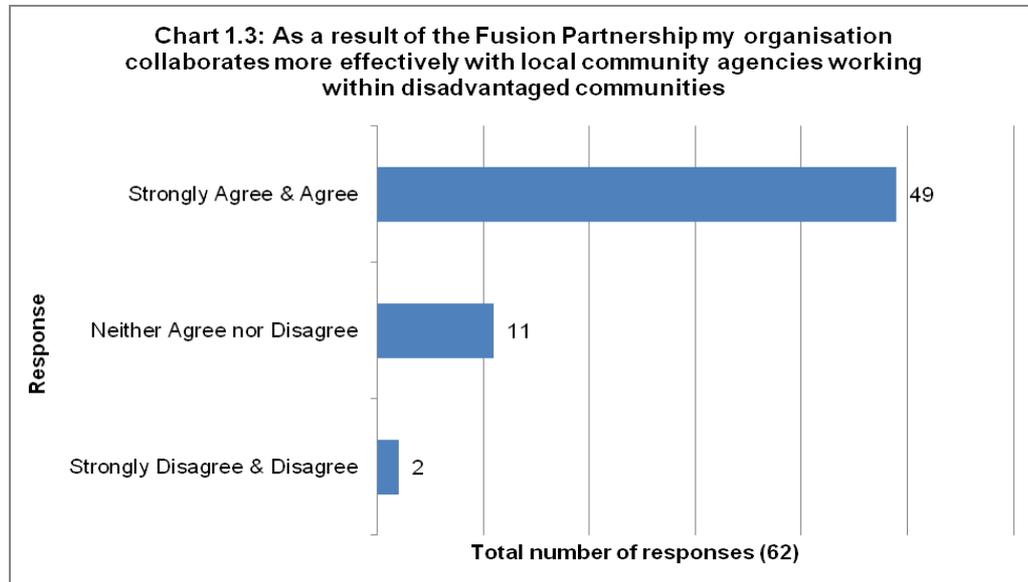
3.18 Respondents to the survey were also asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement their organisation “collaborates about the same amount with local authorities” as a result of the Fusion Partnership. The majority (n=36; 56%) of respondents either *strongly agreed* (n=15) or *agreed* (n=21) their organisation collaborates about the same with local authorities. Only three respondents *disagreed* with the statement, and no respondents *strongly disagreed*. Twenty four respondents (38%) *neither agreed nor disagreed* with this statement, suggesting that this question may not have been relevant for some respondents. This may be because the survey sample identified by LDBs contained local authority services, such as libraries, archives and museums, classed as cultural organisations.

3.19 There is also evidence from both the online survey and the qualitative interviews that some Fusion Partnerships have strengthened the relationship between cultural organisations and local community agencies with a tackling poverty remit. Some interviewees emphasised that activities should be undertaken in partnership with agencies already working within deprived communities:

*“...there are potential issues around just doing things because you have project funding, and you can get project funding to work in Communities First areas, you’ve got to be a bit careful about why projects are undertaken. That’s why I think to do things in collaboration, with an embedded organisation like Communities First is really how those partnerships should be being built.”*

3.20 As part of the online survey, respondents were asked if their organisation “collaborates more effectively with local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities” as a result of the Fusion Partnership. Over two thirds of respondents (n=50) reported that they did (*strongly agree*, n=22; *agree*, n=28). This is outlined at Chart

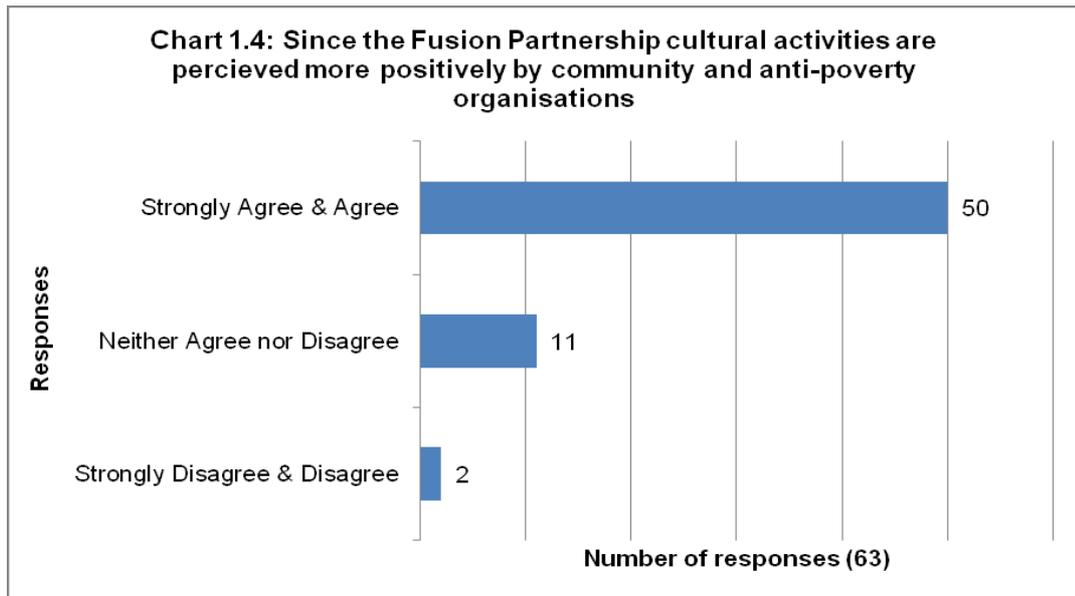
1.3, which also illustrates that of the total number of responses received to this statement (n=62), 11 respondents (17%) *neither agreed nor disagreed*, two respondents *disagreed* and no respondents *strongly disagreed*.



#### *Changing perceptions of culture*

3.21 Over half, or 55% of survey respondents (n=35), either *disagreed* (n=24) or strongly *disagreed* (n=11) with the statement “local authorities have no greater understanding of the value of culture” since the Fusion Partnership. Nineteen per cent of survey respondents (n=12) either *agreed* (n=9) or *strongly agreed* (n=3) with the statement and a quarter of respondents (n=16) *neither agreed nor disagreed*. The majority of respondents therefore, reported that, as a result of Fusion Partnerships, local authorities do have a greater understanding of the value of culture.

3.22 Seventy eight per cent of respondents (n=50) either *agreed* (n=41) or *strongly agreed* (n=9) with the statement that since the Fusion Partnership, “cultural activities are perceived more positively by community and anti-poverty organisations”. Eleven respondents (13%) *neither agreed nor disagreed* with this statement, whereas only two respondents (representing 3% of survey respondents) either *disagreed* (n=1) or *strongly disagreed* (n=1) with this statement. These results are illustrated at Chart 1.4, below.



3.23 Almost two thirds of respondents (66%; n=42) either *disagreed* (n=22) or *strongly disagreed* (n=20) with the statement “my organisation has no better understanding of the role culture can play in tackling poverty” since participating in a Fusion Partnership. Thus indicating that for these respondents, participating in a Fusion Partnership has resulted in their organisation gaining a better understanding of the role culture can play in tackling poverty. Only six respondents (accounting for just 9% of survey respondents) either *agreed* (n=5) or *strongly agreed* (n=1) with this statement.

### **Benefits**

3.24 This section presents findings on themes that emerged in relation to the perceived benefits of the Fusion Partnership approach from the research participants’ perspectives.

3.25 Respondents to the online survey and interviewees were asked what they felt the main benefits, if any, of participating in a Fusion Partnership have been. At interview, they were also asked what they felt the main benefits of participating in a Fusion Partnership have been for the key stakeholder groups of:

- cultural organisations;
- individuals participating in Fusion supported cultural activities;
- local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities; and
- local authority services.

3.26 Analysis of the interview findings revealed that, the benefits of the Fusion Partnerships were largely perceived to outweigh any challenges.

*Benefits to cultural organisations*

3.27 For interviewees, various benefits were noted for their respective organisations. Although no one key benefit came across particularly strongly across the interviews, the main themes which did arise across the interview base centred on:

- developing and strengthening the links between their cultural organisation and other stakeholder organisations, including with stakeholders outside of the cultural sector;
- raising the profile of their cultural organisation with other stakeholders; and
- targeting and engaging new audiences living within deprived communities.

3.28 In addition, many interviewees noted that the Fusion Partnerships helped them gain a better insight into how local authority services and local community agencies based within disadvantaged communities worked. As a result of their involvement in the partnership, these interviewees reported that they had a greater understanding of how organisations supporting tackling poverty operated.

3.29 Some interviewees noted that the Fusion Partnerships had provided opportunities to work on shared goals with other cultural, local authority and local community agency stakeholders operating within their

geographical remit. For these interviewees, the approach had enabled them to better appreciate the opportunities and constraints faced by these other stakeholders operating within their respective partnerships.

*“...the main benefits are getting your hard to reach audiences, getting a better understanding of them, of their needs, a chance to work with other organisations working towards the same target, sharing best practices; there are loads of advantages really.”*

*“...having access to Communities First in that [Fusion Partnership] way, and being aware of what it is they’re trying to achieve and how we might help them do that, and where we might help them do that. I think that’s really helpful.”*

*“It’s helped us to connect us with non-arts organisations or community bodies that we might not have linked with previously.”*

3.30 A few interviewees indicated that they had built relationships with institutions traditionally more difficult to access as they have a duty of care for their participants (for example, schools; youth referral units). According to these interviewees, they had delivered activities to new ‘harder to reach’ audiences as a result of initiating conversations and developing projects in collaboration with gatekeepers met through Fusion Partnerships:

*“The participants that I’ve worked with, I probably wouldn’t have worked with if I hadn’t gone to a Fusion Partnership meeting. So, 14 young people from [institution] have gained an Arts Award Bronze Level qualification directly as a result of me linking up with people at the Fusion Partnership. That’s a very specific example. Their feedback has been enormously positive.”*

*“With the schools... it gives us a better insight into what they’re trying to do to tackle poverty and how they find it hard. We’ve built up on the relationship so they feel confident to share with us... we can have a better insight into our [participants] through working with the schools, so that’s been beneficial for us.”*

- 3.31 To a lesser extent, several other benefits were noted by interviewees. For example, one interviewee emphasised that they had experienced repeat visits from participants to cultural activities as a result of engaging ‘harder to reach’ groups through the Fusion Partnership:

*“...it’s been excellent for us to get to those hard to reach audiences. We know that we’ve had returners from the sessions we’ve been having.”*

- 3.32 Another benefit cited by several interviewees was the opportunity to leverage in additional support as a result their organisation’s participation in a Fusion Partnership. For instance, one interviewee credited the support they had received through the Fusion Partnership as key to their successful application for funding from a UK-wide grant-giving organisation. The funding had increased the capacity of this interviewee’s organisation to deliver projects, contributing towards their longer-term creative ambitions as a result:

*“...the thing about that first [Fusion] project was we then got a letter of support for our [grant] application which went off from Communities First and I really do believe that having that on-the-ground grass roots support for the project really must of helped in terms of getting that funding... It’s very much increased our capacity.”*

- 3.33 For another interviewee, the Fusion Partnership had leveraged in opportunities to share best practice with a wider professional audience. This opportunity may not have materialised otherwise:

*“We’ve also, through the projects that we did, it leveraged in other opportunities. We’ve had opportunities to share our work much more widely – across the UK and internationally through the [national association], and had opportunity to speak at a [national conference] recently. So, all of these things are linked to that project, which might not have happened without the Fusion programme.”*

*Benefits for individuals participating in Fusion supported cultural activities*

3.34 As well as benefits for their cultural organisation, several of those interviewed noted benefits for individuals participating in the cultural activities facilitated via their respective Fusion Partnerships.

3.35 In the main, the benefits cited by interviewees of Fusion supported activities centred on:

- breaking down individual’s barriers and misconceptions around participating in cultural activities and attending culture and heritage events;
- providing new experiences and opportunities for participants; and
- building a sense of both ownership and a right of access for these individuals, many of whom were perceived by interviewees to be accessing the cultural resources on offer for the first time.

3.36 A few of those interviewed described how the activities on offer encouraged families to attend and participate in cultural events designed around school curriculum-based learning events together:

*“...looking back to the [Fusion activity], it was a good project for not just bringing the young children in, but you also got the parents and families involved. On the back of that we want to expand on and develop new projects, because the families found that whole process exciting.”*

One interviewee felt the activities their organisation had designed in collaboration with other members of the Fusion Partnership, and had

then delivered independently, contributed towards a positive family learning experience likely to continue:

*“...they’ve had an enriching experience. A lot of them wouldn’t have ventured in through the door if they hadn’t been pushed by the [activity] they wouldn’t have entered here on their own, and once they’re here, most of them have a very positive experience of the museum. So it’s building their confidence as well. We’re able to support, they can see the potential in using this place to support their children with their homework if there’s anything on history or whatever, and they feel confident enough to come back off their own accord. So it’s building the confidence, breaking down barriers, making it more accessible to them, feeling that they are welcome here anytime, because it can be a daunting space, a museum.”*

3.37 For this interviewee, the activities on offer were helping to build soft skills; in this instance, building the confidence of parents to support their children’s learning at school. The development of soft skills through participating in Fusion activities was an unprompted benefit cited by others interviewed:

*“It’s learning a whole raft of skills or cementing things that you’re learning about yourself. I think that’s really good for anyone who’s participating.”*

3.38 Another interviewee also specifically noted empowering socially excluded individuals and groups with a shortage of key skills living in deprived communities as a potential spill-over benefit of the Fusion programme. According to this interviewee, the activities supported through the Fusion Partnership had engaged new groups, resulting in the development of follow-up projects intended to be designed co-productively with target audiences:

*“It’s finding the right projects, and then where to go next. So it’s either signposting or working with that group and identifying what the needs are with the community... we have a really deprived community with socially excluded people with low skills, and we could do something around literacy skills next to follow on... it’s “ok, we’ve done this, so what next?”, and sometimes it’s about empowering the groups and they do something themselves. It’s helping people to help themselves.”*

3.39 Another contribution the Fusion Partnerships were said to have made by some interviewees was simply promoting more generally cultural activities as “fun” to participants, and thus rewarding and enriching experiences in their own right, without allusion to potential wider benefits. One related suggestion was that some of the novel activities on offer helped to provide participants with a fresh outlook or perspective on their culture:

*“...giving peoples a different activity to do; something that’s unrelated to other stuff that they may have done before that gives the children an opportunity to be involved in stuff that they wouldn’t normally get to be involved with, especially if you don’t have a car.... it was great giving children that exposure to cool Welsh language - their culture, and new opportunities, and new fun activities that are not a bit worn out.”*

3.40 The quote above also helps to highlight another theme which arose across several of the interviews: the difficulties for some individuals living within deprived communities to physically access cultural activities and culture and heritage venues. This is considered in more detail under the discussion on the challenges perceived by interviewees and online survey respondents with the Fusion approach.

#### *Benefits for local authority services*

3.41 All of those interviewed felt the Fusion Partnership approach had brought about benefits for local authority services. One point that emerged strongly in many of the interviews was the ways in which, through Fusion, local authority services had their eyes opened to new

ways of thinking and doing things. At interview, these discussions tended to centre on local authority services learning about alternative ways of engaging target groups and individuals:

*“...they’ve had opportunities to hear about alternative ways of engaging different sections of community and breaking down barriers. Hearing about some really positive projects and ways of working has helped them think about alternative ways of addressing some of their priorities. Bringing artists and arts organisations on board has helped them deliver on some of those priorities.”*

*“I think its opened their eyes to the way arts and heritage can be used in their work, which I don’t think was considered before, because we’d made approaches in the past about arts and regeneration, and the door wasn’t closed, but I don’t think we sold the case as well as we could have and I don’t think they were really buying it.”*

3.42 As illustrated by the quote above, many of those interviewed brought up the theme of barriers not just in relation to breaking down misconceptions of culture within target groups and individuals, but also some prejudices against the value of cultural interventions perceived by interviewees to exist within local authorities. Another benefit that arose during the interviews therefore was the opportunity Fusion provided for organisations to make the case for culture to local authority services. This was articulated by one interviewee in the following terms:

*“A greater understanding of what each sector can bring... and probably breaking down some misconceptions and some barriers.”*

3.43 Some interviewees also emphasised how important it was for local authority services to see the activities in action, so as to gain a greater understanding of the different cultural offers available. One interviewee for example framed this discussion around the theme of new ways of thinking and doing things, and in terms of local authorities, to an extent, being risk averse. They felt that historically, local authority services

played it safe and were unwilling to try new activities and / or different providers. For this interviewee, the local authority had traditionally delivered a “very narrow” cultural offer based on “regurgitating all the time the same stuff” and intensified by local government budget constraints. For them, a key benefit of Fusion was opening-up and widening the perspectives of local authority stakeholders simply by enabling local authorities to employ different artists, thus allowing them to try a wider-range of cultural offers and perhaps be a bit less risk averse in decision-making:

*“I guess it’s to try things out and see how they [local authority services] can engage themselves in different ways. I think it’s easier for the council to go back to people that they always try or always use... and talking personally about our projects, I don’t think they always think of drama as an activity to deliver, and the artists that come and work with me are professional artists that they wouldn’t have seen before. I think it was just good for them to have their eyes opened to a wider range of artistic offers and how those artists, although they are professional artists producing work in their field, are also working in community settings and then [local authority services] can see how that could happen again... so a benefit is just trying things, because the council doesn’t have a lot of money, and they just do the same old stuff over and over.”*

3.44 Interviewees were generally positive about the opportunities to network with local authority stakeholders provided through Fusion. Many reported on opportunities to share ideas and opinions with local authority stakeholders, and receiving encouragement and an opportunity to discuss and debate viewpoints in return. This included the sharing of both good and bad practice. Two of those interviewed noted how the meetings provided a forum for strengthening relationships with local authority services, thus avoiding duplication and supporting collaborative working:

*“I think the main benefit for [local authority services] is basically knowing who’s working in their area... to know what sort of organisations are there, knowing the work that it is that these organisations are doing, and helping to support those activities rather than implementing or duplicating on things that are already being done by another organisation.”*

*“On the benefits to local authorities... it allows the relationship to deepen between the different services... it allows the local authorities to share good practice and bad practice... I think the collaborative working is definitely the future.”*

It is worth noting that one interviewee highlighted the important role local authority services could play in helping cultural organisations to demonstrate the value of their activities to tackling poverty. For this interviewee, a key benefit of the Fusion approach was the emphasis placed by local authorities on monitoring and reporting outcomes through tracking the progress of participants. This meant the interviewee had a better understanding of the issues surrounding the impact of cultural interventions on wellbeing:

*“...there’s so much research coming out at the moment on wellbeing and what drives wellbeing... how [cultural interventions] can help older people with wellbeing, how we can help younger people with wellbeing and how that then drives healthier, happier communities... whether its Communities First and just thinking about what local services are available to people in the communities... those are places where the arts can be hugely useful and where we really all want to input, we really do... the interesting thing for the arts in that conversation is some of the amazing work that local authorities have to do around how they track their participants, how they track people who are interacting with them... there’s so many different ways that the arts can help local authorities and local authorities can just help the arts to know a bit more about their impact.”*

*Benefits for local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities*

- 3.45 Some interviewees noted specific benefits of the Fusion Partnerships for those local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities through the Communities First programme. For these interviewees, advantages of the Fusion approach for participating local community agencies' included how the Fusion Partnerships had connected artists involved in the design and delivery of exciting and interesting projects with local community agencies. As a result, this was viewed to be enabling innovation by opening doors to new ideas and opportunities for local community agencies to engage target groups and individuals in different ways, which had resulted in the delivery of novel activities.
- 3.46 Another benefit cited by a small number of interviewees was the pooling of resources between cultural organisation and local community agencies as a result of relationships forged through Fusion Partnership membership. The pooling of financial resources was specifically mentioned by one interviewee in relation to local community agencies; and two interviewees described how the sharing of responsibilities at project design and delivery level had resulted in the delivery of additional activities.

*"It's that exposure to high quality arts interventions and different ways of engaging groups and individuals. It's thinking outside the box a bit more in how they might address some of their priorities."*

*"It pools resources and gives them access to a product that wouldn't otherwise happen. So very practically, they wouldn't have access to a theatre production for young people normally. So it gave them something to offer that was fun and enjoyable and out of the ordinary."*

*"...they've been able to reach people in a different way that maybe they wouldn't have been able to before, and access different services and different partners."*

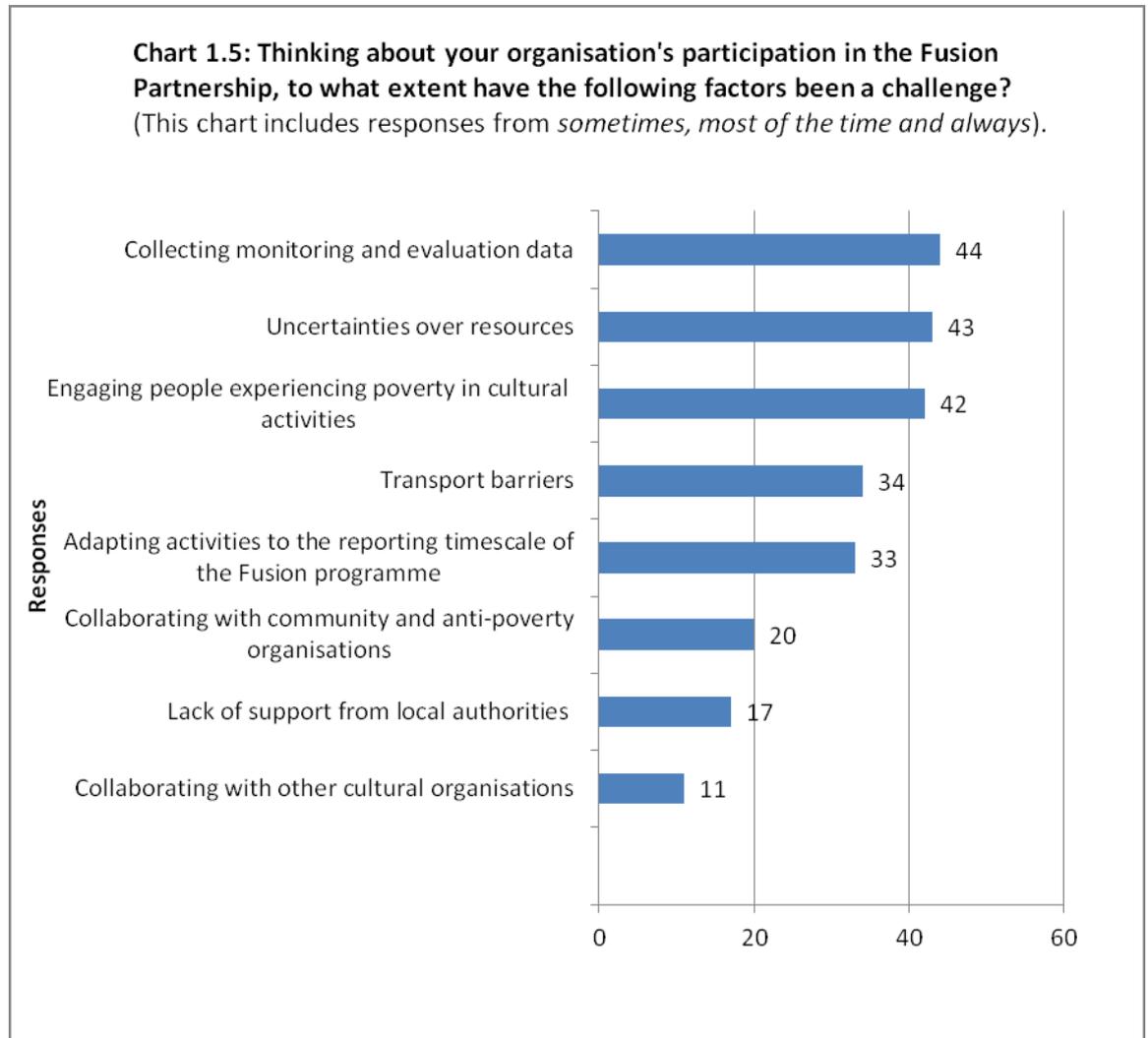
### *The delivery of activities*

- 3.47 When asked to consider if, since joining a Fusion Partnership, their organisation “is more effective at running activities with ‘harder to reach’ groups”, almost half of respondents (n=31) either *strongly agreed* (n=7) or *agreed* (n=24) with the statement. A smaller proportion of the survey responses, nine respondents (14%) however either *disagreed* (n=7) or *strongly disagreed* (n=2) with the statement. Over a third of respondents (n=23), accounting for 36% of respondents, *neither agreed nor disagreed* with the statement.
- 3.48 According to the results of the online survey, sixty six per cent, or nearly two thirds of respondents (n=42 (*strongly agree*, n=5; *agree*, n=37)), felt that “individuals experiencing poverty are accessing cultural activities more” since their Fusion Partnership; with only five respondents either *disagreeing* (n=4) or *strongly disagreeing* (n=1) this was the case. Fifteen respondents *neither agreed nor disagreed* with the statement.

### **Challenges and critical success factors**

- 3.49 Respondents to the online survey and interviewees were also asked to consider any challenges and limitations they associated with the Fusion approach. This section presents findings on themes that emerged in relation to these topics. The findings are considered alongside factors identified by survey respondents and interviewees as critical to the achievements of the Fusion Partnership, which are outlined throughout this section and pulled together as part of a wider discussion on the Fusion programme’s key success factors in the following chapter.
- 3.50 As part of the online survey, respondents were asked to think about their organisation’s participation in a Fusion Partnership, before indicating the extent to which a number of factors had presented a challenge. Of the survey responses received, the most commonly cited challenge was ‘collecting monitoring and evaluation data’, with 69% of respondents finding this either *sometimes* (n=34), *most of the time*, (n=8) or *always*, (n=2) challenging. This was closely followed by ‘engaging people

experiencing poverty in cultural activities’, with 64% of respondents finding this either *sometimes* (n=41), *most of the time* (n=8) or *always* (n=2) to be a challenge. These results are illustrated below in Chart 1.5.



### *Collaboration and effective communication between stakeholders*

3.51 As part of the online survey, respondents were asked the extent to which they found “collaborating with other cultural organisations” a challenge during their organisation’s participation in a Fusion Partnership. Most respondents *never* (n=16) or *rarely* (n=35) found collaborating with other participating cultural organisations to be a challenge, accounting for four fifths, or 80%, of responses. A small proportion of seven respondents reported they *sometimes* found it to be a challenge; with a smaller proportion again finding it a challenge *most of the time* (n=1) or *always* (n=3).

3.52 In the survey, respondents were also asked the extent to which “collaborating with community and anti-poverty organisations” was a challenge during their organisation’s participation in a Fusion Partnership. Most respondents *never* (n=11) or *rarely* (n=32) found collaborating with community and anti-poverty organisations to be a challenge; although, accounting for 67% of responses, to a lesser extent than with “collaborating with other cultural organisations”. Just over a quarter of survey respondents (n=17; 27%) *sometimes* found collaborating with community and anti-poverty organisations challenging, with a small number of respondents having found this to be *always* (n=2) or *most of the time* (n=1) the case.

3.53 For the survey respondents, the vast majority did not find a “lack of support from local authorities” to be a frequent challenge to their organisation’s participation in a Fusion Partnership; with over 70 per cent of respondents (n=46) selecting either the *never* (n=23) or *rarely* (n=23) response option. Fourteen respondents (22%) *sometimes* found a lack of support from local authorities to be challenge; with three respondents stating that getting support from local authorities was a challenge *most of the time* (n=1) or *always* (n=2).

3.54 Communication difficulties were often mentioned at the semi-structured interviews, and in particular, the relationship between cultural organisations and Communities First officers. In the cases where there was not a designated member of staff for the partnership, some interviewees reported they had been overlooked during the initial phases of their LDB establishing a partnership, leading to uncertainty and a perception that their local authority did not recognise the contribution their organisation could make to Fusion:

*“...it feels like there’s definitely a communication challenge in terms of Communities First just getting information out to us around what’s happening...”*

*“...communication has been the main one for us.... I think the hardest thing was getting our foot through the door and once we got our foot through the door it became slightly easier.”*

- 3.55 Similar difficulties were highlighted at the survey’s open-ended response question on challenges, where two respondents highlighted effective communication between stakeholders. For example, *“understanding clearly the collaborative efforts in order to promote them effectively to the public”* was viewed as key by one respondent, because ineffective consultation and information-sharing were issues they had experienced. Another respondent described the difficulties of:

*“...working with Communities First in a productive way... Our advice and expertise was not used, even though we had the contacts and have undertaken projects of this nature for a long time.”*

Whereas for a different survey respondent, the challenge was:

*“Getting into the partnership initially - we had to invite ourselves as we were overlooked!”*

- 3.56 An issue for one interviewee was how to communicate learning and build on best practice under the partnership. This response focussed on the need for evidencing the effectiveness of interventions and disseminating findings:

*“...how do we measure what we’ve done? How do we measure the impact of what we’ve done and make sure that we’re, that all the partners involved, have been all informed about that so we can all communicate where the successes are?”*

Conversely, one respondent noted in the online survey that the level of reporting requested by the Fusion programme was too much, and hindered the partnership-building process. This respondent, along with

another, also felt that the emphasis on collecting outcome data was too burdensome:

*“The main issue was the level of reporting required which to some extent stifled the flexibility and organic nature of partnership building.”*

*“[a challenge was] having to listening to multiple presentations about Communities First targets and activity plans.”*

### *Capacity-building*

3.57 Many points raised during the interviews centred on the issue of limited capacity and resource to deliver activities. Some of these responses focussed on the capacity of staff in terms of finding the additional time to effectively participate in the delivery of activities. For example, several of the interviewees described attending Fusion Partnership meetings, as well as hosting activities in some instances, as an add-on to their day-to-day responsibilities which required juggling existing commitments. In most of these instances however, the challenges were discussed alongside an overarching desire to contribute towards the objectives of the partnership.

*“We’re a really small team, so at times it’s a challenge because we want to do things, we’re so willing, and it’s whether we have the resources. It’s “can we do this?”, “can we get around this?”, “are there enough people on that?” It’s organising ourselves to be able to contribute. That’s always a bit of a challenge... it sometimes takes a bit of work to get around all these things.”*

*“...because I’ve got a Wales-wide remit and I’m only part time project funded, sometimes it’s just purely a capacity issue or a time issue. I’ve got to cover the whole of Wales, so I just haven’t been able to get to as many meetings as I would have liked to have done.”*

*“The capacity of staff, that’s a huge challenge because it’s an add-on to our day to day work. Having said that, they were [participants] that we were hoping to target, so it has been a part of my work as well, but the capacity to do the work has been challenging at times, and I think as well, you put a lot of effort into it, and sometimes the drop-out rate is quite high and that’s a little bit frustrating, but you know that’s part and parcel of working with [the participants] really.”*

- 3.58 One interviewee drew from their personal experience within a Fusion Partnership to highlight the input of LDBs as a risk, in terms of them not having the right people in place to build partnerships and work as effectively on the design and delivery of activities:

*“...the links may be a bit patchy or a bit weak depending on who the lead partner may be, and they don’t necessarily have the sufficient skills, capacity or time to really push things forward.”*

- 3.59 As part of the online survey and in some of the interviews, another challenge raised concerned the time frame of the Fusion programme itself. For instance, two of the interviewees raised issues which included the limited time available to build relationships and identify needs in partnership with target participants, as well as the requirement of the programme for activities to be designed and implemented within short reporting timescales. These were both viewed as weaknesses in the Fusion approach, with the short timescales of the programme perceived to restrict deeper engagement with the target participants:

*“...there is a challenge, in that to do the co-production takes time, relationship building... and it’s not just as simple as asking people what they want because if they’ve no idea, they won’t know what they want. That’s too big an-ask. You need to... engage with them to show the sort of thing for them [to do], then it becomes more “yes, I want more of this”, or “yes, I’d really be interested in doing that.””*

*“They [LDB] had to move on it straight away and come up with ideas straight away. It was almost over as soon as it began really. I think the deadlines, and getting the priorities and ideas together was too short really.”*

- 3.60 The theme of relationship-building was also noted by survey respondents. When asked to reflect more generally on the challenges of the Fusion Partnership approach, one respondent noted “...*time in nurturing new partnerships*” as a factor which had proved challenging to their participation. They highlighted the break between the first year and the second year of the pilot phase as impeding on their organisations ability to develop relations with other stakeholders. Another respondent to the survey also emphasised the time required to establish links:

*“Fusion meetings are a slow process - time is needed to build up relationships and trust.”*

#### *Engaging people experiencing poverty in cultural activities*

- 3.61 One of the questions in the survey asked the extent to which “engaging people experiencing poverty in cultural activities” had been a challenge during their organisation’s participation in a Fusion Partnership. Over half of respondents (n=35; 55%) *sometimes* had challenges, while nearly a third of respondents (n=20; 31%) *rarely* (n=20) did. However, only one respondent *never* found engaging people experiencing poverty in cultural activities to be a challenge. In contrast, seven respondents (11%) stated engaging people experiencing poverty in cultural activities was challenging *most of the time* (n=5) or *always* (n=2).

#### *Resource constraints*

- 3.62 The uncertainties created by the current economic climate, budget cuts across the culture and heritage sector, and the difficulties this has created in terms of longer-term strategic planning was also emphasised by some respondents. For example, according to one interviewee:

*“...you’re working across a sector whose funding is really up and down, and given the current economic and social climate, that may get worse. So trying to create a model of growth is really difficult at the moment.”*

3.63 Similarly, a respondent to the online survey cited cuts to the culture budget at both local authority and national level, at the Arts Council Wales, as a significant barrier to their partnerships ambitions:

*“Ansicrwydd o ran cyllido gweithgaredd celfyddydol... a gostyngiad yng nghyllideb prosiectau loteri Cyngor y Celfyddydau yn effeithio ar ystod a uchelgais gweithgareddau celfyddydol.”*

3.64 In general, “uncertainties over resources” was the factor that presented itself most frequently as a challenge to survey respondents’ participation in a Fusion Partnership. Over a fifth of respondents (22%) cited this as a challenge either *most of the time* (n=7) or *always* (n=7); although this does account for a relatively small number of fourteen responses. Most responses to this factor clustered around the *sometimes* response option (n=29; 45%), with over a quarter of respondents (n=18; 28%) either *rarely* (n=12) or *never* (n=6) perceiving a lack of resources to challenge their organisations participation in a Fusion Partnership.

3.65 When (asked in an open-ended response) questioned about any other factors found to be a challenge, four survey respondents highlighted concerns over their ability to forward plan due to the phasing out of the Communities First programme. For one of these respondents, the challenge was:

*“... a lack of planning for the future, with the sword of Damocles hovering over the head of Communities First for a long while ...”*

3.66 Two of the other survey respondents framed their open text response around the difficulties of both retaining and allocating staff to activities following Communities First related restructures; thus impeding their organisations ability to deliver projects in a collaborative way:

*“Allocating resources to manage the Partnership during year two become more challenging due to staff availability and structural changes related to Communities First. Allocating resource to additional activity has been challenging, not in terms of motivation, but in terms of competing priorities and a finite resource and time to deliver.”*

*“The biggest challenge was the announcement regarding Communities First from Welsh Government. Following the announcement this set of a chain of difficulties in motion for all partners involved in working collaboratively with Communities First to deliver the Fusion programme. The programme is supposed to be a collaborative one where partners work side by side, but unfortunately the announcement had a crippling effect on the partnership due to the uncertainty cast over the future of Communities First and the resulting loss of key members of staff who felt it necessary to seek alternative employment.”*

#### *Financial support for activities*

- 3.67 The amount of financial support available to Fusion Partnerships for developing activities was specifically raised as a challenge by survey respondents and at the semi-structured interviews. These responses focused on the limited funding available, through either the Fusion programme or at local authority level, and across the cultural sector more generally.
- 3.68 Financial uncertainties were raised by three interviewees, who emphasised the up-front work needed to embed working relations and expressed a concern that once the grants stop, there may be no way to continue the Fusion Partnership approach. Insufficient resources to undertake activities was seen as a particular constraint, with two interviewees emphasising the additional resource it took to bid for grants from other sources as a particular concern, because it means investing the time upfront with no guarantee that the work put into applications would pay-off.

*“...if we are able to get some grant aid to support the capacity to do that work, we might be able to lay down some of the foundations for that. But, I do worry that when it runs out then the work will stop and nothing will happen.”*

*“I guess it's that challenge of how to collaborate if there's not money... unless they can pay you to do something it's quite hard for me to deliver something, unless I put a big project together and leverage in some funding to do it. I'm hopeful that in the future I can do that, and [the cultural organisation and the LDB] can maybe do some funding applications together again, but if those funding applications aren't successful then the project won't happen, which is not a brilliant outcome for [cultural organisation] or for our Fusion partners.”*

- 3.69 Another interviewee perceived inconsistencies between the financial resources made available for the delivery of activities and the Fusion programme's goals:

*“...the risk is that it's not sufficiently funded for such a high profile project which had such broad ambitions. The funding didn't really match those ambitions, or at least not initially as far as I was aware.”*

- 3.70 At the online survey, a respondent also raised concerns over the limited budget within their partnership for developing new activities, and issues around managing stakeholder expectations over the delivery of activities with a limited budget.

#### *Training needs*

- 3.71 One interviewee described how they had felt under qualified to deal with some of the sensitive situations which arise when working with participants, and identified the need for further training to overcome this as a key challenge:

*“At times as well, you find that the support that the [participants] need can be pretty intense and you feel maybe that you're not qualified to deal*

*with those challenges. That's one suggestion I will be making after this round that maybe as the cultural organisations, we might invest in some training with that... I'm there on my own really and sometimes I feel maybe I need some more skills.*

#### *Monitoring and evaluation*

- 3.72 When respondents were asked to consider their organisation's participation in a Fusion Partnership, over half *sometimes* (n=34; 53%) found "collecting monitoring and evaluation data" a challenge. A quarter (n=25) responded they *rarely* found it a challenge, and a very small proportion of two respondents *never* found it challenging. At the other end of the scale however, ten respondents (16%) *always* (n=2) or *most of the time* (n=8) had issues collecting data.
- 3.73 The survey also asked respondents the extent to which they agreed, since their Fusion Partnership, "the approach towards monitoring and evaluation within your organisation is more robust". Nearly two thirds of respondents (n=37; 58%) *neither agreed nor disagreed* with this statement. At the other sides of the scale: slightly over a quarter of respondents (n=17; 27%) either *agreed* (n=14) or *strongly agreed* with the statement; whereas at the opposite end of the scale, a small proportion of respondents (n=9; 14%) either *disagreed* (n=6) or *strongly disagreed* (n=3).
- 3.74 Survey respondents were also asked the extent "adapting activities to the reporting timescale of the Fusion programme" had been challenging, with over a third (n=24; 37%) responding *sometimes*. Just over two fifths (n=27; 42%) responded *never* (n=10) or *rarely* (n=17). In contrast, nine respondents encountered challenges either (14%) *always* (n=2) or *most of the time* (n=7).

#### *Embedding opportunities within communities*

- 3.75 When asked what other factors had presented a challenge to their organisation's participation in a Fusion Partnership, some respondents to the online survey cited the difficulties of embedding cultural

opportunities. The issue of building trust and sustainable relationships with community organisations, given the limited timeframe of the funding available, was noted as a particular challenge by one of these respondents. For another respondent, a key emphasis was on ensuring that the activities delivered were embedded within a framework of longer-term strategic thinking.

*“The fact that we are all short term funded programmes leads to lack of trust by communities.”*

*“Providing activities and opportunities that are sustainable, enabling, relevant and have real legacy. Participatory research and embedded evaluation would assist in this.”*

3.76 Indeed, one survey respondent indicated that the activity-based focus within their partnership impeded its ability to effectively embed practice:

*“The focus of participation has been to join in activities without much embedded participation - when Fusion ends the activities will end with it. It has not had a sustainable focus but an activity based focus.”*

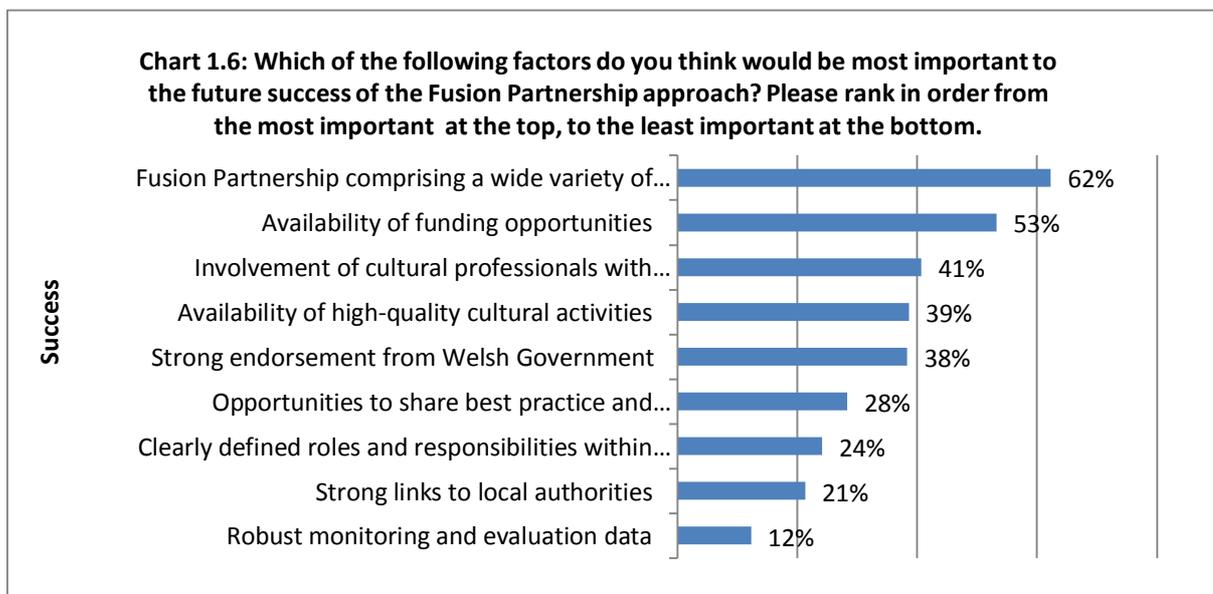
Another survey respondent felt the range of stakeholders at partnerships needed to be expanded, to take on a wider range of anti-poverty organisations:

*“There is a need to increase the partners from the community at some of the meetings - housing associations, other development organisations and so forth.”*

#### *Critical success factors*

3.77 In the survey, respondents were asked to rank nine factors against each other in terms of how important they felt they were to the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach (see Question 10, Annex D). Factors were ranked in order from the most important at the top, to the least important at the bottom. A percentage for the number of

respondents which had ranked a factor within their top three most important factors was calculated (a full breakdown of the question results can be found at Table 5, Annex G), so as to determine how factors were ranked against each other overall. A “Fusion Partnership comprising a wide variety of organisations from different sectors” was considered the most important factor to the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach, with 62% (n=38) of respondents ranking this within their top three. Ranked the least important factor overall was “robust monitoring and evaluation data”. Only 12% (n=7) of survey respondent ranked this within their top three most important factors. The results to this question are illustrated at Chart 1.6, below.



3.78 Survey respondents were also asked in an open text response question (see Question 11, Annex D) what other factors they thought “would be most important to the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach”. Twenty six responses were received in total, focussed on the following themes:

- *Collaboration and the co-productive development of initiatives*  
Factors around this theme arose most frequently, with fourteen of the open responses focussing on issues around incentivising approaches that encourage collaboration between stakeholders.

Key topics which arose included the importance of building strong links between cultural organisations and local community agencies; encouraging good working relationships and partnership-building between stakeholders; facilitating networking opportunities on a consistent basis; making sure that harder to reach groups are involved through the participation of local community agencies in Fusion Partnerships; and engaging the community in the design of activities “so that we do not continue to do to people, that they are part of the design of programmes”, with a focus on local provision.

- *Measuring outcomes and learning from evidence*  
Seven responses specifically referenced monitoring and reporting arrangements and / or the need to evidence the effectiveness of cultural interventions supported through Fusion; for example, through goal setting or case studies. One of the responses however did critique the “rigid monitoring mechanisms” of Communities First, which in their view, did not capture the crucial role played by local community agencies working within deprived communities.
- *Increased funding for partnerships*  
Seven respondents brought-up the issue of funding. The issues raised by individual respondents included the need for more funding for activities, not simply a co-ordinating role; to fund activities supporting diversity; funding for materials; and to link more effectively to providers with access to culture funding streams. One respondent did however emphasise: “Fusion must be believed in and not seen as just an avenue to funding”.
- *Strong leadership of the Fusion Partnerships*  
Factors around the positive role strong leaders could play in shaping partnerships, and in guiding the design and delivery of activities, were cited by four respondents. This leadership role however was framed differently by respondents. Some emphasised the importance of having creative agents within key partnership

roles, and others highlighted the role key individuals within LDBs have played in the pilot phase of the Fusion programme.

- *Effective communication between stakeholders*

Three responses expressly noted improving communication as an issue that needed to be resolved for the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach. In particular, one of these responses emphasised a need to better support the different voices and the sharing of information across the network; and the other two more generally cited a need for clearer avenues of communication.

- *Embedding cultural activities within deprived communities*

There were also three responses which referenced a need to engage deprived communities in the design and delivery of activities. The emphasis was on the importance of forward planning to create lasting change. Issues included how organisations could better forward plan to set budgets and align strategic priorities with Fusion objectives; and thinking more explicitly about the legacy of Fusion work, so as to “*create lasting change*”.

*The quality of the cultural offer*

3.79 A topic raised by several of the interviewees was the quality of the cultural activities offered through Fusion Partnerships, who strongly emphasised that, for them, a factor critical to the success of the partnership approach was for an individual with the appropriate level of understanding, in terms of cultural expertise and knowledge of the cultural sector, background to be intrinsic to the development of the partnership. For these interviewees, the Fusion programme should ensure that individuals with a strong understanding of the cultural sector are embedded within partnerships in a coordinating role, so as to ensure that the cultural activities on offer are of high quality, and that links with providers of thought-provoking and innovative cultural activities are already in place.

*“Actually having someone who’s very embedded... in heritage and culture already, so they know who’s out there.”*

3.80 According to one interviewee, without input from specialists who have worked professionally as artists in the field, the Fusion programme risks losing its distinctiveness. This interviewee highlighted how, for them, even cultural organisations funded by local authorities risked being entrenched in their ways of working, and not necessarily thinking creatively about the cultural opportunities available for target groups:

*“[If] it’s run by the council... a lot of the people who work in that setting are not artists. They haven’t got an arts background... They’ve worked their way through the council, maybe even in the cultural field, but they might not have any artistic understanding or underpinning, so the choices that they’re going to make are going to be massively different from someone who is an artist and can see quality and have those links already embedded within the area... you need someone who’s really creative to give it that artistic bent, otherwise it is just going to down a route that can be satisfied by other areas of the council that have back to work programmes.”*

3.81 Another issue relevant to the quality of the artistic offer raised by one interviewee centred on the non-artistic background of their LDB. As a result, for this interviewee, the cultural activities on offer were not promoted or marketed appropriately, with many viewed as being uninteresting and outdated. For them, this risked reinforcing a main barrier to increasing participation in cultural activities, which is effectively engaging harder to reach audiences:

*“There was one project... I think it just sounded like something you’d do at school, and that’s a danger... that everything just sounds a bit institutionalised, a little bit academic and a little bit worthy, or a little bit kind of assembly speak....”*

*“...You need to phrase things that sound a bit more dynamic. The outcomes can be the same and the activity can in some ways be the same, but thinking almost like “how do we market this activity?”, “how are we going to attract participants?”, “what language can we use to pull those people in?” It may sound a bit daft, but making it a bit cool and a bit sexy, so people think actually “what is this?””*

*No suggested improvements*

3.82 That said, two interviewees did not have any suggestions on how the programme could be improved, but wanted to emphasise that they were pleased with how their respective Fusion Partnerships had developed:

*“I definitely think more of the same, because it’s been working, and I think people have got loads out of it.”*

*“Hopefully I’ve been enthusiastic because I really think it’s been good... We’ve really loved being involved... I do think [cultural organisation] is more outward looking now. We always wanted to be. There was always this ethos that we need to have this community arm and community feel and it’s allowed us to do that... I can only say from our point of view, we’ve loved being involved.”*

3.83 The online survey concluded with an open response question asking respondents how else they thought “cultural organisations can support individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage”. Thirty nine responses were received in total, and in the main, focussed on the following themes:

- *Collaboration and the co-productive development of initiatives*

The most frequent responses were received around the theme of facilitating co-productive and collaborative approaches through involving a variety of stakeholders in the development of cultural activities (this theme was also prominent at Question 11 (see Annex D) of the online survey). The ways in which cultural organisations

could better support individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage included:

- utilising the existing networks of cultural organisations to widen the stakeholder-base of partnerships;
- exploiting the willingness amongst cultural organisations to collaborate with other stakeholders to align objectives;
- stimulate debate and share ideas within partnerships;
- co-producing activities between stakeholders to embed opportunities, make them relevant and genuinely participatory for target groups;
- for stakeholders to develop a more nuanced understanding of poverty and its effects, and challenge some assumptions of cultural organisations in the process.

*“By working together to offer a more varied approach... rather than recreate the wheel”.*”

*“Cultural organisations generally have an expertise at collaborative working and in finding creative solutions to pressing issues related to disadvantage. We have the ability to tailor-make projects and sometimes more flexibility in the way we can deliver our work. We already have good networks of contacts in place. It is useful for us to have the specific issues clearly defined and agendas out in the open so to inform the ideas of cultural activities that could complement the work of other agencies.”*

*“Work with the community [and] value the skills and knowledge of that community and the people at its core.... [Ask] how do we enable programmes like Fusion to make their ideas reality that leaves a lasting legacy where communities drive the programme rather than professionals?”*

*“By developing a more complex understanding of the nature of poverty to reduce some current notions amongst cultural organisations of what would “be good” for people.”*

- *Working with the community to identify tackling poverty objectives*  
Another key theme revolved around working specifically with the community on the design of activities. Responses focussed on how cultural organisations can better work in partnership with individuals and communities to identify their needs, and develop ideas on appropriate projects together, thus encouraging local ownership and facilitating change. For example:

*“By devising new projects in discussion with community groups based on the co-productive model to address the issues most relevant and to provide them with a meaningful platform and voice to influence future political decisions.”*

*“Work with the community; take away tick-box outcomes; community development in the heart of communities that values the skills and knowledge of that community and the people at it's core, such as, for example, “what do they know about culture?”, “what does culture mean to them?” and “how do we enable programmes like Fusion to make their ideas reality that leaves a lasting legacy, where communities drive the programme rather than professionals?”.*

- *Signposting and providing new opportunities*  
A prominent viewpoint across a number of responses was the role cultural organisations can play in signposting individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage to the opportunities available through culture. The issues which arose under this theme converged around the notion of widening access to a broad range of cultural opportunities for individuals living within deprived communities, thus raising aspirations and broadening horizons and skills in the process.

*“... by giving them experiences outside their regular routines, by opening doors for them to volunteer and gain qualifications and experiences, by supporting families to raise their aspirations for their children, encouraging communities to raise their aspirations for their communities’ children.”*

*“I think that cultural experiences can help individuals to broaden their experiences, contacts and horizons so that they can explore new routes into work, different ways to link to the community, and improve quality of life.”*

*“By offering programmes that are engaging, appealing and practical that give participants meaningful experiences, skills and outcomes that enable and inspire them to move on to new opportunities.”*

- *The sustainability of interventions*

Some respondents specifically referenced the sustainability of interventions as a key issue to be acknowledged, when thinking about the role of cultural organisations in supporting individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage. These responses centred on the issue of sustaining a level of engagement with communities and individuals. For one of these respondents, evidencing the effectiveness of interventions through participatory research and longer-term evaluative thinking could assist in supporting the sustainability of interventions.

*“Providing activities and opportunities that are sustainable, enabling, and relevant and have real legacy; participatory research and embedded evaluation would assist in this.”*

*“Building in sustainability and avoiding that binge/purge/starve engagement that funding can bring.”*

- *Funding*

Across many of the responses, other ways in which “cultural organisations can support individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage” were presented against an emphasis on financial constraints. Other issues under the theme of funding centred on the economic limitations stakeholders are currently operating under, and how this is affecting the cultural sector; the financial investment needed to embed activities; and the need to ensure the availability of free activities for participants.

*“We already organise an annual arts and literature event, where all activities are FREE to attend. It is important to give young people the opportunity to try new things, they might not be able to otherwise.”*

*“We would like to offer more learning and a range of skills support - but funding is needed to be able to offer this...”*

*“Cultural organisations do what they can to engage by diversifying their approach to engagement but the current economic climate and the resultant cuts and constraints on these organisations has made it harder... The outcomes Communities First desire to achieve doesn't always dovetail with the outcomes of the cultural bodies and further work (and possibly funding) is needed to support cultural bodies to be able to tailor their offer to engage with communities and the poverty agenda.”*

- *Valuing culture*

Many respondents highlighted the opportunities cultural organisations can bring to tackling poverty through engaging people in activities. However, one respondent felt strongly that culture needed to be valued appropriately by some local community agency stakeholders working within disadvantaged communities:

*“There is a massive opportunity to engage people through cultural events and we have gathered evidence to show the difference it can make. The main thing is that it needs to be properly valued and not seen as a ‘woolly subject’... cultural activities as therapy towards personal development is proven to work by research but it is not valued equally on the ground. I work in an environment where colleagues from other teams are working at the crisis end of the spectrum and they find it difficult to take on that preventative work is worth the money.”*

## 4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Overall, participants were positive about Fusion Partnerships. Generally, any difficulties encountered by participants were felt to be outweighed by the benefits. The key benefits were seen to be:
- developing and strengthening the links between stakeholders from different sectors;
  - raising the profile of stakeholder's organisations and making the case for culture to local authority and anti-poverty stakeholders in partnerships; and
  - targeting and engaging new 'harder to reach' groups living within deprived communities.
- 4.2 However, some areas for improving Fusion Partnerships were also identified. One suggested area for improvement was about allowing more time early in the process to establish and develop the links between stakeholders and help facilitate co-productive approaches between stakeholders and participants, given the time it takes to build collaborative relationships. This was also linked to the need to consider the sustainability of activities and embedding and incentivising partnerships so that projects can be developed in collaborative and more sustainable ways.
- 4.3 Improved communication also arose as an issue that could be improved for the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach. In particular, to more effectively promote inclusive partnerships, share information, avoiding duplication, and learn from others. Factors around the positive role strong leadership played in coordinating partnerships and guiding the design and delivery of activities were raised as critical to the future success of Fusion. Many of those who participated in the research emphasised the key role individuals with artistic backgrounds and a thorough knowledge of the cultural sector should play in developing partnerships at LDB level.

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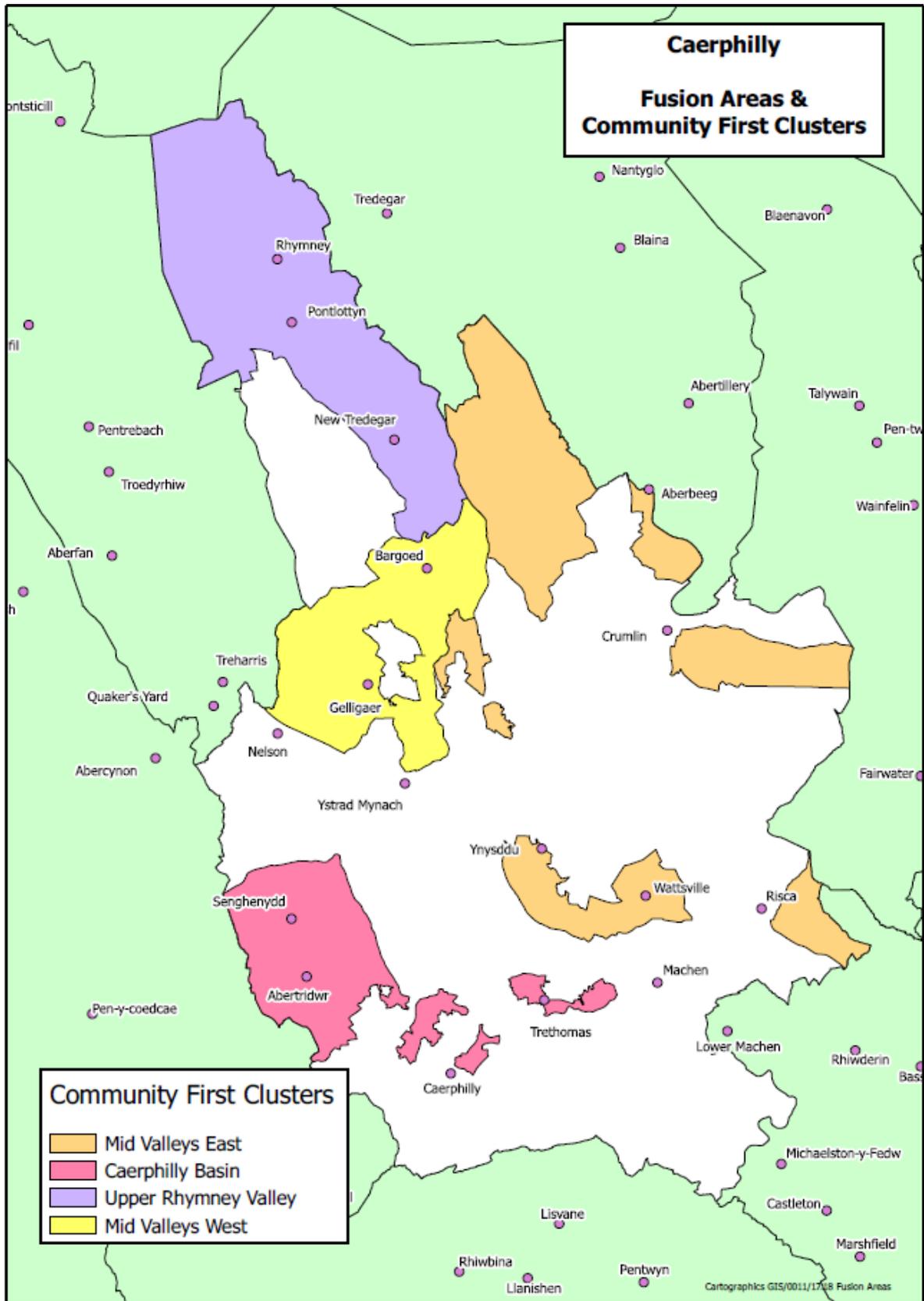
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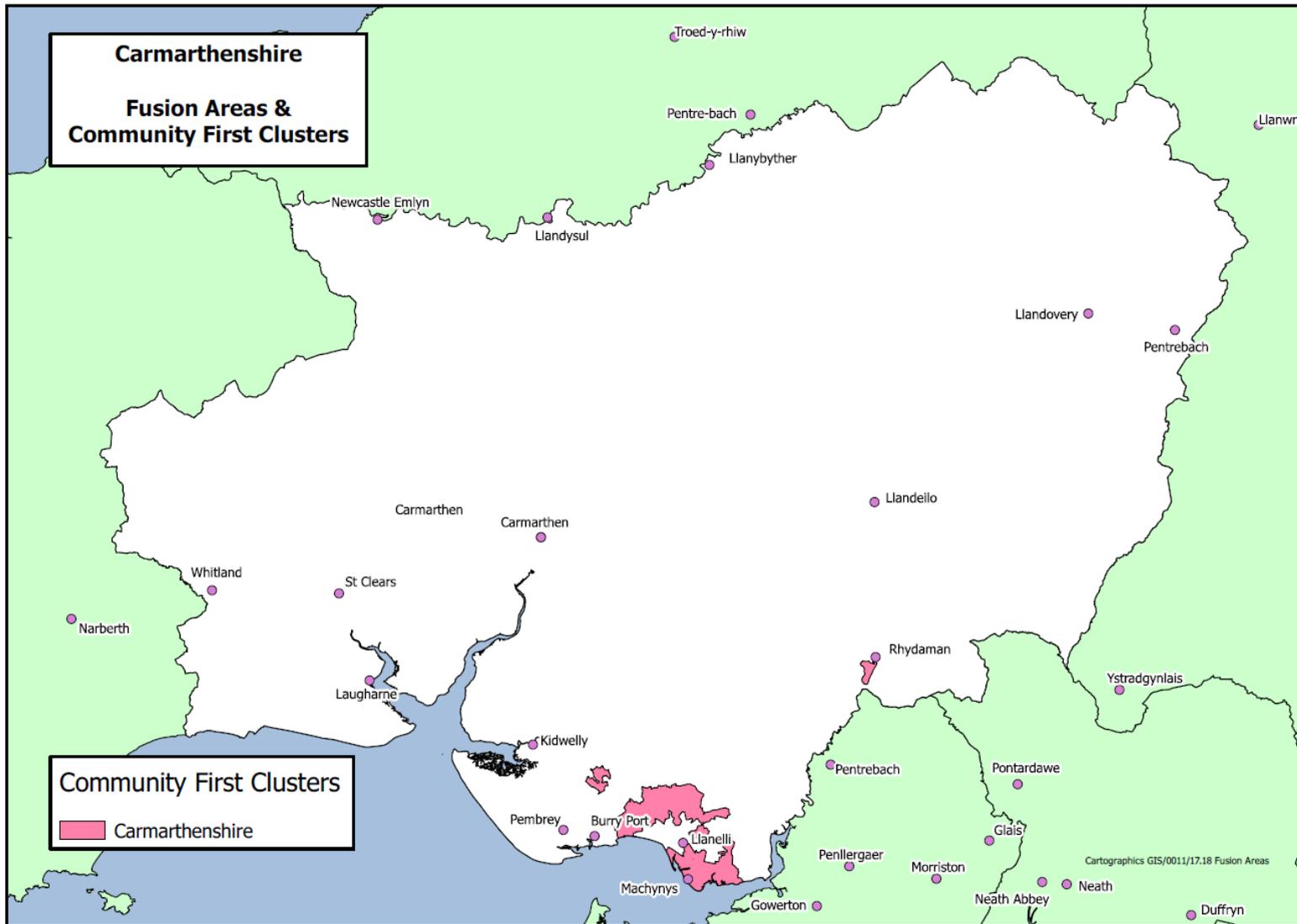
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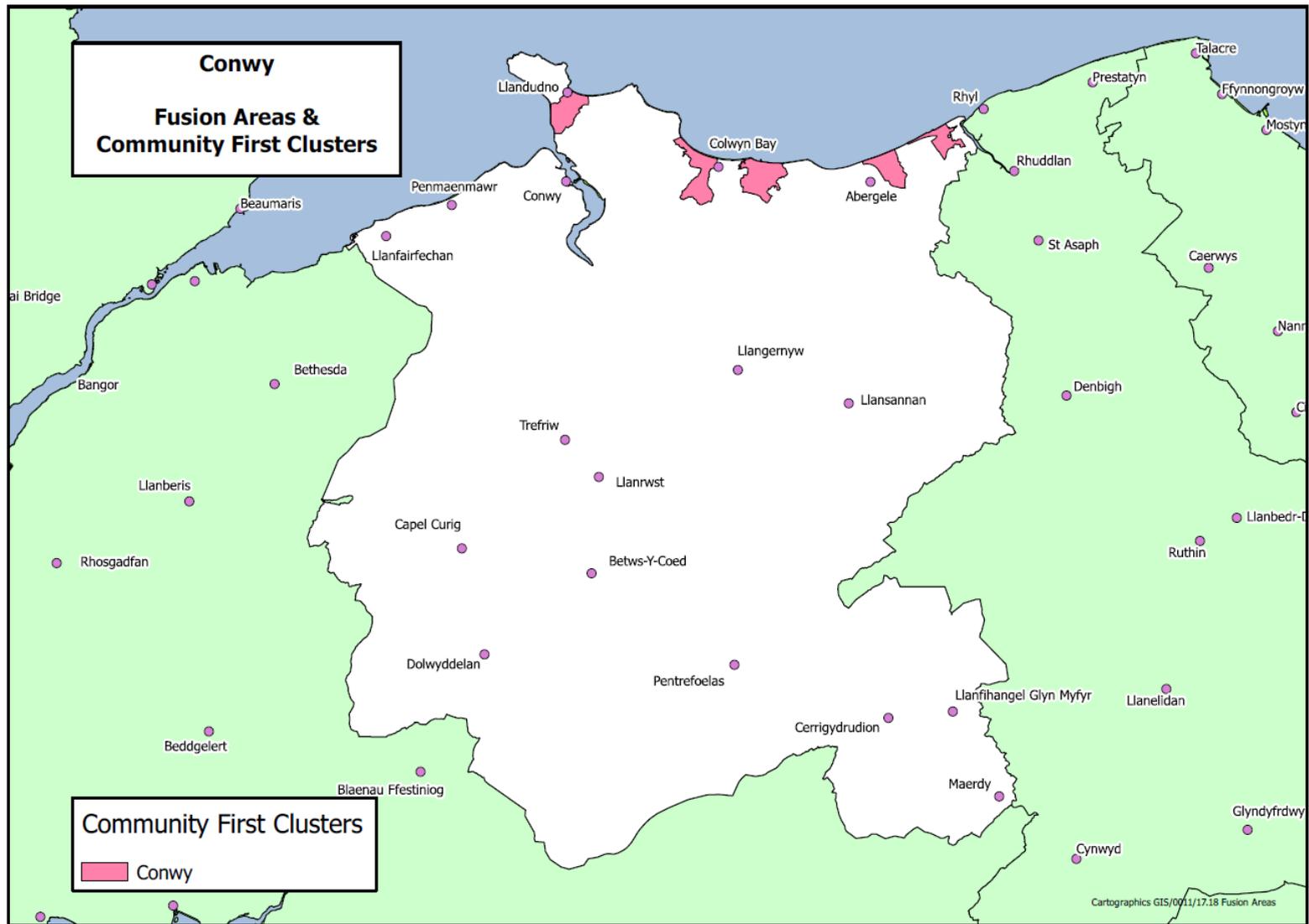
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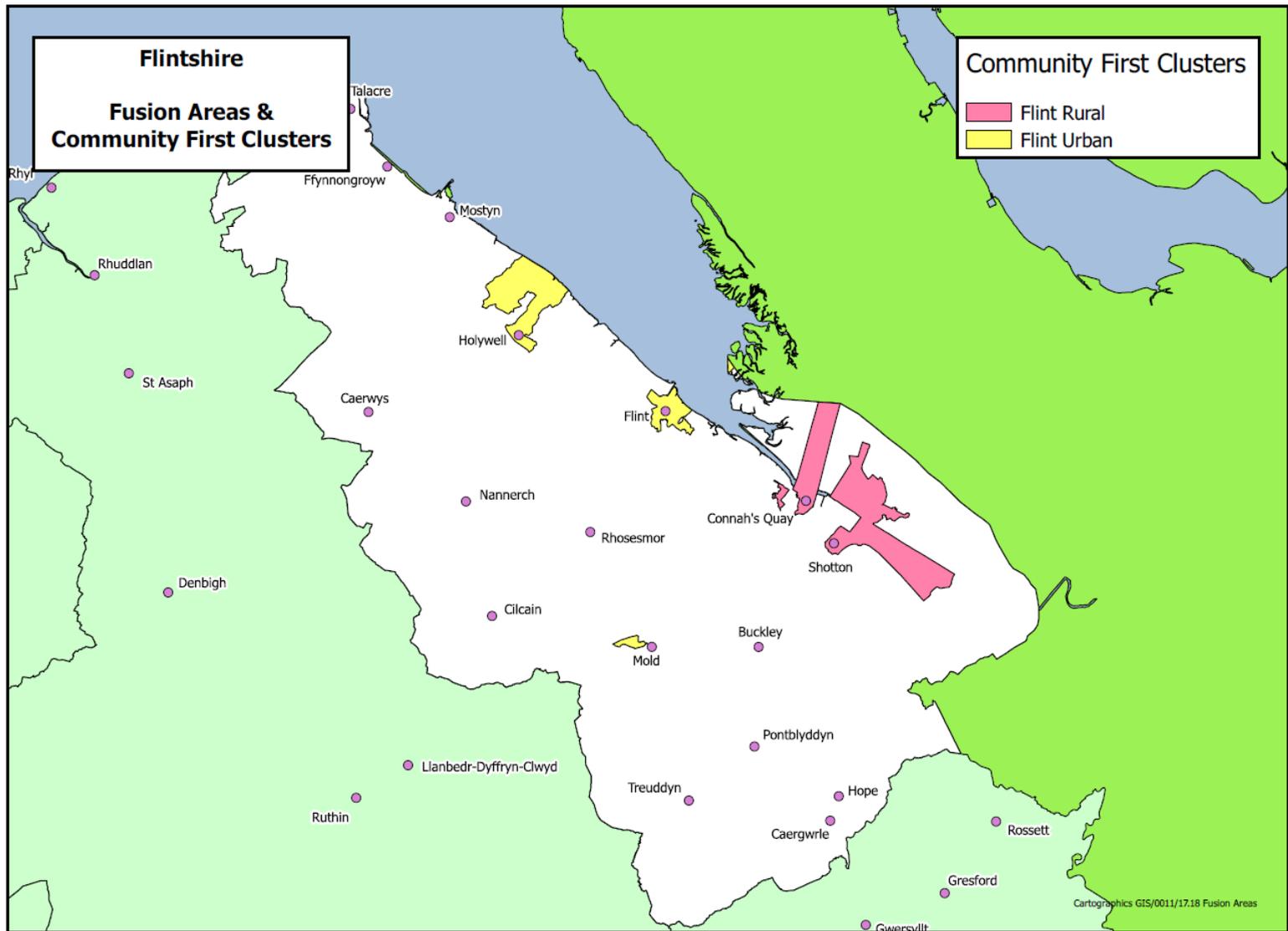
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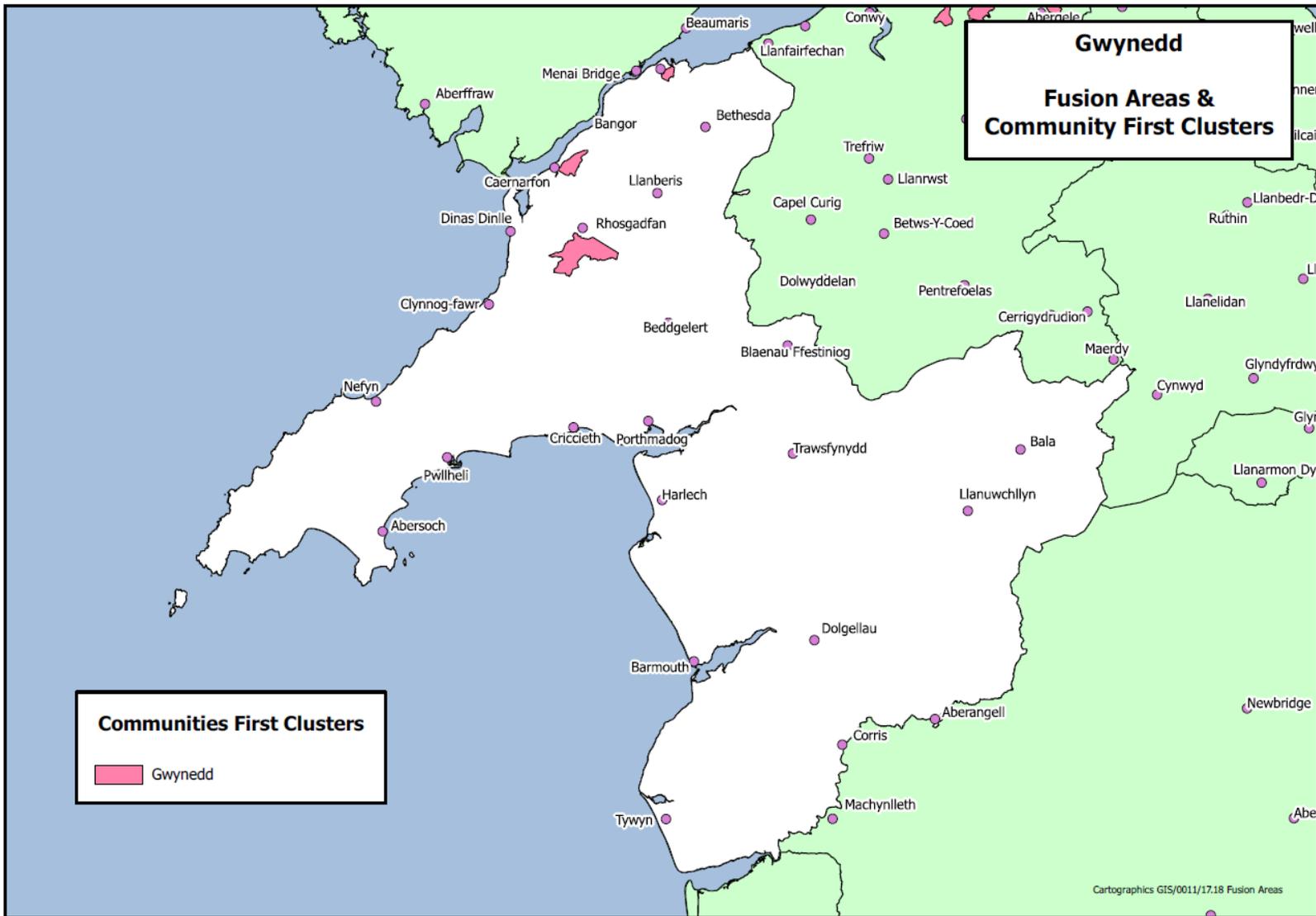
# Annex A – Maps

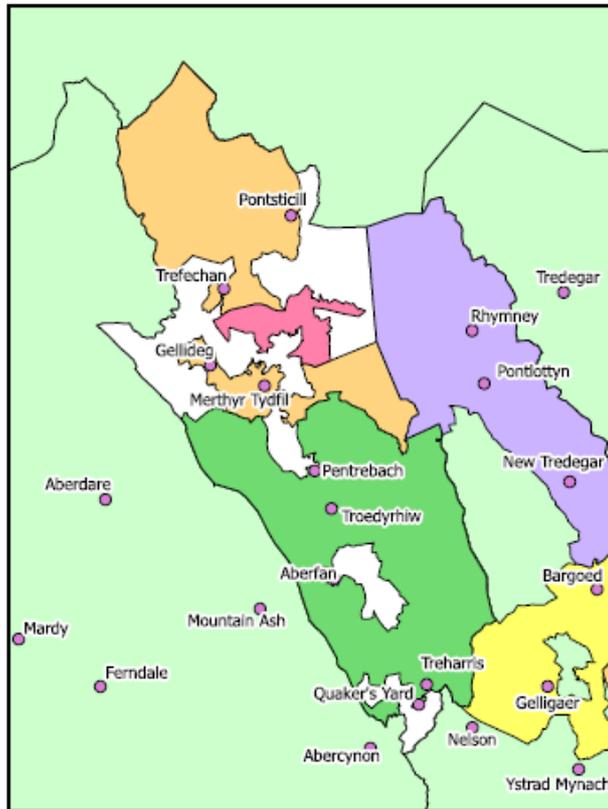












**Merthyr Tydfil & Cardiff**  
**Fusion Areas & Community First Clusters**

**Merthyr Tydfil**

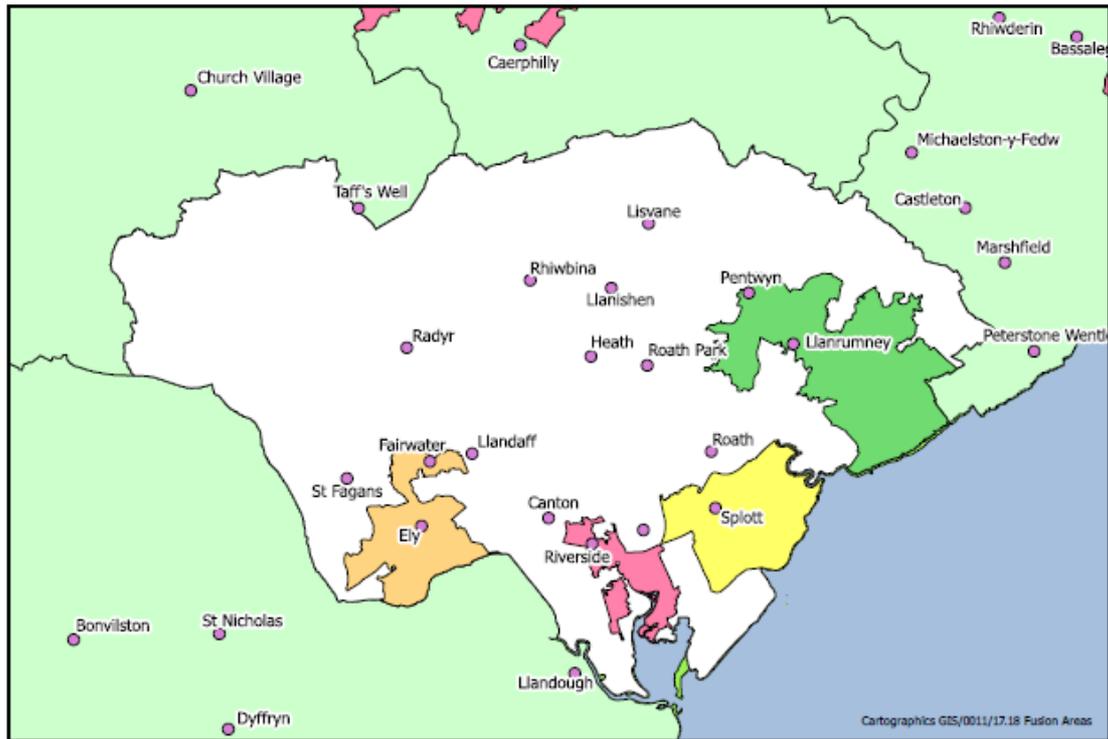
**Pioneer Fusion Areas**

- Merthyr Tydfil South
- Merthyr Tydfil North
- Merthyr Tydfil Mid

**Cardiff**

**Pioneer Fusion Areas**

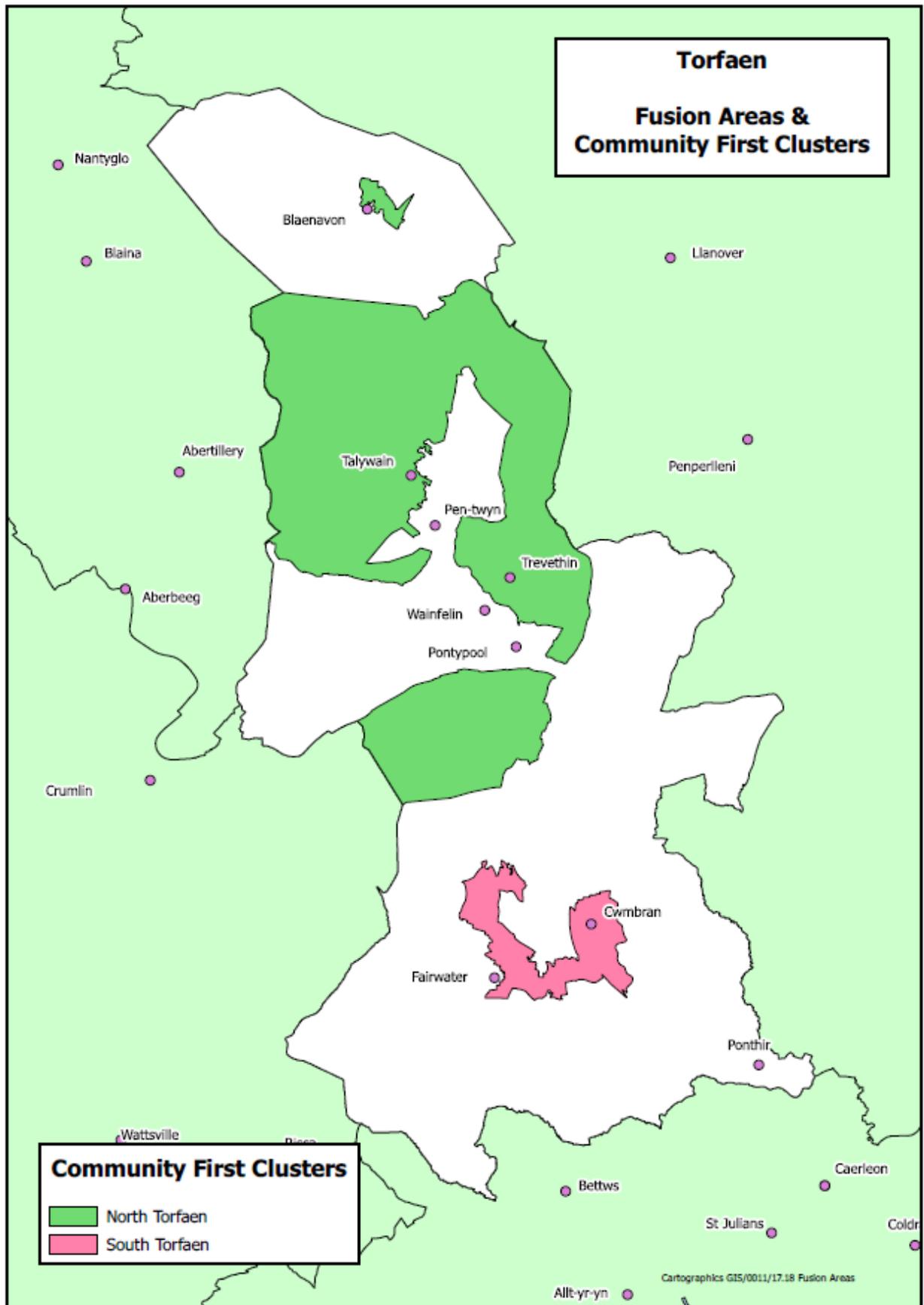
- Cardiff East
- Cardiff West
- BRG
- STAR

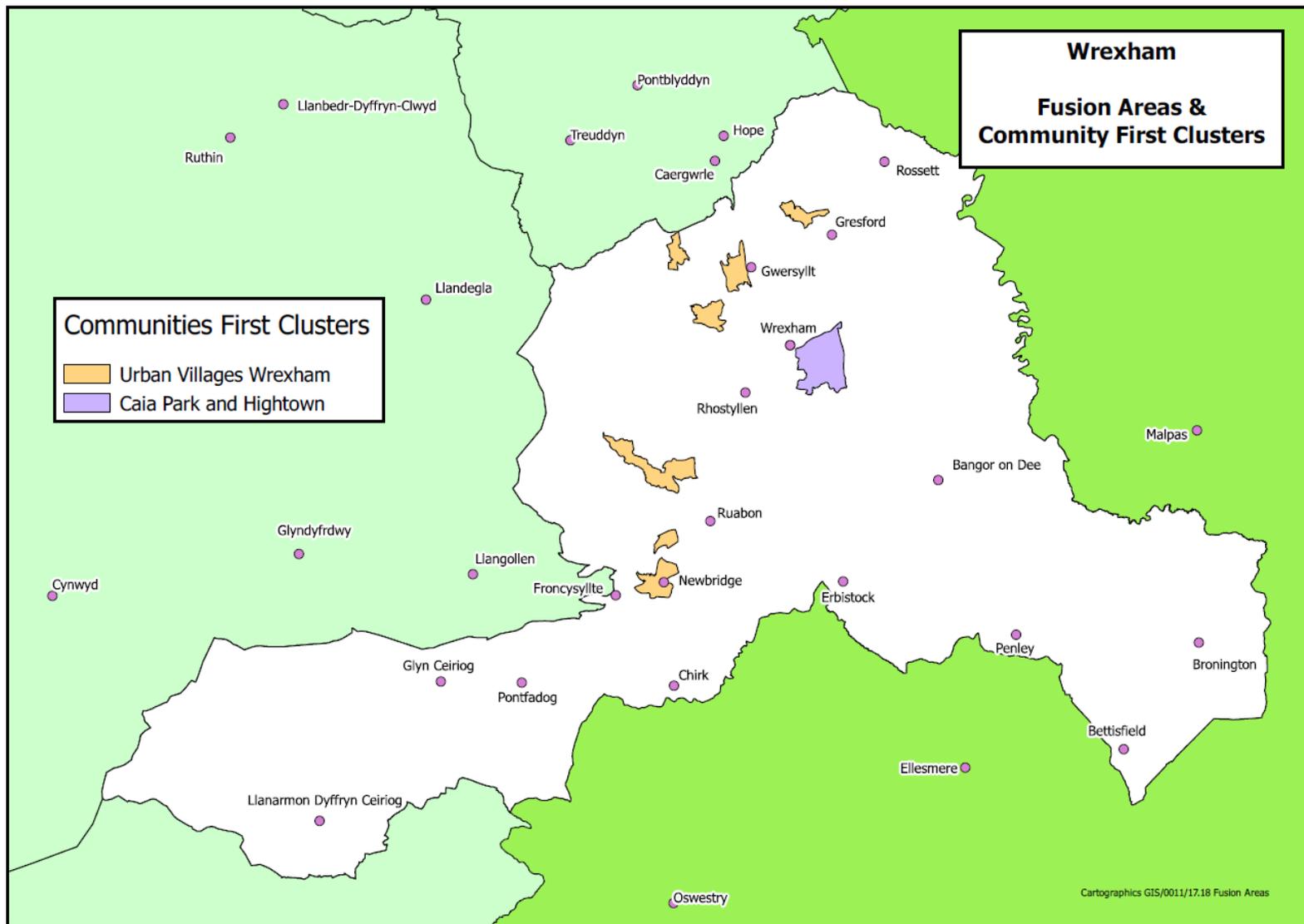


Cartographics GIS/0011/17.18 Fusion Areas









## Annex B:

The data in the table below is a sample of some of the most commonly utilised performance measures across the Fusion programme ('prosperous'; 'health'; and 'learning') together with total numbers of individuals reported as meeting the desired outcome. The sample provides an illustration of the contribution made by the programme against the Communities First performance framework. For some Fusion activities, more than one outcome was reported against an individual for the same activity.<sup>18</sup> The partnerships collected and reported the monitoring information in different ways. These limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting the data.

<b>Mesur Perfformiad / Performance Measure</b>	<b>Allbynnau Gwir rhwng 1 Ebrill 2016 a 31 Mawrth 2017 / Actuals achieved between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017</b>
<hr/> <b>Prosperous</b> <hr/>	
PC-PM.5.3 More Involved in Community through regular volunteering	219
PC.PM 3.1 Gaining Basic IT Skills	134
PC.PM 1.1 Completing an employment related course	22
<hr/> <b>Health</b> <hr/>	
HC-PM.2.3 Increased Physical Activity	319
HC-PM.3.2 - Feel more positive about their mental well being	88
<hr/> <b>Learning</b> <hr/>	

<sup>18</sup> For example an adult receiving a qualification may also have reported more positive attitude to learning or reduced social isolation.

---

LC-PM 3.4 Parents are more engaged with school	271
LC PM 4.1 Gaining a qualification	183
LC-PM.2.3. Improved behaviour in school	159
CD-MP.1.3 Parents reading regularly with child	83

## Annex C: Infographic



# Cyfuno

creu cyfleoedd drwy ddiwylliant

Cyfnod Peilot 2015-2017

## Buom yn gweithio gyda



Amgueddfeydd



Archifau



Llyfrgelloedd



Safleoedd  
Treftadaeth



Y Celfyddydau



Ysgolion



Elusennau



Awdurdodau  
Lleol



Cyrff Iechyd



Cymdeithasau  
Tai

## i wneud gwahaniaeth

Dros  
**5000**  
o bobl yn  
cymryd rhan

Mwy na  
**150**  
o bartneriaid

**10**  
rhaplen  
ar draws  
Cymru

Dros  
**300**  
o wirfoddolwyr

Dros  
**1500**  
o bobl ifanc yn  
cael eu cefnogi  
i wneud yn  
well yn yr ysgol

Dros  
**1250**  
o bobl yn cael eu  
cefnogi i fyw  
yn iach

Dros  
**100**  
o bobl yn  
derbyn  
cymhwyster

## drwy gymryd rhan mewn



Archeoleg



Celf a Chrefft



Dawns



Drama



Cyfryngau  
Digidol



Ffilm



Llenyddiaeth



Cerddoriaeth



Awyr Agored



Chwaraeon

#CyfunoFusion

<http://llyw.cymru/cyfuno>



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## Annex D: Questionnaire

1. Which organisation do you work for?
2. What is your role within the organisation?

The Fusion programme is being refreshed as Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture / Cyfuno: Creu Cyfleodd trwy Ddiwylliant.

The Welsh Government's Museums, Archives and Libraries Division has led on the Fusion programme since April 2015 when they established the Pioneer Area approach. In the pilot year (April 2015 to March 2016) this saw the establishment of 6 'Pioneer Areas', namely:

- Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil (who together, comprised one Pioneer Area)
- Gwynedd
- Newport
- Torfaen
- Swansea
- Wrexham

In 2016, the number of Pioneer Areas taking part was increased to include:

- Caerphilly
- Carmarthenshire
- Conwy
- Flintshire

The term 'Pioneer Area' is being phased out and replaced with 'Fusion Partnership'.

In line with this, the remainder of the survey makes reference to the 'Fusion Partnership' to describe what was previously referred to as a 'Pioneer Area'.

3. Which of the following Fusion Partnerships is your organisation a member of? Please select all that apply.

- Caerphilly
- Carmarthenshire
- Cardiff / Merthyr Tydfil
- Conwy
- Flintshire
- Gwynedd
- Newport
- Swansea
- Torfaen
- Wrexham

- Would prefer not to say
4. When did your organisation first join a Fusion Partnership?
- First year of the Fusion programme (between April 2015 and March 2016)
  - Second year of the Fusion programme (April 2016 to date)
  - I don't know

5. To what extent would you say you agree or disagree with the following statements?

As a result of the Fusion partnership...  
*(Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Disagree Strongly)*

- ...my organisation collaborates more with people living in disadvantages communities on the design of activities.
  - ...my organisation targets activities more effectively at people experiencing poverty.
  - ...my organisation collaborates more effectively with other cultural organisations.
  - ...my organisation collaborates about the same amount with local authorities.
  - ...my organisation collaborates more effectively with local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities.
6. Why did your organisation choose to participate in the Fusion partnership? Please choose the 3 main reasons.
- To support people to gain an accredited qualification
  - To develop people's confidence
  - To develop people's interest and skills
  - To widen access and participation in cultural activities
  - To have an opportunity to work with new groups
  - To have an opportunity to work with new communities
  - To meet funding requirements
  - Other (*open text box*)

7. Thinking about your organisation's participation in the Fusion Partnership, to what extent have the following factors been a challenge?

*(Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Most of the time, Always)*

- Collaborating with other cultural organisations
- Collaborating with community and anti-poverty organisations

- Engaging people experiencing poverty in cultural activities
- Collecting monitoring and evaluation data
- Adapting activities to the reporting timescale of the Fusion programme
- Lack of support from local authorities
- Transport barriers
- Uncertainties over resources

8. What other factors has your organisation found to be a challenge?

*(Open text box)*

9. To what extent would you say you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Since the Fusion partnership...

*(Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree)*

- ...local authorities have no greater understanding of the value of culture.
- ...cultural activities are perceived more positively by community and anti-poverty organisations.
- ...the approach towards monitoring and evaluation within your organisation is more robust.
- ...my organisation is more effective at running activities with 'harder to reach' groups.
- ...individuals experiencing poverty are accessing cultural activities more.
- ...my organisation has no better understanding of the role culture can play in tackling poverty.

10. Which of the following factors do you think would be most important to the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach? Please rank in order from the most important at the top, to the least important at the bottom.

- Fusion partnership comprising a wide variety of organisations from different sectors
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the Fusion Partnership
- Robust monitoring and evaluation data
- Strong endorsement from the Welsh Government
- Availability of funding opportunities
- Opportunities to share best practice and experiences
- Availability of high-quality cultural activities
- Involvement of cultural professionals with specialist knowledge

- Strong links to local authorities

11. What other factors do you think would be most important to the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach?

*(Open text box)*

12. Please rank in order of importance which of the following you think are important ways for culture to support individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage. Please order from the most important at the top, to the least important at the bottom.

- Early years learning
- Family learning
- Accredited learning
- Digital skills
- Volunteering, particularly to gain employability skills
- Work placements or other employment opportunities
- Activities that support physical and mental health and wellbeing

13. How else do you think cultural organisations can support individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage?

*(Open text box)*

## Annex E: Interview Guide

- 1 What organisation do you work for?
- 2 What is your role within the organisation?
- 3 Which Fusion Partnerships have you / do you work within?
- 4 What do you think the overall aims / objectives of the Fusion programme are?
- 5 What role do you think cultural organisations can play in tackling poverty?
- 6 Do you think cultural organisations have a responsibility to contribute towards tackling poverty objectives?

*Why do you think they have a responsibility...?*

- 7 What was your organisations motivation for joining the Fusion Partnership?
- 8 In what ways does your organisation contribute towards...

*...tackling poverty objectives?  
...the aims of the Fusion programme?  
...the Fusion Partnership?*

- 9 How does the Fusion Partnership work in practice?

*How does the network operate...?  
What do you think its role is...?  
Is there a good mix of organisations represented...?  
Does it work efficiently...?  
Expectations...?  
Have you found it helpful...? Why...?*

- 10 What activities have you delivered through the Fusion Partnership?

*New / existing activities...?  
One-off or repeated activities...?  
Opportunities for pathway progression for participants (e.g. through accreditation)...?  
In partnership with other cultural organisations...?  
Local authority services...?  
Other...?*

- 11 How are activities identified?

12 How do you identify / engage participants?

*Co-production...?*

*Are participants involved in the design and / or delivery of activities..?*

13 Has your organisation changed its ways of working as a result of the Fusion Partnership?

*If yes, how / in what ways?*

*If no, why?*

14 If yes, are these changes likely to be sustained in the future?

*If yes, how / in what ways?*

*If no, why?*

15 Do you work more collaboratively as a result of the Fusion Partnership?

With...

...other cultural organisations...?

...local authority services...?

...local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities...?

...participants...?

16 In what ways do you work more collaboratively?

*Specific examples...?*

*More joined-up thinking...?*

*More joined-up ways of working...?*

*Sharing ideas...?*

*Sharing experiences...?*

*Sharing resources...?*

*Shifted practice...?*

*Range of people involved in projects (e.g. people with limited previous experience or involvement with culture, volunteers, apprentices etc.)*

*What factors support working more collaboratively?*

17 What do you think the main benefits (if any) of participating in the Fusion Partnership have been / are...

...for participants?

...for your organisation?

...for other cultural organisations?

...for local authority services?

...for local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities?

*Tangible / concrete benefits (e.g. increased capacity / capability to undertake cultural activities; leveraged funding / resources etc.)  
Added value*

18 How effective do you think the Fusion Partnership model has been in providing an entry point into cultural activities for disadvantaged groups / individuals?

19 What have been the main challenges (if any) of participating in the Fusion programme?

*Are these challenges... ongoing / resolved?  
What barriers have been faced?*

20 Do you have any suggestions on how the Fusion programme could be improved?

21 Do you have any other comments / feedback?

## **Annex F: Case Studies**

### **Caerphilly Fusion Partnership**

#### **Context:**

The partnership's programme of activities utilise culture and heritage as tools to engage and upskill hard to reach families across the four Communities First clusters in Caerphilly Borough. The partnership supports families to access new experiences and break down traditional barriers that exclude residents living in deprived areas from participating in cultural activities.

#### **How was the partnership formed?**

Caerphilly County Borough Council joined the Fusion Programme in June 2016 after securing funding to participate in the second year of the pilot phase. The Council's Community Regeneration team formally established the Fusion Network in August 2016, bringing together four Communities Cluster teams and 35 cultural partners working across the cultural, arts, heritage, education, environment and voluntary sectors in the County. A key aim of the Network was to develop and strengthen existing relationships, as well as develop new partnerships to maximise the impact of activities developed through the work programme. Network meetings were held on a quarterly basis throughout the year and provided an opportunity for cultural partners to share information through both formal presentations and informal discussions, thus improving their understanding of the various organisations within the network. New cultural partners were invited to join the network on a continual basis throughout the year, either through recommendations from other partners or as a result of links made as part of the networking process.

Observations made by the lead partner towards the end of the programme period indicated that the formation of the network had resulted in improved links between cultural partners and Communities First teams, as well as with other departments within the Local Authority. It was also noted that the

network had developed a close working relationship with Torfaen Communities First team, which allowed cultural partners to draw on their experience of participating in the first year of the pilot phase.

### **What activities were delivered through the partnership?**

The work programme was primarily focused on Family Learning and Health and Wellbeing (including mental health). Specific projects were also developed around volunteering and improving employability which supported existing Communities First activity. Throughout the design and delivery process, emphasis was placed on using existing cultural assets within the Borough and across the wider region to support and enhance ongoing activities and projects. A main objective was to, encourage greater use of cultural assets by local residents and foster a better awareness of local history and heritage, whilst also developing new collaborative activities which provided opportunities to access a range of cultural experiences. A small-scale cultural event was held at the end of the delivery phase to celebrate the achievements of participants.

The work programme was developed and implemented in close partnership with the Council's Tourism Department, allowing the network to draw on the in-depth knowledge and experience of key staff in all aspects of the borough's rich and diverse cultural heritage. This new working relationship facilitated access to valuable cultural assets located across the four CF clusters as well as the Local Authority-supported cultural activities and services offered to residents and visitors.

Projects were delivered to plan, with many evolving and developing over the course of the year as a result of valued input from cultural partners. There were some changes to timescales during this time as most projects started later than intended due to delays in gaining grant approval and setting up administrative and financial structures. Projects were mainly focused on adding value to existing Communities First outcomes; however, some individual cultural activities were delivered by cultural partners for

Communities First residents that were not included in the original work programme. As the Fusion Network developed, new project ideas and cultural partnerships emerged, reflecting a more collaborative and joined-up approach to project design and delivery. The Pioneer Area hopes to further develop this approach in their future work through placing an emphasis on developing projects involving the whole network.

**What were the main benefits to:<sup>19</sup>**

**(a) Cultural partners:**

- Greater collaboration between cultural, arts and heritage organisations, the local authority, CF clusters, local community groups and other bodies working within the county to design, fund and deliver joint activities and projects. Existing partnerships have been strengthened and new working relationships have been forged, with further scope to develop this work in future;
- Increased awareness of and access to existing cultural assets within the Borough (including historical sites and buildings, museums and visitor centres) amongst network members. This in turn enabled cultural partners to add value to existing projects and activities, as well as support the development and implementation of new cultural activities;
- Opportunities to encourage hard-to-reach groups (including local Primary schools and older community members) and wider communities from within the CF Clusters to engage with cultural provision in their local area and gain new cultural experiences;
- Improved awareness and understanding of Communities First among local communities, raising its profile across the four cluster areas and within the County.

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<sup>19</sup> The evidence presented at this section was collected from LDBs and is based on their perceptions, and data they collected from stakeholders and participants.

**(b) Participants:**

- Increased engagement with local cultural, heritage and arts-based activities;
- Increased volunteering opportunities within the cultural, arts and heritage sectors;
- Opportunities to gain new cultural experiences and take part in activities outside participants' usual routines and environments;
- Increased levels of physical activity and a better understanding among participants of the health benefits of undertaking physical activity;
- More positive attitudes to personal mental and social well-being and enhancement of soft skills, such as increased confidence, self-esteem and self-belief;
- Strengthening multi-generational links within communities and reducing social isolation and loneliness, particularly among older and elderly members of the community;
- Opportunities to gain practical craft, technical and digital skills and formal qualifications;
- More positive attitudes to learning.

**What were the critical success factors?**

- Developing capacity: work undertaken to develop and deliver projects during the year created the necessary infrastructure to support the continuation and further development of future projects. On one particular project, staff have received tailored training to deliver sessions; skills which can be drawn upon in future at a relatively low cost;
- The opportunity to develop close working links with Torfaen Fusion Partnership, an established Pioneer Area, enabled the network to explore opportunities for joint-working, as well as draw on examples of best practice and what worked less successfully.

### **What were the key challenges?**

- Short timescale: The ability of the cultural partners to plan and develop projects collaboratively through the Fusion network was limited by the short timescale for delivering the work programme. The network was not fully established until after the Business Plan was submitted and approved and funding for the work programme granted;
- Changes to programme timetable: The majority of projects were delivered to plan; however some experienced delays or evolved into different projects with alternative outcomes. The lead partner noted that the initial timescales set for delivering projects had been unrealistic and did not take into account the time required to set up the network, confirm funding and finalise the work programme;
- Unexpected delays: Individual projects faced specific delays as a result of the long-term absence of key delivery staff.

### **Future opportunities:**

- Future projects should be planned and developed collaboratively through the network, at the earliest stage of the work programme, to ensure the engagement and commitment of cultural bodies and to fully benefit from their ideas, knowledge, experience and resources.

*“It’s just widened the net of people that we’re working with, and it’s also given us a better knowledge of the ways other organisations work as well. Because of Fusion, we’ve been able to find out more about other people’s agendas and link into them.”* (Cultural partner, April 2016)

*“We can coordinate things together so we’re not competing for the same pieces of work. Then we’ll put a programme of work together that identify the needs of the county.”* (Cultural partner, April 2016)

*“I felt better about being out in the open and learning about local history and prehistoric cooking.”* (Project participant, Flint Project)

## **Gwynedd Fusion Network**

### **Context:**

The Gwynedd Fusion Partnership seeks to maximise the opportunities for the arts, culture and historical environments to contribute to reducing poverty and raising the aspirations of residents with the Gwynedd Communities First Cluster.

### **How was the partnership formed?**

The Gwynedd Fusion Network was formed in 2015 as part of Gwynedd County Council's work programme for the first year of the pilot phase in 2015-16. The network, led by the Council through its Communities First team, brings together nine regional and national providers of culture, heritage and arts services to work in partnership with seven primary and secondary schools from within the Gwynedd Communities First Cluster.

### **What activities were delivered through the partnership?**

The Network's key priorities for the second year of the pilot phase emerged through a combination of identifying opportunities arising from the Gwynedd Communities First Achievement Plan and through discussions with network partners. The work programme was focused on the delivery of activities around three key priority areas:

- Supporting families to contribute to their children's education;
- Supporting people to develop employment skills and secure employment;
- Developing Lifelong learning opportunities in communities.

Under the first of these priority areas the network worked with the Communities First cluster to further develop a project based around the use of the Family Learning Signature - a tool used by local authorities and schools to develop and target resources aimed at improving attainment, attendance and behaviour, particularly among hard to reach families and disengaged learners. The tool was first implemented by Gwynedd Council in 2014 as part of a

collaborative project partnering Primary and Secondary schools from within the Communities First Cluster and subsequently developed during the first year of the Fusion programme pilot phase. During the latter, the emphasis was on developing a programme of family-based activities based at cultural, arts and heritage venues across the county aimed at stimulating family engagement with learning and strengthening links between families, schools and the wider community.

Gwynedd Fusion Network secured funding as part of the second year of the pilot phase to continue and expand the project, allowing it to work with the original cohort of pupils and families that participated in the first year and develop links with a new group of families from within the cluster. Over 100 families participated in the second year of the project and worked with members of the Fusion Network to develop a programme of activities and local events based around the arts, culture and heritage. The emphasis was primarily on adding value to existing projects or activities offered by the cultural partners, by tailoring these to the specific priorities identified through the family learning process. An important element was therefore to provide enjoyable, family-friendly sessions that could be easily adapted to different age groups, whilst also creating a supportive environment that would encourage families to visit the cultural, arts and heritage venues independently at a later date.

### **What were the main benefits to:**

#### **(a) Cultural partners:**

- Improved awareness of hard-to-reach groups and their particular needs;
- Improved collaboration between network partners and other organisations to deliver similar outcomes – greater ‘joined-up’ working;
- Development of new and mutually beneficial relationships both within the Fusion Network and across the wider programme allowing the exchange of information and sharing best practice and ideas, as well as failures;

- Facilitating links with local schools within the Communities First Cluster;

**(b) Participants:**

- Development and enhancement of soft skills, such as increased levels of confidence and self-esteem;
- Increased awareness of local cultural, arts and heritage offerings and an openness to explore and embrace new and positive cultural experiences within the local area.

**What were the critical success factors?**

- Commitment and buy-in from all partners, ensuring a shared vision;
- Strong emphasis on creating a collaborative and supportive environment;
- Pooling of resources to support joint-working.

**What were the key challenges?**

- The challenge of engaging and involving stakeholders and designing and delivering an effective series of activities within the programme's set time-frame;
- The challenge of achieving consistent family engagement across the cluster;
- Inconsistent prioritisation of the family learning signature process within schools across the cluster;
- Involving partners with the necessary capacity and capability to deliver activities effectively.
- 

**Future opportunities:**

- Engaging new cultural, heritage and arts partners and developing new collaborative interventions;

- Maintain and build on existing relationships with both cultural partners and project participants and develop new approaches to the co-production / co-design / co-creation of projects and activities;
- Broadening the scope and reach of the project to engage a new cohort of families;
- Developing a more robust and holistic approach to monitoring and evaluating project outcomes. As part of this, the evolving attitudes and behaviours of the families could be tracked, for example by focusing on health and wellbeing outcomes;
- Develop a way to better share what's working and what isn't.

*“We’re working towards the same objectives aren’t we? And rather than everyone struggling to do everything on their own there is more sharing going on. It’s a good way of recognising good practice - you pick up tips, you share your failures as well and I think it’s very supportive in that sense. If something doesn’t work, you can actually be honest about it and try and find a way around it. By sharing it with somebody else, somebody could offer ways of overcoming that problem.”*

*“It has been a good way of accessing schools and sharing with the schools the sort of work we can offer, and that’s been very beneficial because I don’t think the schools actually saw us as somebody who could cope with supporting families. They didn’t realise that maybe there are specialists within the museum that not only work with the collections but there is an actual learning officer there that can support them as well.”*

*“We build up relationships with everybody and once that’s in place and you’re aware of who’s out there, working and doing what, you’re more likely to actually pick up the phone and say if you’ve got an idea, is there anything we can do on this together? And I think there’s a good sense of cooperation and support amongst each other. You can see that actually in all the meetings so, it’s a good relationship.”*

*“It’s a slow process, but I think we’ve seen a difference. I took part in the pilot and I know that some things have improved the second time around.”*

*“The support that the families need can be pretty intense and you feel maybe that you’re not qualified to deal with those challenges. The cultural organisations need to invest in some training to enable us to deal with families without the support of schools and trained teachers. I’m there on my own really and sometimes I feel maybe I need some more skills. It could be just everybody putting their heads together and coming up with all the problems they had and seeing whether or not there is a way of offering some support through training to us as providers.”*

*“The activities that we provided will hopefully bring families back in after they experienced our tailor-made sessions, and that’s what we’re aiming at. ... When we take part next year, we would be looking at doing a series of sessions rather than just a one-off, because it does take time to get to know your families and gain their confidence”.*

*“If you had the capacity to actually work with them for a longer period of time you could actually have a discussion about the sort of thing they would like to do, but since it’s a one-off it’s not very practical.”*

## **Newport Community and Culture Partnership**

### **Context:**

The work of the Newport Fusion Partnership seeks to maximise the opportunities for the arts, culture and the historic environment to contribute to reducing poverty and raising ambitions for residents living within the four Communities First (CF) Clusters across the city of Newport.

### **How was the partnership formed?**

The Fusion Partnership was established by Newport City Council in September 2015 and is led by the CF team, with support from representatives of ten organisations, groups and bodies delivering arts, culture, heritage and education work across the CF Clusters. During the early stages of the 2016/17 programme, informal discussions were held between the CF Team and key partners (which included both new and existing partners who had participated in the 2015/16 programme) to consider the findings from the evaluation of the first year of the pilot phase. Strengths and weaknesses of key partners and their capacity to participate in the second year; and linkages to the priorities outlined in the CF Delivery Plans and the Single Integrated Plan for Newport were identified.. The work programme was focused around two key priority areas; Health and Wellbeing and Economy and Skills, and partners worked collaboratively to design and deliver projects and activities under these themes, drawing on their skills, capacity, previous experience, knowledge and organisational priorities (further details are provided below).

Observations made by one cultural partner suggested that the direct link to CF Cluster teams across the city, with their in-depth understanding of the local areas and the needs and priorities of community residents, enabled partners to design and target activities effectively.

*“I’m doing a big project ... and I wanted to place that project where it would be useful, where it would be most impactful. So, I went to Communities First and said what would you advise in terms of schools that we could work with where we could really make an impact and give young people a different experience*

*that they wouldn't normally have access to ... it was more looking for advice from Communities First as a partner and saying where do you think it would be useful to make an impact."*

The ability of the CF teams to facilitate access to and engage with local communities was also highlighted by the partner as crucial in enabling successful participant engagement, as this quote demonstrates:

*"It can be very hard, especially when you're starting in a community and you're just there with an open door to the room saying 'please come in'. That's where the partnerships are crucial ... In one project that we did that was really through contacts that were coming from Communities First, so getting it out there as much as we could through the Communities First partnership, talking to local residents, flyer-ing through people's doors just to make sure they knew it was happening."*

### **What activities were delivered through the partnership?**

The 2016/17 work programme builds on the projects developed during the pilot year to support the delivery of a range of defined outcomes under the two priority areas of Health and Wellbeing and Economy and Skills. These included:

- using cultural and heritage sites to promote health and wellbeing-based activities;
- supporting young people identified as, or at risk of being classified as 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) through training and volunteering opportunities;
- enhancing community learning and digital inclusion through projects aimed at supporting residents to gain digital skills;
- increasing engagement with culture, heritage and the arts, particularly among younger people, through targeted / tailored events and programmes.

By focusing on supporting follow-on projects and activities from the pilot year, the partnership could draw on the key lessons learned from the previous work

programme. In particular, the effectiveness of different community engagement methods and the ability to adapt activity according to the different needs and priorities of participants, and also build upon the existing links forged with both key partners and local residents within the CF Clusters.

The role of the cultural partners in delivering projects varied depending on the nature of the activity, from acting as lead delivery partners responsible for development and delivery to hosts and contributing partners.

**What were the main benefits to:**

**(a) Cultural partners:**

- Opportunity to allow small organisations and groups working within the cultural, arts and heritage sectors and with limited resources to contribute to a wider programme for tackling poverty through cultural engagement;
- Improved awareness and understanding of CF among partnership members, giving rise to increased partnership working and opportunities to design and deliver joint cultural activities across the four cluster areas and on a wider County level;
- Development of bespoke learning resources and experiences for Primary schools with the CF Clusters drawing directly on local cultural, arts and heritage sites and assets;

**(b) Participants:**

- Increased awareness of local history and heritage and increased engagement with local cultural, heritage and arts-based activities;
- Increased levels of physical activity amongst participants and an opportunity to take part in outdoor activities within a variety of local settings;
- Increased social interaction and opportunities meet other individuals and groups from the local community and other areas in the city;

- Opportunities to develop new digital skills using interactive and engaging online content;
- Opportunities to enhance digital learning knowledge within a formal educational and community setting;
- Improved employability skills among participants through training and practical applications (including marketing and sales; research; film-making and social media) and enhancement of 'soft' skills such as team-working; and communication;
- Strengthening multi-generational links within communities
- Increasing social engagement amongst traditionally marginalised groups within the communities.

#### **What were the critical success factors?**

- Having a network co-ordinator with a direct link to CF teams and an in-depth understanding of, and existing links with key actors within the cultural, heritage and arts sector has been crucial in facilitating the successful engagement of new partners, as well as supported the development of new cultural activities;
- The opportunity to develop a working relationship with CF Cluster teams at the local community level enabled cultural partners to successfully access funding and resources to develop new collaborative projects to support the work of the partnership;
- The involvement of communities in the identification of needs and priorities resulted in an increased sense of ownership of, and commitment to projects and activities;
- The networking element of the partnership was highlighted by partners as vital for sharing good practice and discussing ideas for collaborative projects.

#### **What were the key challenges?**

- Time and capacity to measure the impact of projects and activities and communicate impact and successes.

### **Future opportunities:**

- Sustaining working relationships between cultural partners and CF teams, and maintaining ties with local communities;
- An increased focus on the role of arts, culture and heritage in contributing to wellbeing objectives across different generations, from younger sections of the population to older people;
- Future programmes should aim to work more closely with the Local Authority to enable Fusion to learn from their approach to tracking participants through its various services. Within this, emphasis should also be placed on the role of the cultural, heritage and arts sectors in supporting individuals along their journeys to independent living or securing training or employment.

*“Communities First came in on the funding that I put in and wrote me a letter of support. I wouldn’t have had that without that first engagement with them and they were really happy to do that, because they’d seen the quality of the work that we did and the way that we did it, and really that chimed with them in terms of what they were trying to do.”*

*“...just having the opportunities to be around the table and see snippets of people’s work and talk about what people are doing is really helpful because you never know what come out of those networking meetings, and who then chases somebody else up and says ‘Oh I didn’t know you were doing that, can we talk about it?’.”*

*“I think it’s a very worthwhile programme ... it’s a very fertile place to be working and I’d love to keep working in the communities in which Fusion is working, and keep on working in the next 10 to 15 years and see where that takes us.”*

## Annex G: Survey results

Table 1:

To what extent would you say you agree or disagree with the following statements? As a result of the Fusion partnership...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
...my organisation collaborates more with people living in disadvantaged communities on the design of activities.	20	24	15	4	0	63
...my organisation targets activities more effectively at people experiencing poverty.	21	25	11	5	0	62
...my organisation collaborates more effectively with other cultural organisations.	25	22	13	3	0	63
...my organisation collaborates about the same amount with local authorities.	15	21	24	3	0	63
...my organisation collaborates more effectively with local community agencies working within disadvantaged communities.	22	28	11	2	0	63

**Table 2:**

**Why did your organisation choose to participate in the Fusion partnership? Please choose 3 main reasons.**

	<b>Response Count</b>
To support people to gain an accredited qualification	5
To develop people's confidence	25
To develop people's interest and skills	36
To widen access and participation in cultural activities	55
To have an opportunity to work with new groups	26
To have an opportunity to work with new communities	28
To meet funding requirements	0
Other	6
Response count	63

**Table 3:**

**Thinking about your organisation's participation in the Fusion Partnership, to what extent have the following factors been a challenge?**

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Most of the time</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Collaborating with other cultural organisations	16	35	7	1	3	62
Collaborating with community and anti-poverty organisations	11	32	17	1	2	63
Engaging people experiencing poverty in cultural activities	1	20	35	5	2	63
Collecting monitoring and evaluation data	2	16	34	8	2	62
Adapting activities to the reporting timescale of the Fusion programme	10	17	24	7	2	60
Lack of support from local authorities	23	23	14	1	2	63
Transport barriers	11	16	29	2	3	61
Uncertainties over resources	6	12	29	7	7	61

**Table 4:**

**To what extent would you say you agree or disagree with the following statements? Since the Fusion partnership...**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
...local authorities have no greater understanding of the value of culture.	3	9	16	24	11	63
...cultural activities are perceived more positively by community and anti-poverty organisations.	9	41	11	1	1	63
...the approach towards monitoring and evaluation within your organisation is more robust.	3	14	37	6	3	63
...my organisation is more effective at running activities with 'harder to reach' groups.	7	24	23	7	2	63
...individuals experiencing poverty are accessing cultural activities more.	5	37	15	4	1	62
...my organisation has no better understanding of the role culture can play in tackling poverty.	1	5	14	22	20	62

**Table 5:**

**Which of the following factors do you think would be most important to the future success of the Fusion Partnership approach? Please rank in order from the most important at the top, to the least important at the bottom?**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Fusion Partnership comprising a wide variety of organisations from different sectors	20	8	10	7	4	6	1	3	2	61	62
Clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the Fusion Partnership	5	3	6	6	8	11	6	8	5	58	24
Robust monitoring and evaluation data	1	4	2	5	7	5	8	12	13	57	12
Strong endorsement from Welsh Government	8	5	10	6	6	4	6	7	8	60	38
Availability of funding opportunities	11	15	7	5	4	6	6	5	3	62	53
Opportunities to share best practice and experiences	5	6	6	4	8	7	9	8	7	60	28
Availability of high-quality cultural activities	7	10	5	17	5	5	3	4	1	57	39
Involvement of cultural professionals with specialist knowledge	5	9	10	6	7	6	8	3	5	59	40
Strong links to local authorities	2	4	7	4	10	7	9	6	12	61	21