

THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH

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Bethan's Story

"Bethan was on the Work Programme but very far from the labour market. She was suffering from **acute anxiety, agoraphobia** as well as other mental health issues. Due to these factors, she was unable to attend appointments to see her Work Programme adviser. As they were not permitted to work outside of their offices, they were limited as to what support they could offer her."

"She was referred to the SLA Maesgeirchen project as she was getting worried by the job centre's demands and, as she saw it, their lack of understanding of her disorder. She was very reliant on her mother, and **did not leave the home unattended**. Social events of any kind were limited unless family members came to the house - she wouldn't interact with anyone but her mum. Bethan had left formal education at the age of 13, but had gained an English GCSE at grade C via a tutor."

"It took **months of us working together using the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach** before Bethan could begin to see how her future might be. We looked at how she might do some volunteering to build her confidence. In time, she left the house more, began to have driving lessons and would even go into a supermarket, **things she never would have considered before**. She had goals and dreamt of possibly gaining further qualifications. Once I had gained her trust, she opened out a great deal and began to see a future for herself."

"Then came a blow. Bethan and her mother had been living in the same house for many years, but the owner suddenly gave notice she was selling the property. They found another place to rent in the same area but could not afford the removal costs. **As they were potentially being made homeless**, I approached the council and other organisations to ask if there was any support available; there wasn't. They had no family members who could help out. This increased the anxiety and **set Bethan back tremendously**, bringing back her OCD and other mental health issues."

"I helped Bethan and her mum out with the **removal and other costs forced on them by the need to move**. I also helped with all the paperwork needed before and after the move was complete. Bethan's mental health was still affected by the stress though, and her GP referred her to the local mental health team for support. She cancelled planned appointments with me did not make contact for several months."

"When she was **ready to see me again**, she was more focused and had begun to volunteer in a local charity shop. She wanted to put the action plan we had started to work on into place. During this time, because of **changes to the benefits system**, she had to attend an appointment with her benefits advisor. I attended to give moral support and to help her communicate if she went blank."

"Bethan also needed help with **changing her surname**, as it was the last link to her father and changing it would help her mental well-being greatly. No-one else could help her with the process and fees for this, apart from our project."

"I referred Bethan to the careers service for advice and guidance on her goals. She then went about contacting local employers herself for information and to volunteer. She saw a vacancy for a PA and receptionist at a local accountancy firm and called them to ask if she would be considered without relevant qualifications or experience. **To her amazement, she was offered an interview.**"

"The project helped fund clothing for the interview and we spent some time going over interview skills. She went to the interview, was offered the position and took it. The role is full-time and is going well so far. She is **no longer claiming benefits and is instead earning just under £13,000 per annum.**"

The **unit cost** to the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach project in Maesgeirchen project of supporting Bethan over three years was £6,524.41.*

At the same time, the project's support for Bethan generated a **gross fiscal value** (nominal savings to the state) of £12,792.00 through helping her off benefits and into full-time work, through supporting her to no longer need mental health services and through helping her and her mother to find a new house so they did not need to register as homeless.

The project's support also generated a **gross economic benefit** of £5,364.40 through its intervention, first for her volunteering role prior to finding her job, and then through the extra spending power Bethan gained from her new salary.

Finally, the project's intervention also generated a **gross social benefit** of

£82,571.50. This was created through the increase in Bethan's confidence it helped support and her new-found feelings of control over her life, together with the relief of her depression and anxiety, as well as the specific boost in her wellbeing that finding full-time paid employment gave her.

The SLA project did not create all of this value by itself. The work of other organisations has to be factored in, along with the length of the benefits derived, the opportunity costs for Bethan in participating, substitution effects and so on.

With all of this done, and attributing only less than half of the total value created to the SLA Maesgeirchen project as a result, the **combined net value** of the support given to Bethan was £38,481.54 across all outcomes. This equates to a **net value ratio** of 6.62:1. In other words, in Bethan's case, the project generated £6.62 of fiscal, economic and social value for every £1 invested in it.

* All figures in 2015/16 prices. For further information on the definitions and methodologies used in this case study, see L. Quinn, 'Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales: Value Analysis' (1 April 2016), available at: <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/final-evaluation-building-livelihoods-and-strengthening-communities-in-wales-pr-615933>.

Gethin's Story

"Gethin was referred to the project as he was being home tutored, but wasn't engaging with the tutor. He was 16, but **rarely left his room and never left the house**. He barely communicated with family members, let alone strangers. It was evident that his mum had her own issues around relationships and health. She felt other agencies and workers had let Gethin down from primary school age on."

"I explained the aims of the Maesgeirchen SLA project and how important it was for Gethin to see the benefits of working with me. **I attended panel meetings with the education authorities and his mum** and it was agreed that I would support with him gaining work experience and getting him out of the house more. It was evident that Gethin had some mobility issues and **could not even tie shoelaces**, but he wasn't eligible for support from social services. His diet and personal hygiene was poor. He had no life experiences other than the world he was creating on his computer, the only thing he would get animated about. I spent some time **using the SLA** to work with his mum on parenting."

"In time, and with much perseverance, she started to do less for him and **he started to communicate more and more**. I set up a meeting with a local company for him to gain an understanding of the various careers possible within computing. He also did some IT work experience I arranged for him. We discussed college and the possibilities of further education, and I worked with the careers service to prepare him for what he would need to do."

"As a result, he was **diagnosed with dysgraphia, dyspraxia and literacy difficulties**. This information was then used to help put a learning skills plan into place. I took him along to the college interview, he was offered a place. I supported his travel costs for the first term, helped his mum complete the forms to claim the Educational Maintenance Allowance."

"Given that he had **not engaged in education or any form of social setting for years** outside of the IT work experience I had helped him do, it was going to be a big step going to college, and we expected there would be some teething problems.

Eventually, after two terms, a meeting had to be held because of issues around attendance. It was evident that Gethin would not be able to complete the course. He really did want to better his life, but was struggling to see it through."

"**A central aspect of the Sustainable Livelihoods approach** is that everyone has some asset or skill to build on, however small or however unimportant it might seem to them or others. Even though he was seemingly stuck back in his room where he'd started, I found Gethin some one-to-one support with building his own computer. This allowed him to keep up the skills he had learned. It also gave him an opportunity to see the possibilities he still had before him if he went back to education. Most of all, I was able to show him with the help of the SLA that **he was responsible for changing his life**, and no-one else could do that, only him."

"His mum also needed to see that she was not helping matters by allowing him to bow out of situations when it suited him. **Through the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach**, I could show them both that his learnt helplessness was a barrier. As a result, **Gethin reapplied to college**, handling all of the process himself. The college agreed to trial him on a reduced number of days; if his attendance rate was 100 percent, they would allow him to do the full number of days needed to complete the course. **He did not miss a single day**. He is now studying the full number of days to gain his IT qualification **and is willing to do whatever it takes to get to his goal**."

The **unit cost** to the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach project in Maesgeirchen of supporting Gethin over two years was £4,349.61.*

The first type of value the project's support for Gethin generated was a **gross fiscal value** (nominal savings to the state) of £3,077.00. This was created as it helped him go from being NEET (not in employment, education or training) into full-time education. This fiscal value takes into account the extra costs created in terms of benefit take-up (Education Maintenance Allowance) by the support.

By contrast, the support of the project did not result in any **gross economic value** being created for Gethin during its lifetime. His work experience placement did not create any value, and he had taken only the first step towards the economic benefits that would accrue through improving his qualifications.

The project's intervention did, however, generate a **gross social benefit** of £14,152.00 through the huge boost in confidence it gave Gethin. This change also left him better able to plan his life and feeling that he had a more secure financial future, as well as more skilled and knowledgeable generally.

The SLA project did not create all of this value by itself. The work of other agencies has to be factored in, along with the length of the outcomes derived, the opportunity costs for Gethin in participating, substitution effects and so on.

With all of this done, and attributing only just over half the total value created to SLA project as a result, the **combined net value** of the support given to Gethin was £9,475.95 across all outcomes. This equates to a **net value ratio** of 2.03:1. In other words, in Gethin's case, the project generated £2.03 of fiscal, economic and social value for every £1 invested in it.

