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Group Concept Mapping Report Implementation of the Regional Integration Fund

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National Evaluation of the Regional Integration Fund

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Executive summary

Undertaken as part of the year two Implementation Phase of the National Evaluation of the Regional Integration Fund (RIF), this report presents the findings from the second online Group Concept Mapping (GCM) study forming part of the evaluation work.

This second GCM study sought to build and consolidate findings from the year two Qualitative Interviews Report (Bebb et al., 2025), through sense-testing the key findings and conclusions with a wider group of RIF stakeholders.

Using Group Wisdom™ software, GCM engages stakeholders in the research process. Its integration of qualitative processes with multivariate statistical analysis enables diverse groups of individuals to articulate their ideas and represent them visually through a series of related concept maps. The online use of GCM enabled a geographically dispersed national sample of participants who were able to engage with the study at a time and place convenient to them.

Together with demographic questions, GCM typically asks participants to complete three activities: brainstorming, grouping/sorting, and rating. In this study, statements usually generated by participants during the 'brainstorming' activity were drawn from the key findings and conclusion sections of the Qualitative Interviews Report. Participants were asked to sort these statements into themed piles and rate all statements using two 5-point Likert scales: Recognition and Influence.

A maximum of 100 participants were sought (the limit for the Group Wisdom™ software). Email invitations were circulated via gatekeepers (RIF and RPB leads) to RIF funded projects and programme leaders in their region. Following informed consent, participants independently registered onto the Group Wisdom™ software via an online link.

The online software conducted four steps of data analysis; a) Descriptive statistics to analyse participant demographic responses, b) Similarity matrix is created from the participant sorted statements demonstrating the number of participants who sorted the statements together, c) Multidimensional-scaling analysis of the similarity matrix produces a statement point map. Each participant statement is allocated a point on a two-dimension (XY) axis, d) Ward's algorithm was used in a hierarchical cluster analysis of statement clusters to produce a cluster map with cluster labels, cluster rating, Pattern Matching and Go-zone report.

Findings

Participants represented most regions across Wales, a range of organisations, and most had RIF project level roles. Whilst there was an almost equal representation between Statutory and Third Sector participants, this is not necessarily representative of the proportion staff working within RIF funded projects across Wales.

Participants sorted and rated 51 statements. Analysis of the sorted data produced a 5-cluster map (Figure 2) of concepts associated to their experience and implementation of RIF: 'Partnerships especially with the third sector'; 'Learning from experience'; 'Innovation'; 'Positive lessons from RIF'; and 'Data, monitoring and reporting'.

Cluster rating results and pattern match report (Figure 3), shows both similarities and differences between the average rating scores for recognition (of the statement having been participants experience of RIF), and influence (on the implementation of RIF to date). For example, clusters 'Learning from experience', 'Partnerships especially with the third sector', and 'Positive lessons from RIF', were rated first, second and third (respectively) for recognition and influence. Differences were seen with the average ratings for cluster 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (least recognised), and 'Innovation' (least influential).

A Go-Zone report (Figure 6) compared all 51 statements across the two rating scales. The Go-zone showed the statements above or below the mean (average) across the two rating scales. Most statements were situated within the green quadrant (high level of recognition, high level of influence) or the blue quadrant (low level of recognition, low level of influence). The go-zone enabled identification of the top ten statements in these quadrants. Two clusters were represented in the top ten most recognised and most influential statements – 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' and 'Learning from experience'. In the top ten statements in the Blue quadrant, there was greater variation of clusters represented; with all but one cluster ('Innovation') was represented.

Key messages from this GCM study:

- Participants represented a good cross-section of RIF stakeholders, including all organisations and RIF project levels.
- At a sector level, there was almost equal representation of Third sector and Statutory Sector respondents.

- Third sector respondents rated 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' as most recognised as being part of their experience of RIF, and most influential in the implementation of RIF.
- Statutory sector respondents rated 'Learning from experience' as most recognised as being part of their experience of RIF, and most influential in the implementation of RIF.
- Participants working at a project level in RIF were most represented - engaging with wider stakeholders of the RIF (including the workforce) was highlighted for the year two Implementation phase of the overall evaluation.
- Clusters 'Data, monitoring and reporting' and 'Innovation' were the least recognised and influential clusters irrespective of participant sector and level of involvement in RIF.
- Cluster ratings also indicate differences between the two rating scales:
 - Recognition – Two clusters, 'Data, monitoring and reporting' and 'Innovation' were situated at the lower end of the rating score 3 (Disagree has been part of my experience of RIF).
 - Influence – although some clusters were more influential to the implementation of RIF, overall, all clusters had some extent of influence, with the lowest rated cluster ('Innovation') situated between 2 (Hardly influential) and 3 (Somewhat influential).
- The most recognised and most influential statement was 'Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding poses risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services'.
- The least recognised and least influential statement was 'Amalgamating smaller initiatives into larger umbrella projects has improved reporting structures'.

1. Introduction and approach

- 1.1 This report presents findings from the Group Concept Mapping (GCM) study, undertaken as part of the year two Implementation Phase of the National Evaluation of the Regional Integration Fund (RIF). This study is the second in the series of GCM studies that form part of the evaluation work; with the first completed as part of the year one Conceptualisation Phase (Wallace and Wallace, 2024).
- 1.2 The aim of this GCM study was to build and consolidate findings from the year two Qualitative Interviews Report (Bebb et al., 2025), through sense-testing the key findings and conclusions with a wider group of RIF stakeholders.

Group Concept Mapping

- 1.3 This study used an online consensus method, Group Concept Mapping (GCM, Kane and Trochim, 2007). GCM is a sophisticated, robust, participatory method, that engages stakeholders in the research process. It integrates qualitative processes with multivariate statistical analysis to enable a diverse group of people to articulate their ideas and represent them visually through a series of related concept maps.
- 1.4 GCM is facilitator-led and uses Group Wisdom™ software for data collection, data integration, and analysis. The Group Wisdom™ software enables researchers to reach a geographically dispersed national sample of participants who can engage with the study at a time and place convenient to them.

GCM Process

- 1.5 Typically, GCM participants are asked to complete three online activities: brainstorming, grouping/sorting, and rating. Brainstorming asks participants to generate as many statements as they think is appropriate in response to a focus prompt. Once the statements are generated, participants group and sort all the statements that are generated into themed ‘piles’ that make sense to them and label each pile. Finally, participants are asked to rate each statement on a five-point Likert scale.
- 1.6 In this study, statements usually generated by participants in the ‘brainstorming’ phase of GCM were instead drawn from the key findings and conclusion sections of the Qualitative Interviews Report, using the following process:

- The first author reviewed the key findings and conclusion sections, highlighting sentences and paragraphs for extraction to an Excel document.
- Highlighted sections were reviewed and compound sentences and paragraphs split to create an initial list of 81 statements organised into two sections: 'Design and development', and 'Implementation to date'.
- An initial review and discussion of these statements with the evaluation lead – which included removing duplicates, removing statements with too narrow a focus, and minor grammatical edits (Kane and Trochim, 2007) – reduced the list to 52 statements.
- This list was presented to and reviewed by the wider evaluation team and forwarded for in-depth review by the first and second Qualitative Interview Report authors.
- Following feedback, a final list of 51 statements was uploaded onto the GCM software for the sorting and rating activities. by participants. The full list of statements is provided in Appendix 1.

Data collection and recruitment

1.7 Email invitations with an accompanying link to an online information sheet and consent form were circulated via gatekeepers (RIF and RPB leads) to RIF funded projects and programme leaders in their region. Following confirmation of consent agreement, participants were provided a link to independently register onto the Group Wisdom™ software.

1.8 The study was conducted bilingually in Welsh and English and took place during May 2025. Ethical approval was sought and secured via the University of South Wales [230213LR].

Sorting and Rating

1.9 The sorting and rating activities were opened together and the GCM software enabled participants to save their progress and return to complete at a later date / time convenient to them.

1.10 In this study, the rating scales were:

- Recognition - To what extent do you recognise (agree or disagree) that this statement has been your experience of RIF?

- Not applicable – not part of my experience, 2. Strongly disagree, 3. Disagree, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree.
- Influence - How influential has this statement been in the implementation of RIF to date?
 - Not applicable – not part of my experience, 2. Hardly influential at all, 3. Somewhat influential, 4. Influential, 5. Very influential.

Demographic questions

- 1.11 In addition to the sorting and rating activities, participants enrolled onto the software were asked three demographic questions:
1. In which geographical area do you primarily work?
 2. Which of the types of organisations below do you primarily work for?
 3. At what level are you primarily involved within RIF?

Data analysis

- 1.12 The online software conducted four steps of data analysis (Kane and Trochim, 2007):
- Step 1: The three participant demographic responses were analysed using descriptive statistics.
 - Step 2: A similarity matrix is created from the participant sorted statements. This demonstrates the number of participants who sorted the statements together.
 - Step 3: Multidimensional-scaling analysis of the similarity matrix produces a statement point map. Each participant statement is allocated a point on a two-dimension (XY) axis (Figure 1).
 - Step 4: Ward's algorithm was used in a hierarchical cluster analysis of statement clusters to produce a cluster map with labels (Figure 2), Pattern Matching report (Figure 3) and Go-zone analysis (Figure 6). The Go-zone analysis enabled identification of the most and least recognised statements, and the most and least influential statements as rated by participants.

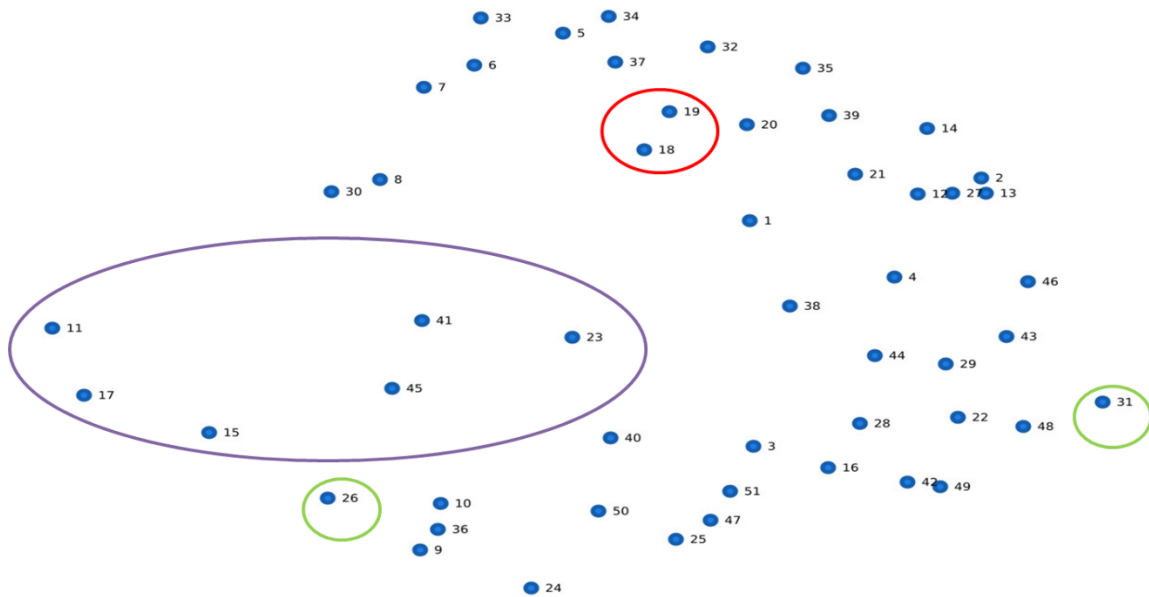
2. Findings

- 2.1 Participants consented and enrolled onto the GCM study independently using GroupWisdom™ software. Thirty-seven participants enrolled onto the software of which 33 completed the participant (demographic) questions, 21 the sorting activity, 23 the first rating activity and 18 the second rating activity.
- 2.2 Participants represented most regions across Wales and a range of organisations. Whilst there was an almost equal split between Statutory (Local Authority, n=9; Health, n=5) and Third Sector participants (n=14 and n=16 respectively), this is not necessarily representative of the proportion staff working within RIF funded projects across Wales. Two 'other' responses to the type of organisations participants primarily worked within were received. These were 'Regional transformation project partnering with Health, social care, third sector and citizens' and 'I am NHS, but half the team are LA'. Participants working primarily at a RIF project level were most represented (n=27), compared to those working at a regional level (n=6).
- 2.3 Details of the responses to the demographic questions are provided in Appendix 2.

Sorting activity

- 2.4 In this activity, 21 participants sorted and grouped all statements individually into piles and assigned each pile with an individual label. Participants could choose to create as many piles as they thought appropriate, although the Group Wisdom™ software instructions advised participants that based on the number of statements to sort (n=51), 5-20 piles were usual.
- 2.5 From the sorting activity, the software generated a point map showing how participants sorted each of the 51 statements (Figure 1 overleaf).
- 2.6 A point represents each statement. The closer the points are to one another indicates how frequently the statements were sorted together by participants. For example, statements 18 and 19 (circled in red) are close together and so have been sorted together most frequently. Conversely, statements 26 and 31 (circled in green) are on opposite ends of the map and were either not sorted together often or not at all.

Figure 1: Computer generated point map of 51 statements



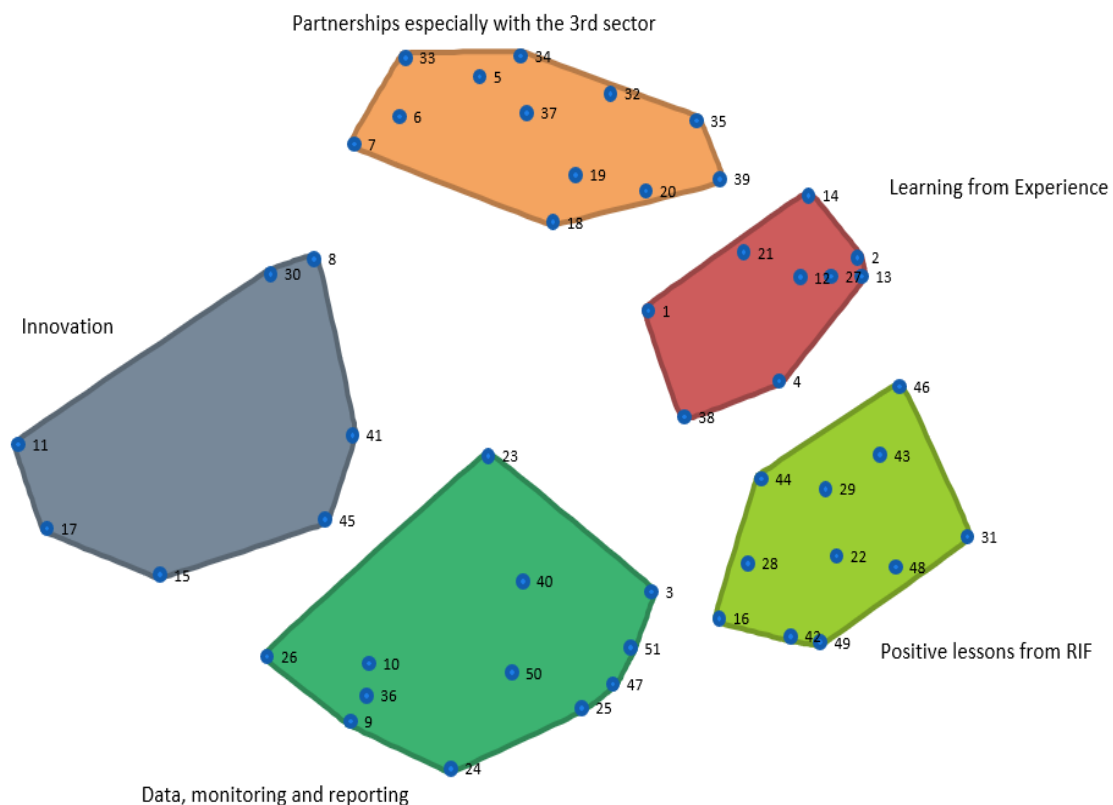
- 2.7 From the point map, we can see the ‘clustering’ of statements, and where ‘clustering’ is less evident, for example, statements to the left (circled purple). However, all points are part of the cluster map.

Cluster map

- 2.8 Hierarchical cluster analysis was carried out to find the optimal number of clusters. The software can be used to generate numerous cluster maps, each of which displays a different number of clusters. Four cluster maps (4-7 cluster solutions) were created to display the 51 points (statements), based on how conceptually similar or dissimilar the statements were to each other, and showing the distribution of how sorted statements were grouped within clusters (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The software also generated a list of possible cluster names, as determined by labels that were given by participants in the sorting stage.
- 2.9 The evaluation team reviewed each cluster map solution (4-7) based on how statements were grouped and related to each other within each cluster map and the possible cluster labels. Following discussion and sense-checking of the maps and labels, a 5-cluster map was agreed (Figure 2). The labels for each of the 5-clusters are:
- Partnerships especially with the third sector

- Learning from experience
- Innovation
- Positive lessons from RIF
- Data, monitoring and reporting.

Figure 2: Cluster map with labels from the participant sorting exercise



- 2.10 The placement of each statement within a cluster is based on participants' grouping of each statement. For example, statement 50 'RIF projects have been informed by data to refine and improve practices' sits within the 'Data, monitoring and reporting' cluster as this is where it was most placed by participants.
- 2.11 The conceptual relationship between clusters is shown by the distance between them – where a short distance means a strong relationship; and a larger distance means a weaker relationship. Therefore, the 'Learning from experiences' cluster is closer to the 'Partnerships especially with third sector' and the 'Positive lessons from RIF' clusters than the other clusters. The 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' and 'Data, monitoring and reporting' clusters had the most statements (n=12) each, followed by 'Positive lessons from RIF' (n=11), 'Learning from experience's' (n=9), and 'Innovation' (n=7).

Anchor statements

- 2.12 Bridging values indicate how closely a statement is related to the other items within its cluster. Bridging values range between 0 and 1. High bridging values indicate that a statement has been sorted with ideas in several other clusters. Low bridging values indicate that the statement was sorted more consistently within that cluster, these statements represent the 'anchor statements' within a cluster.
- 2.13 The bridging values for each cluster were:
- Partnerships especially with the third sector: 0.11
 - Learning from experience: 0.07
 - Innovation: 0.62
 - Positive lessons from RIF: 0.18
 - Data, monitoring and reporting: 0.19
- 2.14 Whilst the 'Learning from experience' cluster (0.07) and the 'Partnerships especially with the third sector cluster' (0.11) had the lowest bridging values, overall, the low average bridging values of clusters 'Positive lessons from RIF' (0.18) and 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (0.19), show cohesiveness and a good representation of the data. The 'Innovation' cluster was the least cohesive in terms of how statements had been sorted.
- 2.15 Anchor statements provide a useful focus for the cluster as they are the statement(s) most consistently sorted together in their cluster, meaning that – more than other statements – they reflect the content of that cluster i.e., they are a closer 'fit' for that cluster. The anchor statements for each cluster were:
- Partnerships especially with the third sector:
 - Strong partnership working is a key component of effective RIF projects (0.02)
 - Embedding system-wide behaviour change, and service integration takes a long time (0.05)
 - Learning from experience:
 - Joint management is a key component of effective RIF projects (0.02)
 - Opportunities for scale up within regions rely on a suitable local context (0.03)
 - Innovation:

- New/emerging RIF projects adopt innovative solutions (0.41)
- Opportunities to adopt digital or technological advancements are not being fully realised (0.42)
- Positive lessons from RIF:
 - RIF has been used as intended to support a wide spectrum of services (0.0)
 - The flexibility of RIF funding has enabled projects to innovate and adapt to changing needs (0.08).
- Data, monitoring and reporting:
 - RIF projects have been informed by robust needs assessment to refine and improve practices (0.06)
 - RIF projects/services focus on their response to local or regional priorities rather than the Models of Care (0.08).

Rating activity

- 2.16 Participants were asked to rate each of the 51 statements based on recognition (of the statement having been their experience of RIF), and influence (on the implementation of RIF to date).

Recognition

- 2.17 The 'Learning from experience' cluster (4.03) was on average, rated the cluster that participants recognised most as being their experience of RIF, followed by the 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' cluster (3.99). Both clusters sit within the rating score of 4 (Agree). Clusters, 'Positive lessons from RIF' (3.67), 'Innovation' (3.12) and 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (3.06) are all situated within the rating score of 3 (Disagree) – meaning that on average, these clusters were not recognised as part of participants experiences of RIF.
- 2.18 Thirteen (n=13) statements sat between the rating scale response of 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly agree), meaning these statements were most recognised as being participants experiences of RIF. These are listed below, together with their respective cluster and average rating score:
- Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding poses risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services (Learning from experience) - 4.92

- Operational challenges are amplified within the current climate of intense resource pressures (Learning from experience) - 4.57
- A strong, resilient and integrated workforce is a crucial enabler for the effective delivery of RIF (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.46
- Traditional silos between health and social care remain (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.43
- Opportunities for scale up within regions rely on availability of resources (Learning from experience) - 4.39
- Strong partnership working is a key component of effective RIF projects (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.39
- Embedding system-wide behaviour change and service integration takes a long time (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.29
- Strategic planning for the longer term is difficult when constantly responding to important, short-term demands on time (Learning from experience) - 4.26
- The effectiveness of partnership working between local authorities, health boards, and third-sector organisations varies (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.22
- There is value in the balance of quantitative data and qualitative narratives reporting requirements (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 4.13
- There is scope for greater cross-project learning to share delivery insights, successes, and challenges (Positive lessons from RIF) - 4.13
- Third sector organisations enhance RIF projects/services (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.13
- Third sector role in RIF projects/services is dependent on sustained partnership working - (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.08

- 2.19 Of the 13 statements above, the 'Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector' cluster was most represented with 7 statements, followed by 'Learning from experience' (n=4), 'Positive lessons from RIF' (n=1), and 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (n=1).
- 2.20 Eight (n=8) statements were rated between 2 (Strongly disagree) and 3 (Disagree); these statements were not recognised as part of participants experience of RIF. In the list below, there is less variation of the clusters to which these statements are situated (compared to the earlier list of 13 statements). Two clusters are represented: 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (n=5) and 'Innovation' (n=3).

- Amalgamating smaller initiatives into larger umbrella projects has improved reporting structures (Data, monitoring and reporting) – 2.38
- Improved data sharing processes have improved integration of project team (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.61
- Innovative technology and digital solutions have enabled more efficient and accessible services (Innovation) - 2.64
- RIF reporting processes have improved efficiency and reduced administrative burdens (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.68
- Improved data sharing processes have streamlined reporting processes (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.72
- RIF projects/services have used innovative methods to make roles attractive (Innovation) - 2.73
- The RIF delivery model has reduced workforce recruitment and retention issues (Innovation) - 2.78
- RIF reporting processes have improved as a result of increased trust and scrutiny (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.88

Influence

- 2.21 'Learning from experience' (3.74) was, on average, rated the most influential cluster in the implementation of RIF, followed by 'Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector' (3.71), and 'Positive lessons from RIF' (3.62). All three of these clusters are within the rating response of 3 (Somewhat influential) and 4 (Influential). Clusters 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (2.96) and 'Innovation' (2.79) were rated between 2 (Hardly influential) and 3 (Somewhat influential) in the implementation of RIF.
- 2.22 Nine (n=9) statement rating scores were between 4 (Influential) and 5 (Very influential). These are the statements rated as having the most influence in the implementation of RIF and are provided below, together with their respective cluster and average rating score:
1. Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding pose risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services (Learning from Experience) - 4.5
 2. Strong partnership working is a key component of effective RIF projects (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.29

3. Operational challenges are amplified within the current climate of intense resource pressures (Learning from Experience) - 4.11
4. Opportunities for scale up within regions rely on availability of resources (Learning from Experience) - 4.06
5. Embedding system-wide behaviour change and service integration takes a long time (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.06
6. A strong, resilient and integrated workforce is a crucial enabler for the effective delivery of RIF (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4.06
7. RIF has been instrumental in increasing capacity (Positive lessons from RIF) - 4
8. Traditional silos between health and social care remain (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4
9. Third sector role in RIF projects/services is dependent on sustained partnership working (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 4

2.23 The cluster 'Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector' (n=5) was represented the most, followed by clusters 'Learning from Experience' (n=3), 'Positive lessons from RIF' (n=1).

2.24 Sixteen (n=16) statements were rated between 2 (Hardly influential) and 3 (Somewhat influential) in the implementation of RIF. The 'Data monitoring and reporting' (n=8) cluster was represented the most, followed by Innovation (n=6), and Partnerships especially with the third sector (n=2) clusters:

1. Amalgamating smaller initiatives into larger umbrella projects has improved reporting structures (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.29
2. Innovative technology and digital solutions has enabled more efficient and accessible services (Innovation) - 2.32
3. Opportunities to adopt digital or technological advancements are not being fully realised (Innovation) - 2.5
4. Communities of Practice (CoPs) are a key component of sharing learning (Innovation) - 2.53

5. Improved data sharing processes have streamlined reporting processes (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.56
6. Recognition of the social value sector is inconsistent (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 2.72
7. Improved data sharing processes have improved integration of project teams (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.7
8. Integration with the social value sector is inconsistent (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) - 2.76
9. RIF reporting processes has improved efficiency and reduced administrative burdens (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.83
10. RIF projects/services have used innovative methods to make roles attractive (Innovation) - 2.83
11. New/emerging RIF projects adopt innovative solutions (Innovation) - 2.84
12. RIF projects/services focus on their response to local or regional priorities rather than the Models of Care (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.88
13. RIF projects have adopted learning from other similar projects (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.89
14. The RIF delivery model has reduced workforce recruitment and retention issues (Innovation) - 2.89
15. RIF reporting processes have improved as a result of streamlined requirements (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.94
16. RIF reporting processes have improved as a result of increased trust and scrutiny (Data, monitoring and reporting) - 2.94

Pattern match analysis

- 2.25 These cluster ratings can be further understood with Pattern Match reports. Figure 3 shows the average rating per cluster on the two scales. This is a relative pattern match, and as such presents the cluster averages within the range of ratings for each scale, rather than on a fixed, absolute scale. The relative pattern match enables the researcher to compare multiple measurements to establish a trend (Kamat, 2019).

2.26 As the rating scales measure different concepts (i.e., Recognition, and Influence), it is more useful to compare the ranking of clusters on the different scales, as opposed to the absolute numbers, which may not be comparable. The pattern match indicates a strong positive linear correlation between the two rating scales ($r=0.96$), meaning there was cohesiveness between the cluster ratings across the two scales.

Figure 3: Relative pattern match report comparing cluster ratings

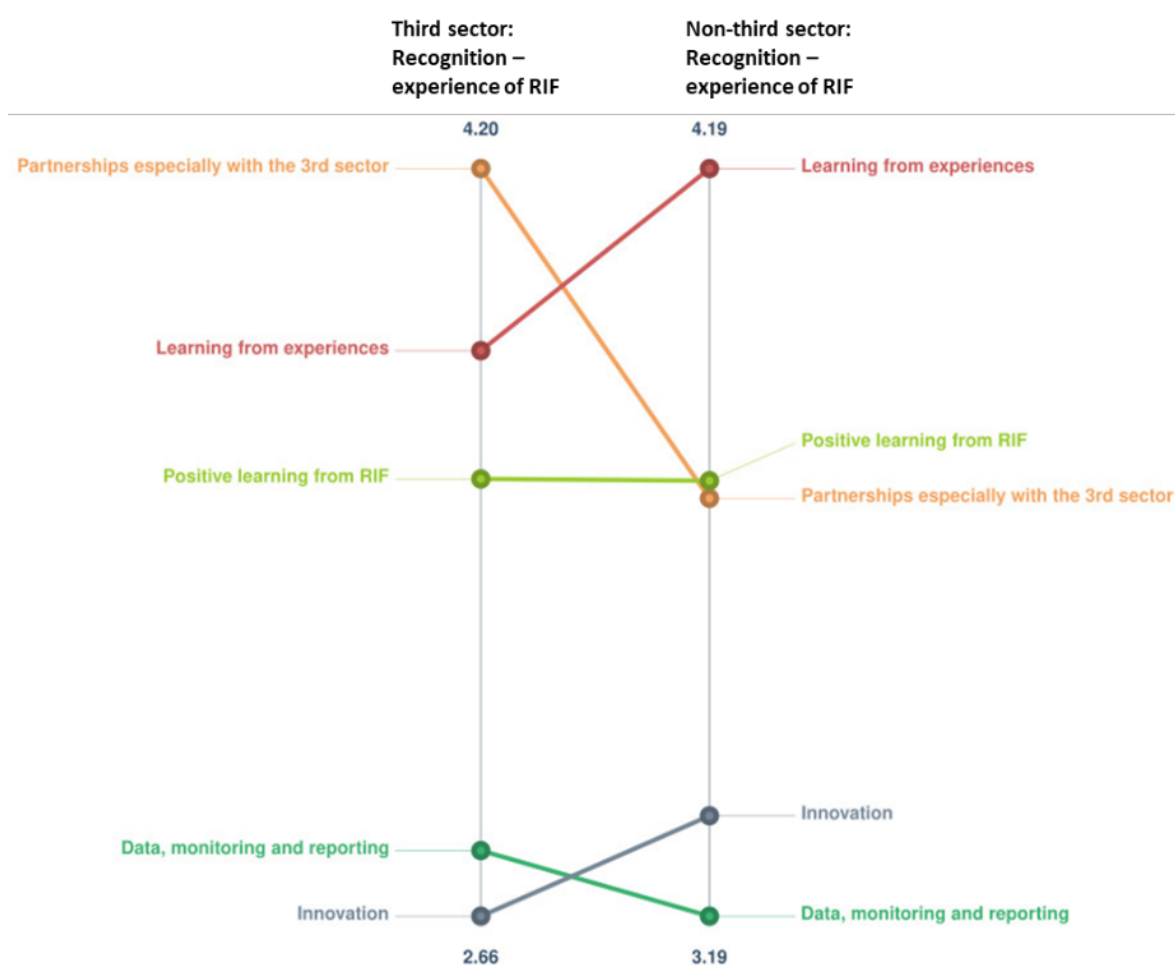


2.27 Figure 3 highlights similarities and differences between the clusters. For example, clusters 'Learning from experience', 'Partnerships especially with the third sector', and 'Positive lessons from RIF', were rated first, second and third (respectively) as most recognised as being part of participants experience of RIF), and most influential in the implementation of RIF. Differences can be seen with the average rating positioning for both the 'Data, monitoring and reporting', and 'Innovation' clusters for both rating scales.

Pattern Matching: participant demographics

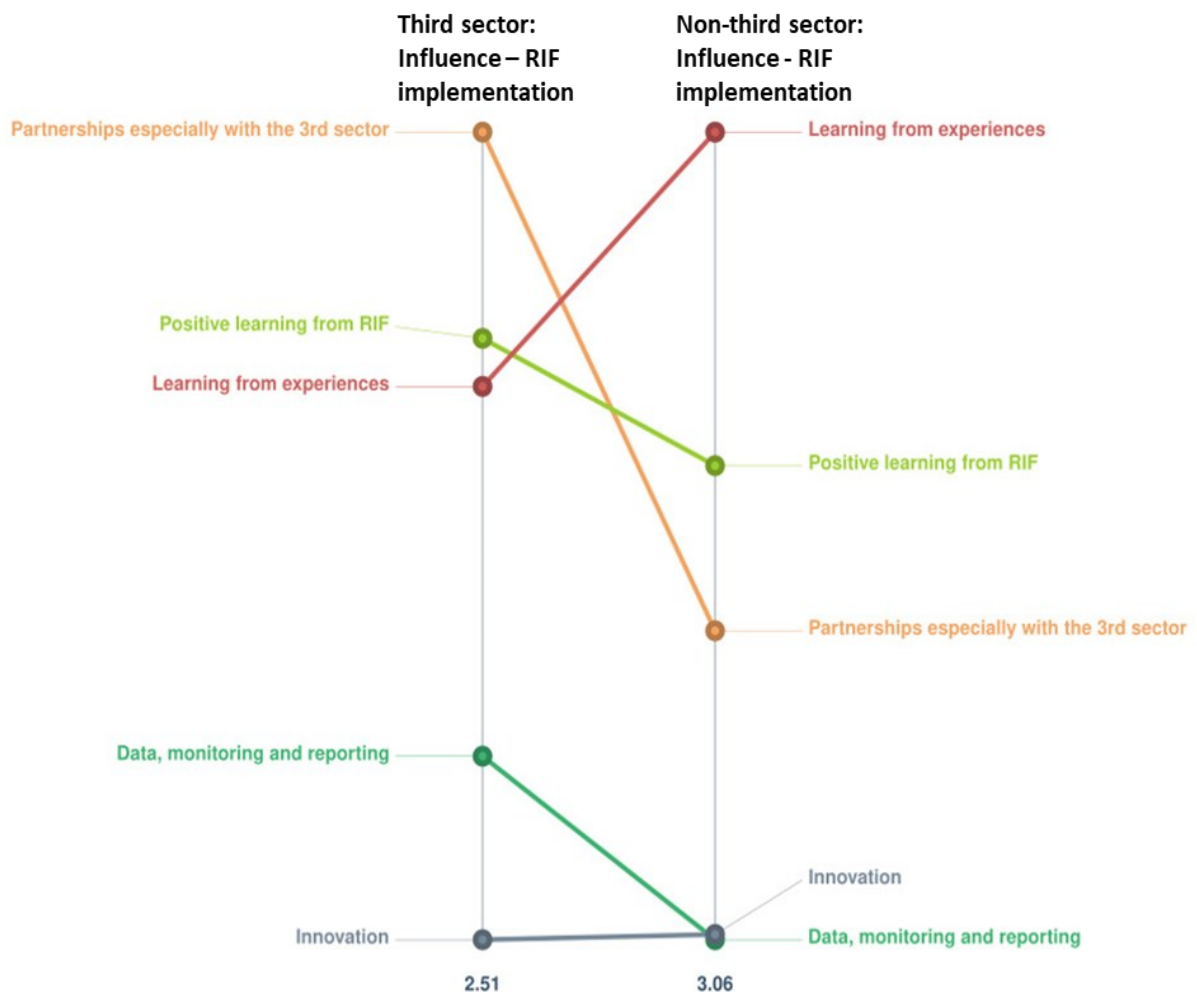
2.28 Relative Pattern Match analysis was also undertaken to determine the average cluster ratings for both scales based on demographic responses. Responses to each rating scale were grouped based on whether participants represented either the third sector or all other organisations (Local authority, NHS, and Regional Partnership) for analysis to compare across the two groups (Appendix 2 for figures). Figure 4 shows both similarities and differences for the recognition rating ($r=0.8$) for the two groups.

Figure 4: Relative pattern match report comparing participants from third sector and all other organisations – Recognition (has been my experience of RIF)



- 2.29 Participants based in third sector organisations rated 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' (4.20) as the cluster they recognised most as being their experience of RIF, whereas the 'Learning from experience' (4.19) cluster was the highest rated by those in non-third sector organisations. Both these ratings are situated within the rating scale response of 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly agree). The pattern match shows that for non-third sector organisations, the cluster 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' was rating third most recognised (3.75) and sits within the rating scale response of 3 (Disagree) and 4 (Agree). Rating similarities can be seen for the 'Positive lessons from RIF' cluster for both third sector and non-third sector participants (third highest rated, 3.56 and 3.77 respectively). As Figure 4 shows, the clusters 'Data, monitoring and reporting', and 'Innovation' were the least rated clusters among both groups.
- 2.30 Figure 5 (overleaf) also demonstrates similarities and differences for the influence rating among third and non-third sector organisations ($r=0.66$). Rating differences include the cluster 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' cluster, which on average was rated as being the most influential by third sector participants (4.04), compared to non-third sector participants where this cluster was rated third most influential (3.43).
- 2.31 Non-third sector participants rated the cluster 'Learning from experience' as most influential (4.03), whilst for those within the third sector, this cluster was rated as the third most influential (3.56). Similarities were seen for the 'Data, monitoring and reporting', and 'Innovation' clusters; both were least influential in the implementation of RIF by third and non-third sector participants.
- 2.32 Rating similarities and differences were also seen based on whether participants worked at either a RIF project or regional level for both rating scales.
- 2.33 In terms of the recognition rating scale, the 'Learning from experience' (4.07) cluster was most recognised among those working at project level, whilst those working at a regional level rated 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' (4.18) as being most recognised in their experience of RIF. Both groups rated 'Positive lessons from RIF' as the third most recognised cluster (3.72, 3.69) respectively), and 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (3.17, 2.81) and 'Innovation' (3.18, 2.84) as being the least recognised clusters.

Figure 5: Relative pattern match report comparing participants from third sector and all other organisations – Influence (in the implementation of RIF to date)

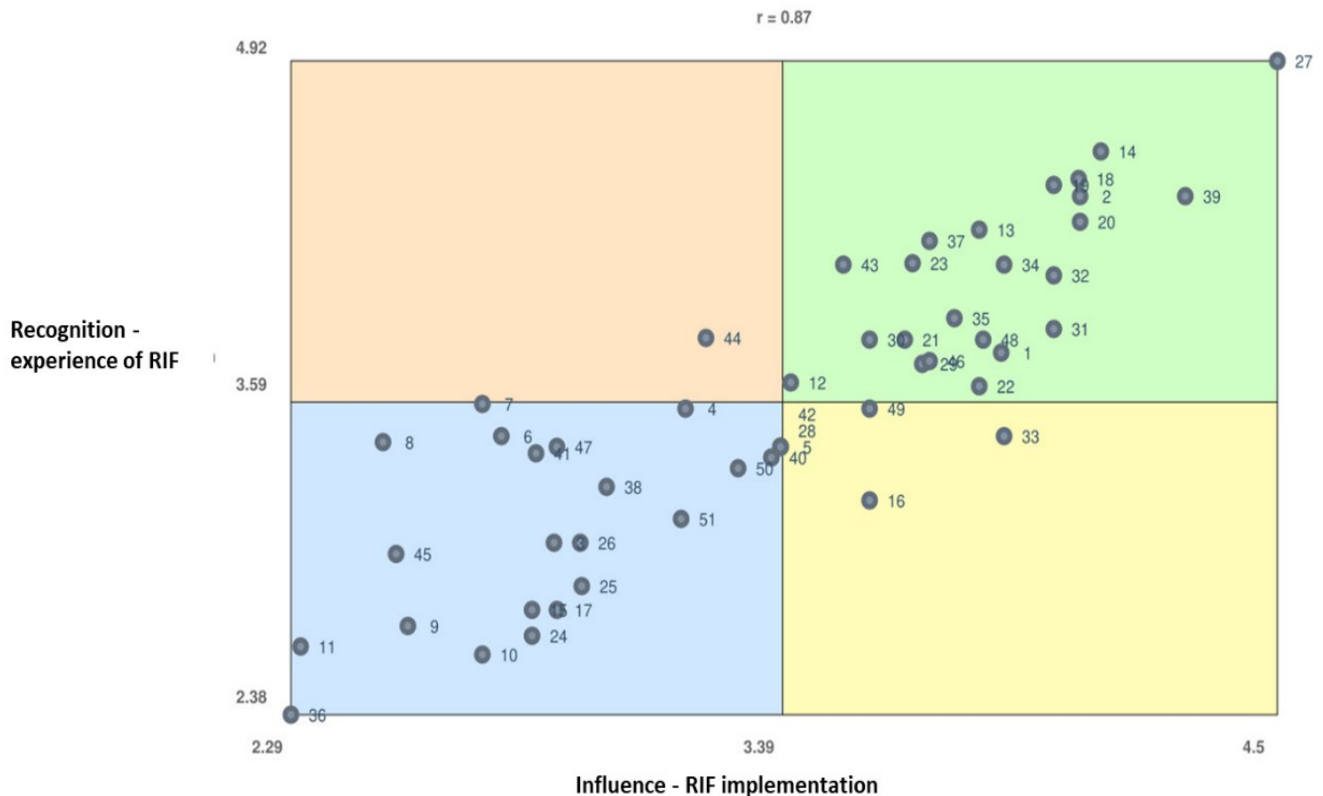


- 2.34 For the influence rating, participants working at a RIF project level rated 'Learning from experience' (3.69) as the most influential cluster, followed closely by 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' (3.63) and 'Positive lessons from RIF' (3.62). Those working at a RIF regional level, rated 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' (3.94) as most influential, followed by 'Learning from experience' (3.88). Both RIF project level and regional groups rated the 'Innovation' cluster as least influential (2.73 and 2.96), followed by 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (2.89 and 3.16).

Go-Zone

- 2.35 Using the cluster map and rating scales, the software produced a Go-Zone report (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Go-Zone report displaying how each statement is rated in relation to both rating scales



2.36 The Go-zone compares all statements across the two rating criteria. Statements were placed on a graph of four quadrants (each quadrant has its own colour), based on the mean rating of each statement on the two scales rated by participants. The Go-Zone (Figure 6) shows which statements were above or below the mean (average) across the two chosen rating criteria. Statements above the recognition rating mean (3.59) were most recognised as being part of participants experience, and statements above the influence rating mean (3.39) were most influential in RIF implementation:

- Green quadrant – 23 statements: High level of recognition, High level of influence
- Orange quadrant – 1 statement: High level of recognition, Low level of influence
- Yellow quadrant – 3 statements: Low level of recognition, High level of influence
- Blue quadrant – 28 statements: Low level of recognition, Low level of influence

2.37 Statements above the mean recognition rating are in the orange and green zones, and statements above the mean influence rating are in the green and yellow zones.

As highlighted above, the majority of the 51 statements sit within the green or blue quadrant.

- 2.38 There is a strong positive correlation ($r=0.88$) between the two ratings, meaning a strong linear relationship between the two scales. This indicates that an increase in one rating is related to an increase in the other rating; if a statement was rated as being recognised as having been a participant's experience of RIF, it was more likely to have been rated as being influential in the implementation of RIF.
- 2.39 By examining the 23 statements from the green quadrant, we can identify the top ten statements and their respective clusters (below):

Top ten statements – high level of recognition and high level of influence by cluster

- Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding poses risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services (Learning from experience) – Mean = 4.71
- Strong partnership working is a key component of effective RIF projects (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 4.34
- Operational challenges are amplified within the current climate of intense resource pressures (Learning from experience) – Mean = 4.33
- A strong, resilient and integrated workforce is a crucial enabler for the effective delivery of RIF (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 4.26
- Opportunities for scale up within regions rely on availability of resources (Learning from experience) – Mean = 4.23
- Traditional silos between health and social care remain (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 4.22
- Embedding system-wide behaviour change and service integration takes a long time (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 4.18
- Strategic planning for the longer term is difficult when constantly responding to important, short-term demands on time (Learning from experience) – Mean = 4.05
- Third sector role in RIF projects/services is dependent on sustained partnership working burdens (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 4.04
- Third sector organisations enhance RIF projects/services (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 4.01

2.40 From the above, we can see that two clusters were represented in the top ten most recognised and most influential statements – ‘Partnerships especially with the third sector’ (n=6 statements) and ‘Learning from experience’ (n=4 statements).

2.41 Three statements were represented in the yellow quadrant of the Go-Zone. The list below presents these in order of average rating and their respective clusters.

Statements with low level of recognition, but high level of influence by cluster

- Third sector organisations address gaps in RIF projects/services (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 3.67
- RIF projects have been shaped by ongoing service user feedback to refine and improve practices (Positive lessons from RIF) – Mean = 3.58
- The longer-term financial certainty provided to posts via RIF's design has improved workforce stability (Positive lessons from RIF) – Mean = 4.00

2.42 Analysis of the 28 statements in the blue quadrant, provides the top ten statements and their respective clusters (below). The list shows greater variation in the clusters represented; all but one cluster (‘Innovation’) was represented – ‘Data, monitoring and reporting’ (n=4), ‘Learning from experience’ (n=2), ‘Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector’ (n=2), and ‘Positive lessons from RIF’ (n=2).

Top ten statements – low level of recognition and low level of influence by cluster

- Opportunities for deeper collaboration and innovation with the third sector have been missed (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 3.40
- The regional infrastructure and resource has enabled projects to innovate and adapt to changing needs (Positive lessons from RIF) – Mean = 3.40
- New/emerging RIF projects have been introduced to address gaps in service provision (Positive lessons from RIF) – Mean = 3.40
- RIF projects are evolving to operate in a more regional, integrated way (Data, monitoring and reporting) – Mean = 3.37
- RIF projects align well with the Model of Care to which they report (Learning from experience) – Mean = 3.37
- RIF projects have been informed by data to refine and improve practices (Data, monitoring and reporting) – Mean = 3.31
- RIF projects have adopted learning from other similar projects (Data, monitoring and reporting) – Mean = 3.15

- Recognition of the social value sector is inconsistent (Partnerships especially with the 3rd sector) – Mean = 3.15
- RIF projects have been informed by robust needs assessment to refine and improve practices (Data, monitoring and reporting) – Mean = 3.15
- Joint management is a key component of effective RIF projects (Learning from experience) – Mean = 3.13

3. Summary

- 3.1 This online GCM study was undertaken as part of the year two Implementation Phase of the National Evaluation of the Regional Integration Fund (RIF). The GCM study aimed to build and consolidate findings from the year two Qualitative Interviews Report (Bebb et al., 2025) through sense-testing the key findings and conclusions with a wider group of RIF stakeholders.
- 3.2 Demographic data shows that participants represented most regions of Wales (no national representation), a range of organisations and most had RIF project level roles. Whilst there was an almost equal split between Statutory and Third Sector participants, this is not necessarily representative of the proportion staff working within RIF funded projects across Wales.
- 3.3 Participants sorted and rated 51 statements drawn from the year two Qualitative Interviews Report (Bebb et al., 2025), which enabled the development of a 5-cluster map associated to the RIF's implementation:
1. Partnerships especially with the third sector
 2. Learning from experience
 3. Innovation
 4. Positive lessons from RIF; and
 5. Data, monitoring and reporting.
- 3.4 Cluster rating maps, based on the individual statement ratings, showed that clusters 'Learning from experience' (4.03) and 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' (3.99) were most recognised among participants as having been their experience of RIF. At a statement level, 13 were rated between 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly agree), with the most recognised statement sitting within the 'Learning from experience' cluster - 'Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding poses risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services' (4.92).
- 3.5 The second cluster rating map (influence on RIF implementation to date), showed that the 'Learning from experience' (3.74) was most influential. This cluster together with two other clusters 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' (3.71) and 'Positive lessons from RIF' (3.62), were situated within the rating scale range of 3 (Somewhat influential) and 4 (Influential). 'Data, monitoring and reporting' (2.96)

and 'Innovation' (2.79) were rated least influential in the implementation of RIF to date, with rating scores situated between 2 (Hardly influential at all) and 3 (Somewhat influential). Nine (n=9) statement ratings were between 4 (Influential) and 5 (Very influential). The statement rated as being most recognised was also rated as having the most influence in the implementation of RIF; 'Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding poses risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services' (4.5).

- 3.6 Similarities were also seen in the statement rated as being least recognised and having least influence 'Amalgamating smaller initiatives into larger umbrella projects has improved reporting structures' (2.38, 2.29 respectively), situated within the 'Data, monitoring and reporting' cluster.
- 3.7 Pattern match reports show similarities and differences for cluster map ratings for both scales based on whether participants worked in the third sector or any other of the responding organisations, and the level of which individuals are working within RIF (regional or project). Third sector respondents rated 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' as the cluster they recognised most as being their experience of RIF and as being most influential in the implementation of RIF to date (4.20 and 4.04 respectively). For non-third sector respondents, the cluster 'Learning from experience' was rated as most recognised and most influential (4.19 and 4.04 respectively). These rating scores are within the rating range of 4 (Agree, Influential) and 5 (Strongly agree, Very influential).
- 3.8 The Go-zone showed the statements above or below the mean (average) across the two rating scales, and a strong positive correlation between the two scales was noted. Most statements were situated within the green quadrant (High level of recognition, High level of influence, n=23) or the blue quadrant (Low level of recognition, Low level of influence, n=28). The go-zone enabled identification of the top ten statements in these quadrants. Statements in the green quadrant are 'positive' relative to the others in terms of the level of agreement and influence. The opposite is true for the statements in the blue quadrant – these were least recognised and least influential and are therefore rated more negatively than others.
- 3.9 To summarise:
- Participants represented a good cross-section of RIF stakeholders, including all organisations, and project levels.

- At a sector level, there was almost equal representation of Third sector and Statutory Sector respondents.
- Third sector respondents rated 'Partnerships especially with the third sector' as most recognised as being part of their experience of RIF, and most influential in the implementation of RIF.
- Statutory sector respondents rated 'Learning from experience' as most recognised as being part of their experience of RIF, and most influential in the implementation of RIF.
- Clusters 'Data, monitoring and reporting' and 'Innovation' were the least recognised and influential clusters irrespective of participant sector and level of involvement in RIF.
- Cluster ratings also indicate differences between the two rating scales:
 - Recognition – Two clusters, 'Data, monitoring and reporting' and 'Innovation' were situated at the lower end of the rating score 3 (Disagree has been part of my experience of RIF).
 - Influence – although some clusters were more influential to the implementation of RIF, overall, all clusters had some extent of influence, with the lowest rated cluster ('Innovation') situated between 2 (Hardly influential) and 3 (Somewhat influential).
- The most recognised and most influential statement was 'Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding poses risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services'.
- The least recognised and least influential statement was 'Amalgamating smaller initiatives into larger umbrella projects has improved reporting structures'.

Strengths and Limitations

- 3.10 We aimed to recruit up to 100 participants involved in RIF funded projects / programmes across Wales. Whilst the majority (but not all) of regions were represented and there was no national representation, all organisations were represented – Third sector (n=16), Statutory Sector (n=14), comprised of Local Authority (n=9) and Health (n=5). Differences and similarities were seen for cluster level ratings for these two groups. The finding that third sector organisations are broadly agreeing that partnership working has been their experience of RIF and has influenced its implementation is encouraging. Furthermore, the study recruited both those working at a regional and project level, with those working at a project level in

RIF being most represented (n=27). Engaging with wider stakeholders of the RIF (including the workforce) was highlighted for the year two Implementation phase of the overall evaluation.

- 3.11 This study has reported the findings from the sorting and rating of the 51 statements and provides a clearer picture and insight into the most and least recognised experiences of RIF, and the most and least influential statements in the implementation of RIF to date. Findings offer a useful contribution in the implementation of RIF and the extent of recognition and influence. However, further detail is provided in the Year two Qualitative Report (Bebb et al, 2025).

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Appendix 1 - Full statement list (n=51)

1. Opportunities for scale up within regions rely on a suitable local context
2. Opportunities for scale up within regions rely on availability of resources
3. RIF projects/services focus on their response to local or regional priorities rather than the Models of Care
4. RIF projects align well with the Model of Care to which they report
5. Opportunities for deeper collaboration and innovation with the third sector have been missed
6. Integration with the social value sector is inconsistent
7. Recognition of the social value sector is inconsistent
8. Opportunities to adopt digital or technological advancements are not being fully realised
9. Improved data sharing processes have streamlined reporting processes
10. Improved data sharing processes have improved integration of project teams
11. Innovative technology and digital solutions has enabled more efficient and accessible services
12. Navigating complex governance structures impacts on project delivery
13. Strategic planning for the longer term is difficult when constantly responding to important, short-term demands on time
14. Operational challenges are amplified within the current climate of intense resource pressures
15. RIF projects/services have used innovative methods to make roles attractive
16. The longer-term financial certainty provided to posts via RIF's design has improved workforce stability
17. The RIF delivery model has reduced workforce recruitment and retention issues
18. A strong, resilient and integrated workforce is a crucial enabler for the effective delivery of RIF
19. Traditional silos between health and social care remain
20. Embedding system-wide behaviour change and service integration takes a long time
21. Well established RIF projects/services are continuing to increase integration
22. RIF is enabling an increasingly person-centred approach to the delivery of earlier intervention and prevention activity
23. There is value in the balance of quantitative data and qualitative narratives reporting requirements
24. RIF reporting processes has improved efficiency and reduced administrative burdens
25. RIF reporting processes have improved as a result of increased trust and scrutiny
26. RIF reporting processes have improved as a result of streamlined requirements

27. Uncertainties regarding longer-term term funding poses risks to the sustainability of RIF projects/services
28. The regional infrastructure and resource has enabled projects to innovate and adapt to changing needs
29. The flexibility of RIF funding has enabled projects to innovate and adapt to changing needs
30. It is difficult to measure the specific impact of RIF when it only funds part of the staff team delivering a broader service
31. RIF has been instrumental in increasing capacity
32. Third sector role in RIF projects/services is dependent on sustained partnership working
33. Third sector organisations address gaps in RIF projects/services
34. Third sector organisations enhance RIF projects/services
35. Third sector organisations play a vital component within RIF projects
36. Amalgamating smaller initiatives into larger umbrella projects has improved reporting structures
37. The effectiveness of partnership working between local authorities, health boards, and third-sector organisations varies
38. Joint management is a key component of effective RIF projects
39. Strong partnership working is a key component of effective RIF projects
40. RIF projects are evolving to operate in a more regional, integrated way
41. New/emerging RIF projects adopt innovative solutions
42. New/emerging RIF projects have been introduced to address gaps in service provision
43. There is scope for greater cross-project learning to share delivery insights, successes, and challenges
44. RIF has been used as intended to support a wide spectrum of services
45. Communities of Practice (CoPs) are a key component of sharing learning
46. RIF projects have adapted and tailored provision to accommodate local needs and circumstances
47. RIF projects have adopted learning from other similar projects
48. Ongoing feedback from service users is used to refine and improve practices
49. RIF projects have been shaped by ongoing service user feedback to refine and improve practices
50. RIF projects have been informed by data to refine and improve practices
51. RIF projects have been informed by robust needs assessment to refine and improve practices

Appendix 2 - Participant responses to demographic questions

A2.1: Geographical area primarily working within

North Wales	n=6
Powys	n=1
West Wales	n=5
West Glamorgan	n=11
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	n=7
Cardiff and the Vale	n=3
TOTAL	n=33

A2.2: Organisation type

Local authority	n=9
Third Sector	n=16
NHS	n=5
Regional Partnership	n=1
Other	n=2
TOTAL	n=33

A2.3: Level of involvement in RIF

Project level	n=27
Regional level	n=6
TOTAL	n=33