

# RISE.

## UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND IMPACT REPORT 2025

Women's Wellbeing in South Tyneside



South Tyneside Council



Funded by  
UK Government

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# INTRODUCTION

**This report details the activities delivered and outcomes achieved by Rise through securing UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and includes:**

- Background to the project
- Project deliverables
- Impacts achieved including quantitative data and case studies
- Learning points and reflections from those managing and delivering the project





# BACKGROUND

## In the Autumn of 2023...

...South Tyneside Council invited organisations to submit bids to the UKSPF. The fund aimed to **improve pride in place** and **increase life chances** across the UK by investing in communities, supporting local business, people and skills.

South Tyneside Council issued an open call for projects through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund under the Community & Place and People & Skills themes. This call specifically sought projects with a clear focus on engaging local communities, especially those in the most disadvantaged areas of the borough with the highest rates of economic inactivity. **Projects needed to show how they would support people to move closer to the labour market and reduce economic inactivity.**



# PROJECT DELIVERABLES

In January **2024** Rise were successful in securing **£130,000** to deliver a holistic employability support service in collaboration with **Women's Health in South Tyneside (WHiST)** and **South Tyneside Council** between **April 2024 and March 2025**.

The service primarily aimed to support women, with a particular **focus on young women with children or caring responsibilities, as well as those experiencing poor mental health, living in Beacon & Bents and parts of Simonside & Rekendyke in South Tyneside**.

The project employed a **female key worker** to provide a personalised, person-centred approach to support. Service users received **1:1 support** to identify barriers preventing them from considering employment and worked collaboratively with the key worker to develop individualised plans to overcome those challenges.

To progress towards employment, the key worker supported individuals to **tackle barriers** such as low self-esteem and confidence. They also provided assistance in **accessing primary healthcare, referrals for counselling, and support to engage with community groups and volunteering opportunities**.

The service also helped women overcome practical barriers to employment. This included securing free **SIM cards**, referring them to organisations that could provide **laptops or tablets**, supporting access to **IT skills training**, and assisting with **interview preparation and work clothing**.



## PROJECT DELIVERABLES



In order to ensure the service reached those who would benefit most from the support, the key worker was based in WHiST's building and established a range of **referral pathways** into the programme. Referrals were received from **partners** such as **Probation, Impact Family Services, South Tyneside Adult Recovery Service and the local VCSE sector.**

In addition to the key worker service, the project also included **engagement activities at WHiST** and other local community venues such as **Ocean Road Community Centre, Marsden Road Community Centre, Impact Family Services and Apna Ghar.**

The sessions delivered included **social activities** which focused on improving physical and mental well-being, raising confidence and self-esteem, communication and life skills.

In addition to delivering engagement activities, the funding also supported **WHiST** to reopen the **creche** which helped to **remove childcare barriers.**

# IMPACT

Throughout the twelve month project:

**23**

economically inactive women have engaged with key worker support services

**279**

individuals engaged in life skills opportunities (i.e. confidence building, sessions to reduce social isolation, mental and physical wellbeing sessions)

**172**

individuals engaged in education/lifelong learning opportunities

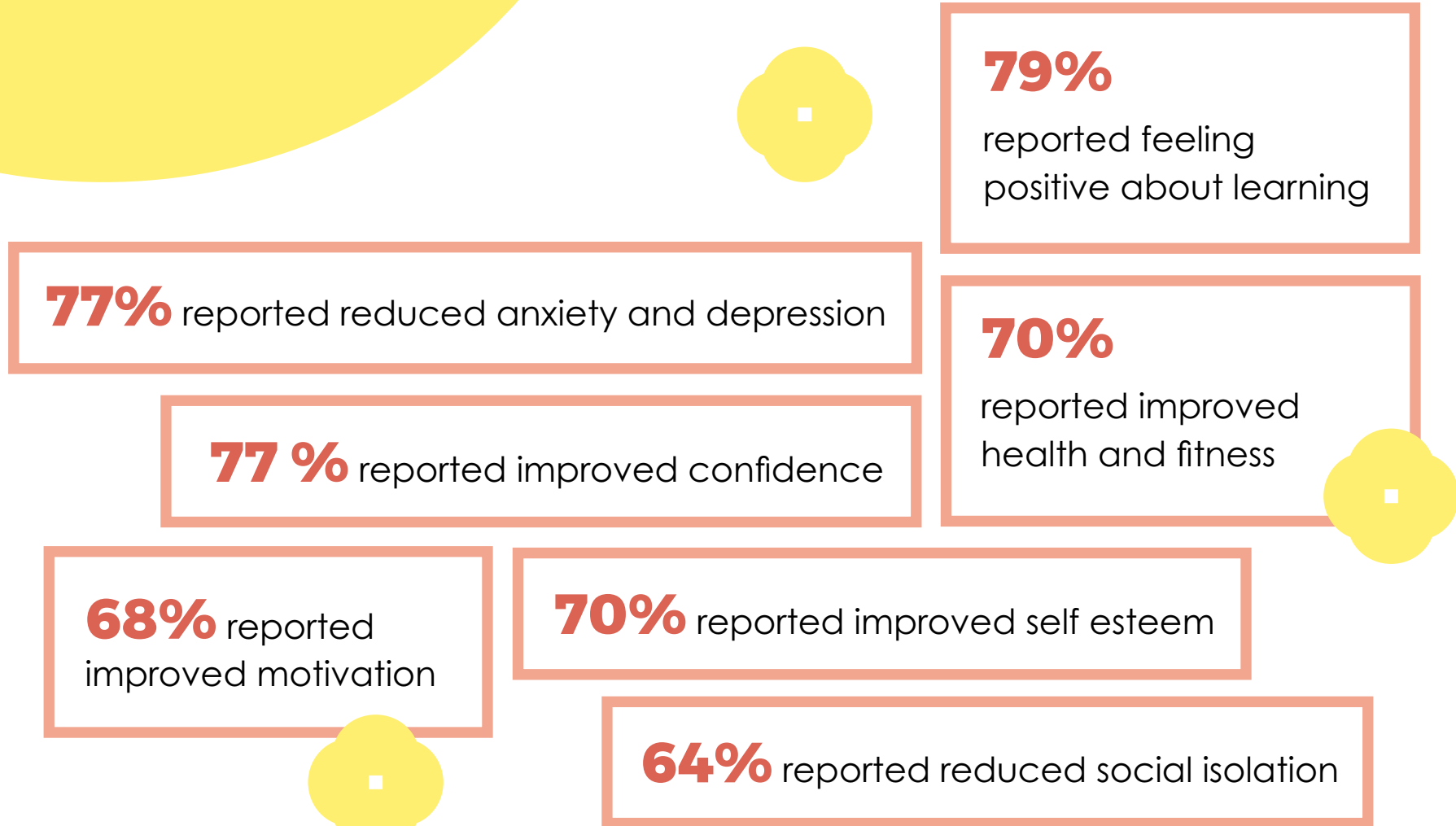
**7**

women were supported into volunteering opportunities



IMPACT

Of those women engaging in wellbeing activities:





## IMPACT

### Feedback from the courses included:



*'This course has helped so much with anxiety/depression. Being with like-minded people and getting out of house helps enormously'*

*'Improved fitness, health, and confidence'*

*'I'm now less isolated, more focused and positive, have made friendships and have a reason to come out of the house. Course is adapted to individual needs'*

*'Helped (me) get fitter and find time for exercise around having young children. Good for confidence'*



Alongside the course feedback we have also received the following feedback in relation to the Creche:



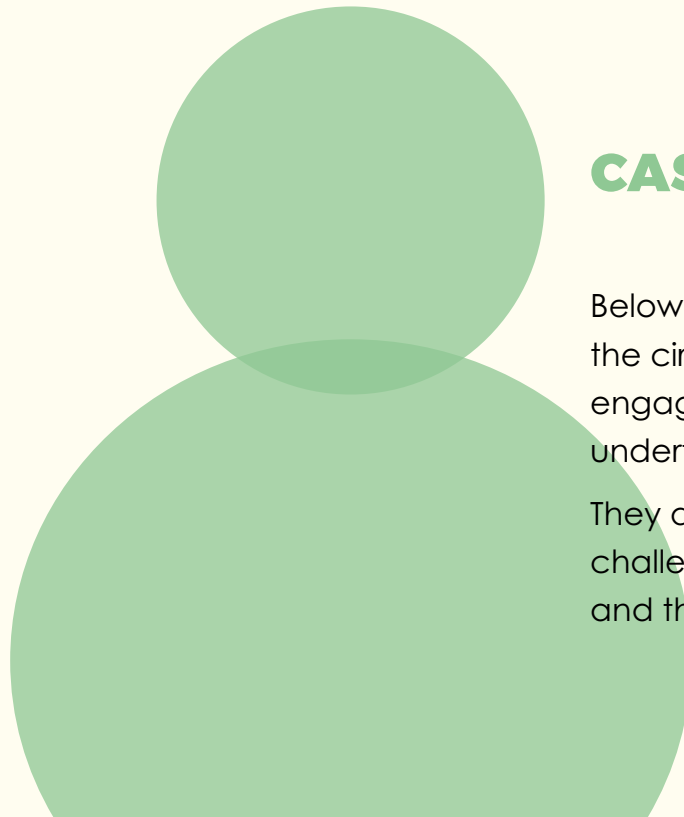
*'My baby is learning new words, gaining confidence in walking and crawling'*

*'I am able to get free time for myself/ socialise or do activities for my health and interest'*

*'Great opportunity for me to access courses and activities to help build by skills and confidence whilst my child is safe and plays with other children'*



## IMPACT

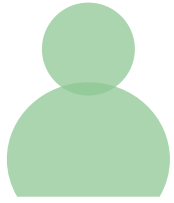


### CASE STUDIES

Below are three case studies which illustrate the circumstances and issues of participants engaged in the project, interventions undertaken, and outcomes achieved.

They also evidence some of the wider challenges facing the women supported and the project in trying to respond to these.

## IMPACT : CASE STUDIES



### CLIENT A

Client A is a woman in her 40's who has had a successful career in banking.

She was referred to the key worker, having become unemployed following a mental health crisis and being increasingly unable to work due to the impact of the perimenopause on her existing ADHD symptoms.

Client A is open to the Early Intervention in Psychosis team and is also suffering from financial hardship due to the loss of her job and existing debt.

Client A was experiencing isolation. Prior to having to cease working, Client A had worked remotely and has few friends in the area.

Her family are supportive, but do not understand the seriousness of her mental health difficulties. Consequently, she feels she is not able to talk to them about her feelings or experiences.

Initially Client A was encouraged to engage with WHIST by the CRISIS Team and then referred to the key worker by the WHIST advocacy worker.

Client A came to the key worker looking for support around gaining employment and remains very motivated to work. However, at present she is under a great deal of stress and her mental health difficulties fluctuate in ways that would make a return to work difficult.





## IMPACT : CASE STUDIES



The key worker has enabled Client A to work with specialist debt advice services and request support from creditors due to mental health difficulties. She has also been supported to claim benefits, so she has an income of her own.

Client A reports that though she appreciates the practical help, what she really values is having someone to talk to.

*"I feel that I can talk to you about my thoughts without being judged...I feel like I can cry here, when I can't at home."*

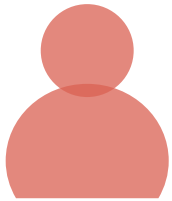
Client A wants to make more connections and have structure in her life but knows that she is not ready yet to return to the workplace.

Client A discussed her deep connection with animals and the outdoors. As a result, the key worker suggested she might enjoy volunteering at the Jarrow Hall farm. The key worker has supported Client A to attend a volunteer induction, and she has now completed her first volunteer session on the farm, getting to know the other volunteers and animals and reported having really enjoyed her first session. Client A has plans to continue volunteering in 2025 and has also signed up for a history course, also at Jarrow Hall. Client A also hopes to volunteer for WHiST.

Client A needs ongoing support to help her to manage her stress levels, deal with her financial issues and reduce her isolation. This ongoing support will ultimately help her to return to work in the longer term which she is determined to do.

However, to do this successfully she needs to be supported, build new connections and confidence, as well as explore new possibilities for work that will suit her needs and be sustainable for her – all of which the key worker has supported her with.

## IMPACT : CASE STUDIES



### CLIENT E

Client E initially self-referred to the key worker service after being signposted to WHiST by a friend who had previously been supported through other services offered at WHiST.

She was ineligible for support, at this point, as she was working. However, the key worker had capacity to see Client E to discuss what help was needed and offer light touch support.

Client E is originally from Greece and was working as part of the EU settlement scheme. However, she had been asked by her employer to prove her continued right to work.

Unfortunately, she was not able to access her online immigration record – and so unable to prove her right to work. Client E had tried to access help previously but had not found an organisation who were able to provide support of this nature.



The key worker supported Client E to identify why she could not access her online account, telephone the Immigration Service and provide the information needed for them to be able to allow access to her account. This enabled her to provide her employer with confirmation that she was still eligible to work in the UK.

## IMPACT : CASE STUDIES

Client E was also signposted to Citizen's Advice as she had been in the UK for more than 5 years and was now eligible for settled status. Client E was happy with the support she had received.

As a result of the length of time taken to prove her right to work in the UK, Client E became unemployed. Consequently, Client E came back to see the key worker and was now, as unemployed and not claiming benefits, eligible for support. Client E felt confident coming back due to the support she had received previously when other organisations were not able to offer her the time she needed to resolve her initial issue.

The key worker supported Client E to consider the types of jobs that she would be interested in. Client E had previously worked in the care sector in Greece and would like to be able to do this in the UK. The key worker supported her to improve her job seeking techniques and to update her CV. Client E was also referred to the Care Academy for a career coaching session to help her to find care roles that would suit her and to Training in Care, who were able to offer her free training that will help her to improve her skills and employability in the care sector.

*Client E said "I know that when I come here you will be able to help me and that when I go, I will not be depressed"*

Client E continues to access support to seek work and hopes to find work in the near future.



## IMPACT : CASE STUDIES



### CLIENT J

Client J is a woman in her 40s with mild learning difficulties. Due to her learning difficulties and social anxiety, she has never been able to find work which meets her needs. Client J is a dedicated mum but struggles to get out and access opportunities in the community.

Client J was recently transitioned from Tax Credits to Universal Credit and was signposted by the Jobcentre to an event at South Shields Town Hall, facilitated by another UKSPF project, South Tyneside Works.

As part of the event, she was given information about community organisations that could support her and engaged with the key worker who was in attendance.

Client J was extremely nervous about coming to WHiST, but having spoken to the key worker was able to visit as long as the key worker met her at the door, so that she felt comfortable to come into the building.

During several meetings with the key worker, Client J explored what she wanted help with. Client J identified that she was struggling to go out and this was stopping her from doing activities that she wanted to do for herself and her daughter; she was also feeling extremely stressed due to uncertainty around changes to her benefits.

Client J was supported to better understand Universal Credit, to provide additional information so they understood her health problems and supported to attend the Jobcentre to meet with her work coach. This helped her to feel more confident, and she is now able to go to the Jobcentre alone.

## IMPACT : CASE STUDIES

The key worker talked to Client J about ways she might improve her confidence. Client J felt some of the suggestions were too ambitious, but together she and the key worker were able to find goals that were challenging and would help Client J move forward, without feeling too daunting.

Together they agreed that as Client J now felt able to attend WHiST, the next step for Client J was to attend a course at the centre. Client J was supported to become a member of WHiST, and the key worker helped her to identify courses which would suit her needs and helped her to enrol. Client J is now starting an assertiveness and wellbeing course.

With support from the key worker, Client J was able to see that some of her thought patterns were making her anxiety worse. The key worker suggested that she access counselling and as this was offered at WHiST where she felt safe, Client J agreed. Before her first counselling session the key worker was able to show Client J the counselling room and explain to her that the counsellor would come and meet her at reception, so she knew what to expect and felt confident to attend.

Client J has now started attending her counselling sessions and hopes to find new ways to manage her anxiety.



*Client J says, "I wish the Jobcentre hadn't left me alone for so long, without them giving me a push I would not have found my way here...I feel much better knowing that you're there to support me ...I feel proud of what I've done so far."*

## IMPACT

# LEARNING AND REFLECTIONS

Over the 12 month period of the programme Rise and WHiST have worked in collaboration with each other, South Tyneside Council and other partners to ensure the project was a great success. In relation to the targets set we have:



- Exceeded the number of economically inactive people engaging with the key worker support service. **23 women were supported, exceeding the target of 20.**
- Exceeded the number of people engaging in life skills. **279 individuals engaged in life skill course, exceeding the target of 72.**
- Met target for number of effective engagements between key worker and additional services.
- Exceeded number of people supported to engage with education/life long learning with **163 individuals engaged compared to a target of 154.**
- Exceeded the number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment. **197 people who attended courses reported that the intervention had helped improve issues which were barriers to returning to employment compared to a target of 94.**

However, in order to improve the service, it is critical to understand what went well, the challenges encountered, what was learned and what could be done differently if successful with future funding.



## IMPACT

### WHAT WENT WELL AND WHY:

#### Recruitment

Recruiting a key worker with empathy, knowledge and experience providing 1:1 support was hugely important, especially when targets needed to be achieved in a relatively short period of time. The key worker's ability to quickly build strong, positive relationships with clients and colleagues was critical to project success.

#### Collaboration - Rise and WHiST

The partnership between Rise and WHiST and having the key worker based within WHiST was critical to the success achieved during the programme. WHiST is a locally well known, well regarded, and trusted organisation, regarded as a safe space by the project's target group of women. As such, women were comfortable to engage with WHiST and therefore the key worker in a way they may not have been with Rise.

Furthermore, WHiST staff have a wealth of experience in delivering provisions to women experiencing deprivation, marginalisation, and poor mental and physical wellbeing; whereas Rise is not a direct delivery organisation and lacks this experience and capacity. In addition, collaborating with WHiST and other partners also enabled women to access wider services beyond those directly funded via UKSPF. This created a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of the women accessing the project.



## IMPACT

### WHAT WENT WELL AND WHY:

#### Realistic Targets

Both Rise and WHiST have previous experience delivering holistic employability courses and working with individuals in similar circumstances. As a result, realistic and achievable targets were set based on their understanding of how many individuals they could feasibly support and the outcomes that could be achieved. In addition, as realistic targets were identified, it enabled the key worker to provide light touch support to some individuals who did not meet the criteria. This strengthened relationships with referral partners and enabled the key worker to build trust and a reliable reputation for the service.

#### Creche Provision

Funding for free creche provision for individuals with children was a key element of the project. The creche not only enabled participants to leave their children in a safe, friendly space within the same building they received support, it also strengthened WHiST's partnership with another South Tyneside organisation Crest.

The creche enabled WHiST to provide placement hours that Crest trainees needed to complete their childcare qualification. Both the workers in the creche are from black and minoritised communities, which has helped both the children and parents who attend the courses as it has addressed language barriers that otherwise may have made clients reluctant to leave their children in the creche.

*"Great opportunity for me to access courses and activities to help build by skills and confidence whilst my child is safe and plays with other children"*

## IMPACT

## CHALLENGES:

### Planning and Delivery Timescale

The delivery timescale was particularly challenging and for some individuals 12 months was too short a time-period to provide the full support they needed to move towards employment. The funding decision (and so funding) was received later than anticipated, consequently, the development phase (to promote and plan delivery) of the work felt rushed.

### Eligibility Criteria

A key challenge for the project was unclear definitions of the E35 criteria and what constituted lifelong learning. It took a considerable amount of time to clarify eligibility which made delivery, in already tight timescales, more challenging.



### Reporting

Reporting and outcomes focus on quantitative numbers/throughput, rather than quality of experience or impact on participants related to their unique starting point.



## IMPACT

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED:



- Need to **accept service users outside of criteria** while building the service



- Service users need **longer term support** - for some cases more than 12 months would be required for interventions to have the maximum positive impact



- **Clear and relevant eligibility criteria** need to be established from the start



- **Realistic**, rather than overly ambitious, **targets** are required to ensure delivery is manageable and focuses on delivering appropriate, high-quality interventions, rather than box-ticking interventions to ensure high numerical targets are met



- **Experienced delivery staff** and organisations with a history of working with target groups, who are embedded in their local communities, are crucial to achievement of positive outcomes



- A **development period to plan and promote** activities is critical. This supports promotion, engagement and underpins successful delivery

## IMPACT

## CONCLUSION

**Overall, the project exceeded its targets, providing relevant support to clients. Through interventions that boosted confidence, stabilised finances, and improved overall wellbeing, clients were able to move forward in their lives and get closer to employment.**



The outcomes were achieved despite tight delivery timescales and some unclear eligibility criteria due to successful collaboration between Rise and WHiST. WHiST is locally embedded in the community and has a longstanding history of providing support to women. This expertise alongside previous experiences from Rise ensured achievable targets were set and that women were enabled to engage with the provision provided.

The free creche was a critical element of the project as it provided childcare whilst women engaged with support. Whilst positive outcomes were achieved during the 12 month project, longer term projects are needed to fully enable economically inactive women to move closer to or into employment as their circumstances are such that longer term support is required.

## IMPACT

## RECOMMENDATIONS



An appropriate amount of time is required to effectively plan and promote services.



Clear eligibility criteria should be established at the start of projects to enable better planning.



Whilst positive impacts can be achieved in 12 months, longer-term projects would be preferable to reflect the time it takes to transition from economic inactivity into employment.



Long-term funding for projects delivered by experienced, locally embedded organisations and staff is critical to successful project delivery.



Free childcare must be included in projects supporting this client group. Without it, engagement would be significantly more difficult - if not impossible.



Strengthening communication and embedding the key worker within WHiST would be more effective with longer-term projects.





Performance monitoring should capture the quality of participants' experiences alongside throughput to fully illustrate the impact achieved and the value of investments made.


# RISE.

## THANK YOU!

If you'd like to discuss how we can work together please contact us:

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