

# Evaluation of Infuse

Draft Final Report

Monmouthshire County Council / Nesta / Cardiff University

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## Evaluation of Infuse: Draft Final Report

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## Glossary

| <b>Acronym/Key word</b> | <b>Definition</b>                          |
|-------------------------|--|
| CC                      | City / County Council                      |
| CBC                     | County Borough Council                     |
| CCR                     | Cardiff Capital Region                     |
| CCT                     | Cross-Cutting Themes                       |
| CEIC                    | Circular Economy Innovation Communities    |
| CU                      | Cardiff University                         |
| EDI                     | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion          |
| ESF                     | European Social Fund                       |
| ESI                     | European Structural Investment             |
| EW                      | East Wales                                 |
| HEFCW                   | Higher Education Funding Council for Wales |
| IACW                    | Innovation Advisory Council Wales          |
| MCC                     | Monmouthshire County Council               |
| PMD                     | Programme Management Division              |
| SMEs                    | Small and Medium Enterprises               |
| WW&V                    | West Wales and the Valleys                 |

## 1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the external final evaluation of the Infuse Programme.

### **About the Infuse Programme**

- 1.2 The conception of the Infuse Programme reflects a decisive shift in approach to the development of public services in Wales. The Innovative Future Services Programme (Infuse) has been specifically tailored to build skills and capacity across the sector, throughout the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR). By implementing a range of targeted activities, the Programme enhances opportunities to trial new and applied methods enabling knowledge transfer and skills development. Intended outcomes for the Programme include embedding collaboration across the public services, promoting innovative solutions, and driving better informed decision making.
- 1.3 The Programme itself is facilitated through a collaboration between Cardiff University, Nesta and Monmouthshire County Council as the lead partner of ten collaboration local authorities within the CCR. The partnership seeks to explore the ways that Local Government can make changes to improve services and, in turn, work towards wider Welsh Government strategy.
- 1.4 Strategically, the Infuse Programme responds to *ESF Priority 5: public services reform and regional working*, specifically Specific Objective One: 'collaboration and innovation in public service delivery'. It also aligns with several other policy areas such as the decarbonisation agenda and the transition to net zero, economic development and supporting communities, which will be explored in further detail through this report.

### *Delivery Overview*

- 1.5 In order to foster innovation, Infuse participants (Associates) are provided with six months of training and support in new skills, tools and methods to progressively evolve their work practices. This process is then complimented by coaching, which assists associates

to implement newly acquired knowledge and learnings from collaborative activities. In Cohort Alpha and Cohort 1, this took the form of support by programme staff. The format changed for Cohort 2 and Cohort 3, with external coaches from the People Powered Results Team at Nesta being introduced to run experiment coaching and reflective practice sessions, alongside Programme staff.. In Cohort 3, the delivery method was said to be the most successful. Recruitment for Cohort 3 saw an increased focus on engaging with public and third sector organisations linked to addressing social care and health challenges. . The number of delivered content days was also reduced.

1.6 The Programme was originally focused thematically across six targeted workstreams comprising:

- Workstream 1 - Thematic Assessment
- Workstream 2 - The Adaption Lab
- Workstream 3 - The Data Lab
- Workstream 4 - The Procurement Lab
- Workstream 5 - Continuous Learning
- Workstream 6 - Ensuring Resilience and Legacy.

1.7 For Cohort 2, the Programme was structured into the following key phases of delivery:

- Weeks 1-4 – Inspire Phase
- Weeks 5-8 – Learn & Activate Phase
- Weeks 9-12 – Learn & Explore Phase (Data Lab)
- Weeks 13-16 – Learn & Explore Phase (Procurement Lab)
- Weeks 17-22 Experiment Phase
- Week 23 – Celebrate Phase

1.8 For the final cohort, Cohort 3, the Programme was also structured into five delivery phases. This included:

- Bootcamp (17-18 January 2023)
- Explore (24 January – 21 March 2023)

- Learn (28 March – 31 May 2023)
- Test (31 May – 27 June 2023)
- Celebrate (4 July)

- 1.9 Scheduled to run until the summer of 2023, the Programme has worked with four cohorts (120+ public servants) of local authorities and public sector workers from across the Cardiff Capital Region, providing significant opportunities for skills development. The target audience for the latter half of the Programme has been extended to include non-LA public private third sector organisations.
- 1.10 Upon completion, Programme participants are also invited to join the alumni, a network to encourage ongoing collaboration with fellow Infuse colleagues.
- 1.11 In total, the Programme has a three year delivery timeline and an overall cost of £5,631,598. Of this, £1,201,654 is from the East Wales Programme (EW) and £2,421,218 from the West Wales & the Valleys Programme (WW&V). Match funding is provided by value of time contributed by the staff of the ten Local Authorities of the region.
- 1.12 In order to assess progress, Miller Research was appointed in November 2021 to conduct the external evaluation of the Programme – providing an independent review of its implementation. The evaluation has sought to draw conclusions in relation to process and value of the Programme, that is, what are the outcomes and impacts that can be attributed to Infuse.

### **About the final evaluation**

- 1.13 Programmes funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) via the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) are required to be evaluated by an external party. To meet these requirements, Miller Research has devised an evaluation methodology designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the programme. For details of methodology for this final stage, and overall approach, see section 2.

- 1.14 This report forms the main output of the final stage of evaluation. It follows the interim evaluation which was undertaken between March 2022 – September 2022. The interim evaluation built on the baseline and applied more of a specific focus on to the process and implementation of the Programme.
- 1.15 This final evaluation will report on the final contribution that the Infuse Programme has made to the intended audience, on their entities and other public sector bodies in the Cardiff Capital Region. It will also assess the progress made towards the following long-term impacts:
- improved effectiveness of decision making;
  - economies of scale in meeting challenges and opportunities on a regional basis;
  - to replicate learning tools and methods across other Local Authority based activity and across other Public Sector Bodies
- 1.16 This evaluation has also engaged with the two ‘core challenges’ that were the focus of the ‘learning by doing’ approach in the Infuse Programme, and to assess:
- how effectively the deployment of the Programme’s resources has impacted on collaborative working;
  - and the decision-making process, including the process of iteration of lab content between cohorts
- 1.17 Building on the interim evaluation, the final stage has focused on engaging with a range of stakeholders, including those involved in delivering the Programme, to gain a greater sense of what was effective, and the challenges faced. The final evaluation has sought to determine the critical success factors that will enable Infuse to have a long-lasting legacy.
- 1.18 The final report is structured as follows:
- **Section 2:** sets out the final evaluation approach and provides a discussion on the methodology adopted



- **Section 3:** presents information on the Programme’s context, including the needs for the intervention and its stated objectives
- **Section 4:** assesses the Programme’s design, management and governance to-date
- **Section 5:** details the Programme’s progress as a result of its activities, as well as presenting outputs, including its contributions to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- **Section 6:** reviews the outcomes and impacts of the Infuse, alongside a counterfactual assessment.
- **Section 7:** provides overall conclusions from the final phase and recommendations to ensure the Programme has a long-lasting impact.

## 2. Evaluation Approach

### Methodology

- 2.1 The methodology for the three stage evaluation of Infuse has centred around a Theory of Change approach. This has entailed formulating a Programme Logic Model that identifies policies relevant to Infuse, as well as the Programme's needs and objectives. It also captures relevant inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts, alongside external factors. The reports for the baseline, mid-term and final evaluations have been structured in alignment with these headings.
- 2.2 The final evaluation has placed a primary focus on qualitative engagement activities, ensuring rich and detailed data is gained from the associates and the Programme delivery team.
- 2.3 After adapting the methodology in coordination with internal evaluators of Infuse, adjustments were made to avoid duplication of research activities and better evaluate Programme progress and outcomes. Thus, more resources were allocated to carry out additional qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders, as opposed to evaluation case studies and a six-month follow-on survey of associates.
- 2.4 Interview samples were drawn on a voluntary basis, with Miller Research formulating recruitment text outlining the purpose of the evaluation and the focus of the ensuing qualitative interviews, alongside a doodle poll of available dates, which were subsequently disseminated by the Infuse delivery team.
- 2.5 The following tasks were undertaken as part of the final evaluation:  
*Interviews with Associates (Participants) Cohort 2*
- 2.6 Seven associate interviews with Cohort 2 were conducted with Programme participants with a mix of both group and one-to-one interviews. Drawn across the Local Authorities, interviews were designed to gain qualitative insights on Programme delivery, their

reflective experiences of going through the process, and the outcomes of the Programme at an individual, organisational and regional level.

*Interviews with Associates (Participants) Cohort 3*

- 2.7 Eight associate interviews with Cohort 3 were conducted with Programme participants in one-to-one interviews. These discussions had a similar focus to the interviews conducted with Cohort 2 associates.

*Interviews with the Delivery Team*

- 2.8 Sixteen interviews were conducted with representatives of the Programme's three project partners Nesta, CU and MCC to gain qualitative insights on the design and delivery of the Programme throughout its lifetime, as well as their perspective on the benefits it has produced.

*Attendance at the wrap-day event for Cohort 2 and Cohort 3*

- 2.9 During the final evaluation, Miller Research attended the Infuse wrap event/celebration day for Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 respectively to gain a further understanding of what has been achieved over the course of the Programme and the outcomes. This provided the opportunity to speak with delivery team stakeholders and associates to gain a sense of reflections/views towards the Programme on a larger scale.
- 2.10 The evaluators took notes of key learnings from the day covering varied themes including restoring trust in public services, buy-in from communities, social value in procurement, and the Programme's impact on enhancing collaboration.

### 3. Programme context

3.1 This section of the report presents the context for the Infuse Programme, including an assessment of its alignment with policy, and considers whether the market need / rationale for the Programme remains the same as it was when it was conceptualised.

3.2 Given that this has already been covered in previous evaluation reports and the focus of the final evaluation is predominantly on Programme effects, which is outcomes and impacts, this section provides only a brief overview.

#### Policy alignment

3.3 At the final evaluation stage, the evaluation team tested to what extent the Programme still aligned with the policy context identified at the inception and mid-term evaluation stages.

3.4 Since the mid-term evaluation, a re-assessment of overarching policy for Infuse indicates that there have been some developments in the policy context surrounding the Programme. Despite this it remains well aligned with the strategic context and addressed the substantial challenges of Accelerating Decarbonisation in Wales and building Supportive Communities<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 3.1 – Policy Alignment**

| Strategic origin | Policy area                         | Current relevance  |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Welsh Government | Wellbeing of Future Generations Act | Aligned with ‘a prosperous Wales’, and its delivery method, involving ‘delivering greater skills, collaboration, and new ways of working’. This is one of the Act’s ‘Ways of Working’ and will positively impact on Local Authorities’ ability to contribute towards the seven shared national well-being goals. |

|                         |  |  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Welsh Government</p> | <p>Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan</p>                        | <p>The Infuse Procurement Lab has examined how public procurement can act as a strategic lever for change and an accelerator of innovation, which has a direct impact on service delivery, value for money and impacts positively on the circular and foundational economy. The Procurement Lab enabled skills development and action-based learning and collaboration, encouraged procurement teams to build transferable innovation knowledge, identify new procurement tools.</p> |
| <p>Welsh Government</p> | <p>Cardiff Capital Region Industrial and Economic Plan</p>             | <p>Infuse is the first significant collaboration, outside of the CCR, between public sector bodies in South East Wales to identify opportunities and address challenges that will occur as a result of the delivery of the City Deal</p>   |
| <p>Welsh Academia</p>   | <p>Cardiff University's 'The Way Forward 2018-2023' Strategic Plan</p> | <p>Infuse supported Cardiff University's commitment to reshaping their civic mission in order to help Government, health services and wider society to revive and renew the Welsh economic, social and cultural landscape.</p>   |
| <p>Welsh Academia</p>   | <p>Higher Education Funding Council</p>                                | <p>The design of the Infuse Programme and this strategy clearly</p>  |

|           |   |  |
|-----------|---|--|
|           | for Wales (HEFCW) strategy<br>Research and Innovation: The Vision for Wales | align, not least with the Programme's focus on innovation activity and collaboration with public bodies.   |
| EU Policy | European Social Fund  | Infuse strategically aligned with the European Social Fund (ESF) West Wales and the Valleys and East Wales 2014-2020 Operational Programmes.   |
| EU Policy | ESF Priority 5: Public Services Reform and Regional                         | Responded directly to this, particularly Specific Objective 1: Collaboration and Innovation in Public Service Delivery   |
| EU Policy | Europe 2020 – the Eu's growth strategy                                      | Research and development (R&D) investment is considered a precondition for, and positively associated with, technological innovation. This in turn can be transformed into improved regional economic growth and competitiveness, depending on region-specific socio-economic characteristics. |
| EU Policy | Economic Prioritisation Framework   | The Infuse Programme aimed to address the Economic Prioritisation Framework by delivering a regional approach which details how local authorities can collaborate to increase public service innovation skills, respond in partnership to  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>societal opportunities and challenges that Local Authorities face, and work together to build stronger and more effective leadership across the CCR.</p> |
|--|--|---|

- 3.5 In February 2023, the Welsh Government published an Innovation strategy: ‘Wales Innovates: Creating a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales’. This strategic shift was driven by changing economic conditions and the impacts of Brexit. The new policy seeks to use innovation to deliver impact and value for citizens in a modern Welsh economy by coordinating people, organisations and funding bodies to maximise outcomes and investment.
- 3.6 The Innovation strategy aims are categorised into four key missions: progress for Education, the Economy, Health and Wellbeing, and Climate and Nature. Many of the strategies’ specific aims align with the objectives of the Infuse Programme, including its aims to support/create producers of research, development and industry; decarbonisation of industry and homes; public procurement, and skills development.
- 3.7 Overall, the strategic fit of the Infuse Programme with the wider policy context has remained strong at the Welsh, UK, and European level. Given the increasing interest in strengthening Welsh public services, their connectivity across regions, and their leverage for enabling social value – the relevance of the Infuse Programme remains high.

### **Needs**

- 3.8 The needs for the Programme, identified in earlier phases of the evaluation, appear to remain as valid now as when the Programme was designed. This view was shared by the Programme’s delivery

team and wider stakeholders who did not identify any significant changes in the underlying needs for Infuse.

**Table 3.2 - Needs for the Infuse Programme**

| <b>Programme Needs</b> |  |
|------------------------|--|
| N.1                    | Skills deficiencies within public sector organisations   |
| N.2                    | Decline in the local number of government employees  |
| N.3                    | Limited collaboration between key organisations  |
| N.4                    | Provide the Local Authorities in the CCR with a space for collaboration, to meet the changing demands of public services |
| N.5                    | Increasing challenges for public services to address   |
| N.6                    | To develop new, responsive interventions and/or way of delivering services to address these challenges                   |
| N.7                    | Investment opportunity from implementing the CCR City Deal   |

Source: Miller Research Evaluation Logic Model

- 3.9 During the fieldwork phase, interviewees were prompted to discuss their views on the needs and rationale for the programme, providing further insight.
- 3.10 The need to create relationships between local authorities and share knowledge emerged as a significant need of the Programme. Stakeholders frequently discussed the role of Infuse in addressing knowledge and skills gap within local organisations / authorities. Infuse allowed for knowledge and skills sharing, and a greater focus on building supportive communities, rather than competitive ones as once perceived.
- 3.11 This is similar to the Programme’s role in challenging the status quo and the culture of organisation across the CCR. This was highlighted by several participants. In providing the resources for innovation, and in encouraging creativity, Infuse has sought to address this need.

**Objectives**

- 3.12 Objectives are important in understanding whether the Programme, as designed, has achieved its overall goal. The objectives of the Programme are set out below:



**Table 3.3 - Objectives of the Infuse Programme**

| Programme Objectives |   |
|----------------------|---|
| OB.1                 | Develop a range of skills from CCR public servants through cohort-based teams   |
| OB.2                 | Understand the processes of intervention development so participants can apply this learning and transferable skills to their own problem |
| OB.3                 | Improve data skills and literacy  |
| OB.4                 | Establish how to effectively procure new solutions which maximise benefits to communities   |
| OC.5                 | Support the associates to develop practical and responsible solutions to their problem  |
| OB.6                 | Develop transferable processes, techniques and tools  |
| OB.7                 | Build innovation skills and capacity of public services   |
| OB.8                 | Enable the identification of two regional themes to be investigated and a range of potential interventions tested                         |
| OB.9                 | Embed a collaborative approach across public services in the CCR  |
| OB.10                | Create cultural change around collaboration and innovation throughout the LA's  |
| OB.11                | Increase regional capacity to tackle societal challenges and challenge the status quo   |
| OB.12                | Develop a willingness to take risks and learn from failure.   |

Source: Miller Research Evaluation Logic Model

- 3.13 Delivery team stakeholders believed the stated objectives closely aligned with the needs identified, and therefore the overall rationale for the Infuse Programme remained strong.
- 3.14 There was consensus amongst the delivery team that the Programme has met the objectives and has excelled in certain areas. For example, the decarbonisation team met expectations to ensure all local authorities have a decarbonisation strategy already in place or in the planning stage.
- 3.15 Stakeholders were complimentary of the development of leadership skills. Infuse has provided the skills and resources for local leaders to

work collaboratively with others; the delivery of events both in person and online was highlighted as an effective and key factor in achieving this. However, there was an underlying concern about whether the Programme has done enough for this collaboration and leadership to sustain going forward without the support of Infuse.

3.16 Many associates highlighted that the Programme excelled in meeting objectives in some local authorities, but not in others. Some remained engaged and committed to the Programme, whereas targets were not met in other areas.

3.17 In summary, the Infuse Programme was relevant and coherent with its policy drivers throughout its delivery. The design was tightly aligned with the policy and needs, with the result that there was a clear rationale for the Programme. In the view of delivery team stakeholders, the objectives were relevant and proportionate. They have been successfully achieved, if not exceeded, in certain areas, however, failing to achieve equal levels of participation across all local authorities, in terms of the number of employees who engaged with the Programme, meant that not all objectives were met across the board.

## 4. Programme design and management

### Inputs / resources

4.1 Inputs are the resources available to a Programme to carry out its activities. At this final evaluation stage, the key questions for the evaluation is: *Has the Infuse Programme been sufficiently resourced and what resources were available to Infuse?*

4.2 The following inputs and resources available to the Programme were identified through a further review of the Business Plan, progress reports and discussions with stakeholders.

### *Finance*

4.3 The Infuse Programme has a total budget of £5,631,598 for its delivery between October 2021 and July 2023. The Programme will receive £3,622,872 in ESF funding of which £1,201,654 is from the East Wales Programme (EW) and £2,421,218 from the West Wales & the Valleys Programme (WW&V). Match funding is provided by the ten Local Authorities and public bodies participating in the Programme. These figures have remained unchanged since the interim evaluation.

4.4 Stakeholders within the delivery team agreed that there was sufficient funding for Infuse and stated that the Programme had efficient funding. However, it was suggested that the Programme had in some respects underspent and that there would still be some unused budget as the Programme draws to an end. This could have perhaps been used in areas such as recruitment where there were some issues stimulating interest. Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that this may have instead been due to a lack of interest or availability within certain local authorities rather than lack of recruitment staff.

4.5 Some delivery stakeholders suggested that Infuse was at times, *too* well staffed, with some staff members not having enough of a role or substantial responsibility. A small proportion of stakeholders engaged with suggested that the funding could have perhaps gone into a

different area of the project. Delivery team stakeholders also shared frustration regarding the match funding process as it was inflexible and limiting.

- 4.6 A significant portion of the delivery team stakeholders suggested that although there was significant funding from WEFO, this perhaps led to a lack of flexibility regarding the usage of the funding, meaning that funding opportunities were limited to certain areas of the Programme.

#### *Marketing and Communication*

- 4.7 The marketing and communication surrounding the Infuse Programme was viewed as a success by the delivery team. They felt there was a clear brand created throughout the course of the Programme which became clearly recognisable both internally and within partnering Local Authorities.

- 4.8 Delivery team stakeholders agreed that as the Programme progressed, the Infuse brand gained trust and traction. Communication teams were eager to push the 'human' element of the Programme rather than focussing purely on the business perspective, which was believed to have been one of the successes of the marketing campaign. Social media campaigns on platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn were considered useful tools in stimulating interest and encouraging participation in the Programme.

- 4.9 In nine months, the Programme witnessed a 93.7 per cent increase in its LinkedIn followers, rising from 125 to 242. This growth reflects a growing interest in the Programme. Impressively, the LinkedIn engagement rate hit 69.84 per cent, showcasing significant audience interaction. The content generated 556 impressions and achieved a click-through rate of 61.76 per cent, demonstrating the effectiveness of the content strategy.

- 4.10 On Twitter, the Infuse account grew from 398 followers in January 2023 to 479 in September 2023. Notably, the Twitter posts received more views than those on LinkedIn. However, it's worth noting that

Twitter posts in Welsh consistently received lower engagement than those in English.

4.11 Lastly, the Infuse Summer 2023 Newsletter received 586 views, with an average completion rate of 43 per cent. These data-driven insights underscore the Infuse Programme's successful branding and recognition, both internally and amongst partnering Local Authorities.

4.12 The publication of case studies on the Monmouthshire County Council website<sup>1</sup> was also used to promote Infuse and to demonstrate examples of the work done by associates. Case studies included, 'Microenterprises for social care and support in communities' and 'Data Science Mini- Projects', which discussed themes such as data reduction, clustering, topics and time-series analysis. Infuse newsletters were also sent out every three months, which allowed associates and alumni to stay engaged and up to date with the Programme. Regular videos were also produced and posted on the website and social media channels which was said to encourage 'Blue Sky Thinking' and was aimed at both current and potential associates. Alumni video clips were also shared on social media channels and on the website which demonstrated alumni discussing the Programme and reflecting on some of the key values of Infuse such as 'collaboration'. The delivery team praised the role of promotional videos and stimulating interest in Infuse and indicated that this was one of the more successful approaches of marketing and communications.

**Recommendation:** To secure a long lasting impact of the Infuse Programme, a continued focus on marketing and communication is essential. This includes sharing alumni activity and continued promotion of the Programme's benefits by Infuse associate champions within their organisation to share case studies, experiment developments, and forms of best practice. This approach will facilitate

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<sup>1</sup> [Infuse Case studies - Monmouthshire](#)

knowledge-sharing, inspiring others to learn, creating a wider network of support and collaboration within the Infuse community.

#### *Recruitment of participants*

- 4.13 Stakeholders from the delivery team reported that there was some reluctance from some senior members of staff within local authorities in recruiting participants, however this seemed to vary depending on the organisation. This reluctance was thought to be due to concerns over workload and the relevance of Infuse within some local authorities.
- 4.14 Stakeholders in the delivery team commented that Covid-19 had also created some recruitment challenges for Infuse in the earlier stages of delivery. One delivery team stakeholder suggested that there was 'less time for innovation and creativity' for the associates. It was also suggested that different local authorities had conflicting internal challenges and pressures which meant that committing to the whole of the programme was complicated.

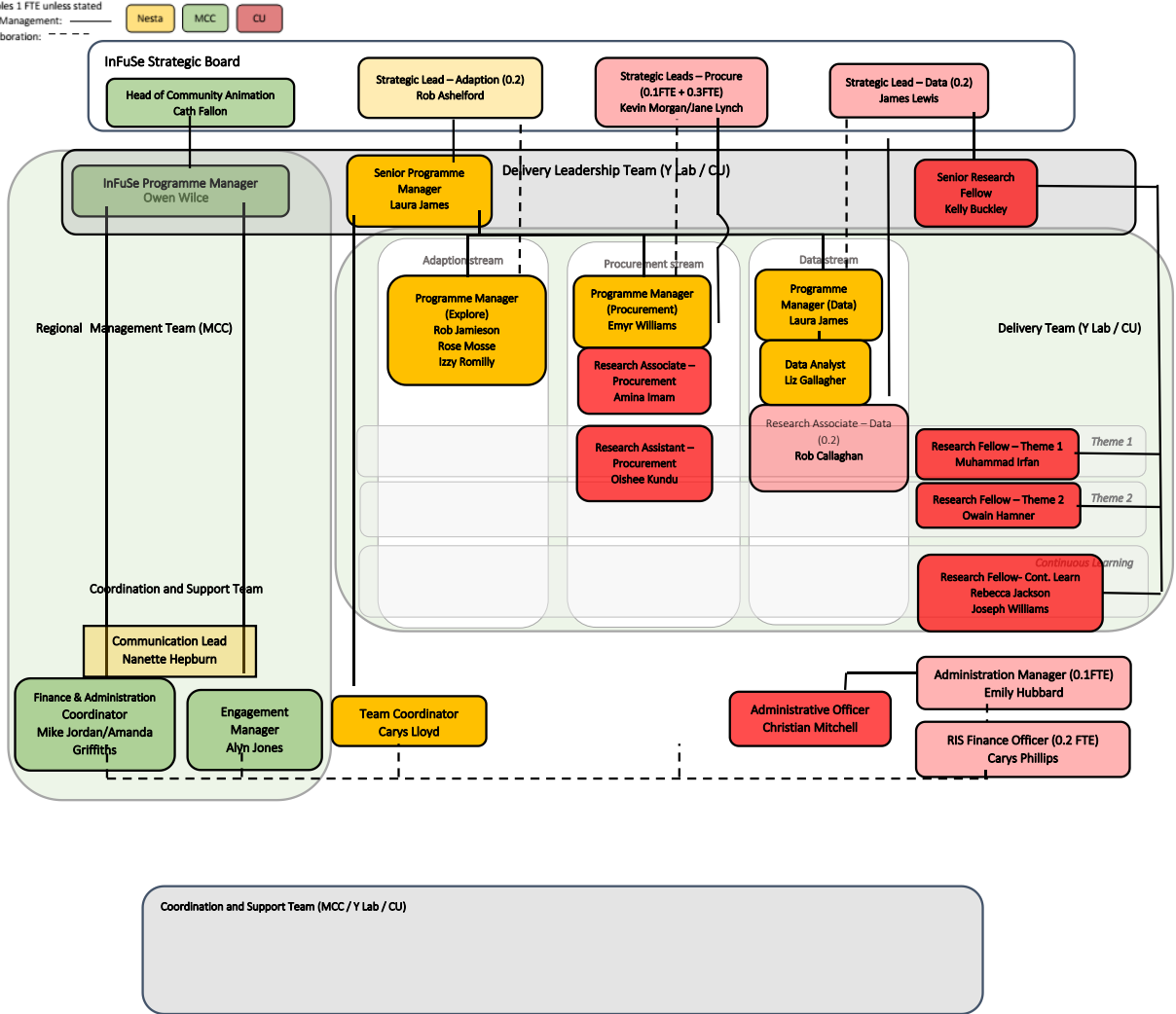
#### **Management and Governance**

- 4.15 Effective management and governance are essential components of the successful delivery of the Infuse Programme. The evaluation team's assessment of management and governance processes involved an exploration of the following core areas:
- The process of recruiting participants for the Infuse cohorts
  - The administrative processes supporting the delivery of the Infuse Programme
  - The level of support provided for Programme participants to see them through the Programme
  - The partnership of the three lead partners (Monmouthshire County Council, Nesta and Cardiff University)
  - The support received by wider stakeholders including the Infuse Regional Strategic Board.

## 4.1 – Infuse Organogram

### Organograms: InFuSe

All roles 1 FTE unless stated  
 Line Management: ———  
 Collaboration: - - - - -



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

- 4.16 Relationships between the three lead partners are now well developed given that the Programme has completed four cohorts.
- 4.17 Several delivery team stakeholders spoke highly of the management of Infuse, noting that regular meetings with all three key partners further aided the smooth management of the Programme. Regular meetings ensured that elements were kept up to date and relevant activities taken forward.
- 4.18 Several stakeholders within the delivery team reported some staff absence within the senior management team which led to more junior members of staff having an increased responsibility, sometimes without the relevant experience. This therefore made the delivery of Cohort 3 somewhat more challenging for some members of staff. It was reported that this period of senior staff absence was a 'strange time', however, the day-to-day delivery of the project continued without problems and without the associates noticing any major differences or issues.
- 4.19 A few delivery team stakeholders also highlighted that relations between Nesta, MCC, and CU occasionally became tense due to their differing managerial approaches. The interim evaluation stage also raised challenges between the partner organisations. At the baseline stage, it was mentioned that many conversations were typically happening internally within organisations, rather than across organisations, with different objectives within the different organisations. Some delivery stakeholders highlighted difficulties faced at an institutional level due to contrasting systems and ways of working. In particular, the style and pace of work was mentioned as contrasting.
- 4.20 Within the final stage of evaluation, disconnection between the partner organisations appeared to pose less of an issue with stakeholders reporting that the delivery of the programme improving and developing further. There was some concern raised by stakeholders regarding staff absence which led to increased



responsibility for junior members of staff. However, this did not affect the delivery of the programme.

- 4.21 Despite this, delivery team stakeholders noted that internal staff roles, and the general path of the Programme were both clearly defined within the business plan. This allowed for the smooth execution and delivery of the Programme even when faced with challenging circumstances.

#### *Staff turnover*

- 4.22 It was noted that as employment contracts were fixed term contracts ending in September of 2023, several delivery team members actively sought alternative employment opportunities. This was further exacerbated by the current cost-of-living crisis and economic instability which led to members of the delivery team looking for more permanent contracts elsewhere. This turnover not only disrupted continuity, but also led to a loss of valuable institutional knowledge and experience. Additionally, it was noted that the leadership team faced significant challenges with long-term sickness, resulting in frequent absences. This significantly impacted the team's capacity to effectively deliver the Programme and manage its objectives by placing additional pressure on junior members of the team, who had to step up and assume greater responsibilities. The delivery team handled any changes to the staffing team through taking on extra workload and ensuring that any extra work was equally spread through the remaining team.

- 4.23 Although there were some challenges faced across the working teams, delivery team stakeholders reported a feeling of shared ownership on the delivery of the project and a mutual desire to maintain a high standard throughout the three cohorts.

#### *Programme Design*

- 4.24 The Infuse Programme has experienced significant iteration and adaption to its design and delivery over the course of its lifetime. The delivery team largely spoke positively about these changes,

suggesting that by Cohort 3 the Programme was considered the most successful and effective, as there had been more opportunity to learn and develop from Cohort 1 and Cohort 2.

- 4.25 For Cohort Alpha, the iteration implemented introduced significant changes which benefitted all participating associates. Instead of focusing on just one lab, all associates had access to the adaptation, data, and procurement labs. Additionally, the Programme revolved around two key themes: accelerating decarbonisation and fostering supportive communities.
- 4.26 The rationale behind these changes stemmed from the realisation that procurement professionals played a crucial role in the COVID-19 recovery efforts. Furthermore, attempting to recruit a specific cohort solely dedicated to procurement proved to be impractical. Instead, the delivery team recognised the existence of weaknesses across public services and believed that all programme elements would be valuable to every associate.
- 4.27 As a result of this iteration, all associates concluded the Programme with a robust understanding of sustainable procurement practices. This newfound knowledge will empower them to make a positive impact on the budgets they are responsible for, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of the program. These outcomes demonstrate the importance of deviating from the initial business plan in order to achieve more significant results.
- 4.28 In Cohort 1, further changes were introduced. Associates were tasked with bringing a pre-existing experiment with them to the Programme, rather than generating one during the course. This adjustment aimed to enable a more direct application of the thematic content and the knowledge gained from the innovation lab sessions.
- 4.29 The rationale behind this change was to establish a stronger connection between the associates and the issues they were trying to address. By bringing their own experiments, associates had a tangible

context for testing the tools and strategies they were learning, which in turn, could be directly applied to their organisations' challenges.

- 4.30 The impact of this change was notable. Associates spent dedicated time at the end of the cohort to apply their newfound knowledge and skills to their experiments. However, it was noted that there were a higher number of experiments and direct collaboration reduced as a result.
- 4.31 Cohort 2 saw the inclusion of the People Powered Results PPR Team at Nesta. This brought in specialist facilitation, innovation, coaching and reflective practice to boost our delivery team. The Infuse team pushed associates harder than they had worked previously. This resulted in PPR increasing its ability to support associates with their wellbeing and learning journey. Happier individuals meant a better quality of learning and a lower drop out rate.
- 4.32 Phases were also introduced during Cohort 2 to better articulate the process of the Programme. These included : Learn & Activate, Learn & Explore, Experiment Phase, and Celebrate Phase. The Phases allowed blending of the innovation labs and thematic content to provide the inspiration required at the relevant stage of the Programme as opposed to associates waiting. This resulted in better collaboration, not just between associates but also between the delivery team.
- 4.33 Lastly, the delivery team reduced the number of collaborative experiments and linked thematic support directly to experiments, introducing sub-themes as a way of grouping associates. The delivery team highlighted that previously they found it difficult to effectively support the high number of innovation experiments. Additionally, the low collaboration was not keeping with the principles of the Programme. Therefore, by reducing the number of collaborative experiments, collaboration through learning increased, and closer support from thematic leads allowed more intensive and bespoke support to increase the effectiveness of the experiment.

- 4.34 For Cohort 3, a mission led innovation group to aid recruitment and specificity was introduced. By focusing on 'Attracting, recruiting and retaining great people in Social Care and Health' it allowed a multi disciplinary team to be recruited based on their interest and expertise. This hyper focus created a collaborative learning environment specific to the challenges being face by the organisations, it also allowed the delivery team to expand the cohort with individual innovators outside of Infuse to add further value.
- 4.35 Additionally in Cohort 3, learning from the labs was directly applied to the associates innovation experiment. Due to significantly more time being applied to experimentation from the very start of the cohort. The delivery team decided that instead of learning all of the innovation principles ahead of developing an experiment, Cohort 3 would develop the experiment and learning in tandem. This resulted in normative learning loops being created by 'learning through doing' creating more confident innovators with a much higher percentage of applied learning.
- 4.36 Lastly, the addition of the Explore, Learn and Test phases were developed during Cohort 3 to simplify and reduce the level of detail covered in each phase of the Programme. This simplification allowed associates to spend more time on their experiments. It was noted that this resulted in the understanding and promotion of the Programme by the associates increasing.
- 4.37 Feedback from participants had also been gathered between cohorts to inform changes. One of the main changes that was positively received by both associates and the delivery team was the wide range of speakers, who changed each week. This allowed participants to work with different team members and learn new approaches.
- 4.38 The inclusion of wider organisations beyond local authorities was also seen by the delivery team to have added value to Infuse,

commenting that the inclusion of third-sector organisations and Health Boards allowed for new conversations and ideas to develop.

4.39 However, other Cohort 3 associates added that although it was positive to include individuals who do not work within LAs, there was more of a shared understanding between those that do, particularly in terms of funding, ways of working and targets which those who did not work in the sector would not be able to fully grasp. Stakeholders within the delivery team expressed some concern surrounding the relevance of some areas of the programme to non-LA organisations. However, Cohort 3 associates suggested that this was not a barrier, and the difference in background instead fostered interesting and new discussions.

4.40 In terms of Programme content, one delivery team member also suggested they should have incorporated an element of tackling organisational culture into delivery. It is important to note that for Cohort 2 and 3, content was introduced on the areas of challenging the status quo, being an 'insurgent', as well as topics such as psychological safety and openness to learning.

4.41 Increasing the integration of key organisations, such as Welsh Government, which have a substantial influence over Local Authorities was proposed by delivery team members. In the context of decarbonisation, the failure to include the Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES) was viewed as a potential missed opportunity.

**Recommendation:** Programme participants should sustain and continue to establish collaborative partnerships with Welsh Government services to ensure that best practice is shared and innovation continues

4.42 The impact of Covid-19 was also raised as a key factor in changing the delivery of the Programme. As Covid-19 related restrictions lifted, Cohort 2 were allowed to have some face-to-face meetings in Cardiff. This enabled participants to meet each other and build relationships

offline. Cohort 3 associates commented that virtual meetings could be overwhelming at times, with the introduction of face-to-face sessions allowing associates to build a shared sense of camaraderie and connection.

## 5. Programme Delivery

- 5.1 This section of the report presents the findings related to the delivery of Infuse. It also expands on findings relating to external factors and any barriers that affected the Programme.

### **Activities / Structure**

#### *Labs (Data/Procurement/Adaption)*

- 5.2 One of the biggest changes made between Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 was the re-design of the adaption lab. The change was based on feedback received at the end of Cohort 2 and made to reflect the broader changes within the Infuse Programme, including the introduction of the 'Explore' phase.
- 5.3 Regarding the Programme labs, feedback gathered was generally positive. Associates from both Cohorts 2 and 3 were complimentary about the theory of change tools and their importance when planning out a project. Feedback also revealed that topics such as community citizenship, participation and decision making were interesting and useful.
- 5.4 Furthermore, associates deemed the data lab to be highly insightful and useful, stating that it was relevant to both their roles and experiments, providing essential day-to-day skills and tools. Associates described how the data lab was 'eye-opening', with several individuals taking the learnings from the lab and applying it to their own organisational context, either in the form of data collection and analysis, or in one instance, tailored training for council employees.
- 5.5 Despite the general positivity, feedback on the procurement lab was more varied, typically depending on the individual's professional background and mindset going into the lab. Some associates found aspects of the Procurement Lab overall too technical and felt the session should have been optional. They felt procurement was not relevant to their field, and therefore had limited usefulness.

Conversely, associates across both Cohorts 2 and 3 who were familiar and involved in procurement on a daily basis, typically viewed the lab as worthwhile.

- 5.6 This was also the case for the theme of decarbonisation in the early stages of delivery, with the first few sessions described as ‘broad brush’ yet useful, but then becoming too in-depth and technical for associates without a background in decarbonisation. As the Programme progressed into Cohort 2 and Cohort 3, the amount of content delivered on the theme of decarbonisation was reduced.

*Reflective practice*

- 5.7 Reflective practice sessions was a teaching component of Infuse that took a broader approach beyond experiments and the delivered content of the programme. The aim of the sessions were to increase general skills in a few different areas, including confidence in disrupting, confidence to explore and make sense of problems, listening and reflection skills and collaboration and ability to work as part of a team. Associates undertook reflective practice in different groupings to their experiment groups focusing on softer skills around providing support to one another, coaching each other and unleashing curiosity together.
- 5.8 Feedback was varied on the reflective practice exercise delivered by the People Powered Results Team. Associates from Cohort 2 provided useful detail and a range of opinions. One associate was particularly complimentary, stating that not only did it feel great to “see other people’s psyche, the way they think and work” but also taught the tools needed to discuss and reflect, claiming it was a practice which they could implement in their own workspace. Other associates were slightly more reserved about the activities’ usefulness, with one associate stating “I would not have missed it if it were not there. Nice to have but not completely necessary.” Another claimed they already had experience with the process and therefore did not learn anything new but understood why it was worthwhile to others.



### *Experiment coaching*

- 5.9 Associates provided positive feedback about the experiment coaching, delivered by both Programme delivery staff and People Powered Results, with the majority describing it as ‘useful’ and ‘invaluable’.
- 5.10 The quality of facilitators was praised by several associates, both for their knowledge as well as their advice when associates approached them with issues or doubts. They were described as “identifying the seedling of an idea and helping you to extract it”, as well as “helping to bring out the solutions you already have inside of you”.
- 5.11 The collaboration it fostered between associates was also seen as a big strength, with one associate stating, “we stripped everything back we had talked about, bounced off and supported each other”, coming at it from a different work perspective

### *Experiments / Projects*

- 5.12 The process of developing specific ideas related to their experiments was viewed differently by various associates. Of the associates interviewed for Cohort 2 and Cohort 3, some were comfortable being creative, researching and working towards an unknown, whereas several others struggled to ‘trust the process’ when entering the Programme without a clear idea of their experiment.
- 5.13 All associates interviewed<sup>2</sup> stated how their experiments were still yet to start, describing them as either a ‘work in process’ or ‘ready to go’, but halted as the day job has ‘taken over’ their ambitions to put their experiments into practice.
- 5.14 One individual said they did not feel confident to share their project with colleagues yet as it is ‘too clunky’.
- 5.15 It is important to note that at the time associates were interviewed, they were either approaching the end of their six month Infuse journey

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<sup>2</sup>All Cohort 3 associates who participated in the evaluation were interviewed between 4-6 months after the initial bootcamp event. Cohort 2 associates were interviewed one-two months following Programme completion.

or had only recently finished the Programme. As such, limited progress in terms of associates experiment implementation is to be expected.

5.16 Further information on individual experiments are explored later in this section.

*Phased approach*

5.17 Since the start of Cohort 2, the Infuse Programme has been structured into five key phases of delivery which include:

- Weeks 1-4 – Inspire Phase
- Weeks 5-8 – Learn & Activate Phase
- Weeks 9-12 – Learn & Explore Phase (Data Lab)
- Weeks 13-16 – Learn & Explore Phase (Procurement Lab)
- Weeks 17-22 Experiment Phase
- Week 23 – Celebrate Phase

5.18 Both associates and delivery team stakeholders were complimentary about the phased approach adopted by the Programme.

5.19 In particular, the in-person bootcamp event as part of the Inspire Phase was described by Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 associates as extremely useful, offering the opportunity to meet fellow associates and Programme delivery staff face-to-face, establishing a personal connection and rapport.

5.20 It was cited as a great networking opportunity to “make contacts straight away”, not purely through workshops and activities, but also socially, building an element of trust and openness. It was also seen to help associates in terms of working in teams as the Programme progressed. Associates across Cohort 2 and 3 felt, following bootcamp, they were more willing to support and help each other throughout the Programme.

5.21 As the Programme developed, most associates interviewed described remaining engaged and committed throughout the data and procurement; learn and explore phases. However, one Cohort 3

associate cited the challenge of feeling 'slightly out at sea' by the time of the experiment phase, as if they had been "let loose without feeling ready". This is despite the acknowledgment that they knew support was available if needed. As such, they stated preference for the experiment phase to have been extended a few more months.

5.22 Throughout the Infuse Programme, as part of the celebration phase, wrap day events were organised for the associates, offering an opportunity to reflect on their achievements and progress made during their time on the programme. The evaluation team actively observed in all three events, gaining valuable insights into the outcomes and impacts of the Programme on associates. The final wrap event, held in July 2023, served as a platform to engage with multiple delivery team stakeholders and associates, providing a comprehensive understanding of their reflections and perspectives on the Programme's broader implications.

5.23 During the wrap events, the evaluation team took notes of key learnings and discussions, covering a range of topics such as future opportunities for driving change, potential challenges in fostering innovation, support needed to sustain innovation in the workplace, rebuilding trust in public services, and the Programme's contribution to enhancing collaboration within the CCR. Feedback from Infuse delivery team stakeholders emphasised the immense value of the wrap events to the associates, serving as a fitting end-of-programme celebration that acknowledged the significant progress achieved and the positive impact of the Programme on all participants.

*Guest speakers*

5.24 Cohort 2 associates provided mixed feedback on guest speakers. Some were described as 'too theoretical' with not enough practical exercises to make the teachings 'stick'. One Cohort 2 associate also criticised the duplication of content across speakers in relation to the procurement lab, whilst others felt there was too much information provided by procurement guest speakers.

- 5.25 Despite similar criticisms amongst Cohort 3 associates, they were generally more positive, with Infuse described as offering “a good range of guest speakers to help expand on the subject and give a different perspective”. This opinion was echoed by the delivery team.
- 5.26 On certain topics however, such as procurement, it was felt by associates that there was too much information, despite the interesting nature of the subject. It was therefore suggested by one Cohort 3 associate that attendance for guest speakers should have been voluntary, with the opportunity to ‘drop in’ if it was of relevance to your role and professional background.

*In-person vs online*

- 5.27 There was a clear consensus from associates across Cohort 2 and 3 respectively that face-to-face delivery was preferable to online, although there was also recognition of the merits of a hybrid approach.
- 5.28 Associates described how they were grateful to have experienced in-person delivery, especially given that this was not possible for the previous cohorts of Cohort Alpha and Cohort 1. As already highlighted, the in-person aspect of the bootcamp phase in particular was frequently attributed as a major reason for its success and popularity. The in-person end of lab meetings were also seen as particularly useful.
- 5.29 Associates described the ability of the in-person events to inspire and rejuvenate them, “feeding and bouncing off others in the room”.
- 5.30 Conversely, several associates referenced fatigue and concentration issues with online delivery and ‘all day teams sessions’, having to “stare at a screen all day”. Furthermore, the inability to debrief with colleagues following virtual sessions was described as a drawback of online delivery.
- 5.31 From a delivery team perspective, stakeholders noted that online activities were less effective when attempting to do creative and innovative tasks.

- 5.32 In summary, in-person, interactive activities were seen by associates as the 'way forward', with several claiming they would have liked more face-to-face days across the six months of Infuse.
- 5.33 Delivery team stakeholders expressed regret that certain individuals were not able to attend in-person events, with the suggestion that the location of the meetups should have been moved around to connect with the different areas involved.

*Time / Resource Commitments*

- 5.34 Feedback from the majority of Cohort 2 associates interviewed found the time commitments of Infuse to be manageable. However, this was dependent on the extent to which their workloads were managed in their day jobs. One associate stated that their Head of Department described three members of staff from the same department joining Infuse simultaneously to be 'positive but also disruptive'. Another noted that dropping down to only two hours on the Thursday worked well, as there was a lot less commitment required.
- 5.35 Several Cohort 3 associates highlighted both positive aspects and specific challenges related to time and resource commitments. One positive aspect noted was the well-balanced combination of in-person and online sessions, with the designated catch-up hour on Thursdays. Associates found this arrangement to be beneficial, as it provided flexibility while maintaining valuable face-to-face interaction. However, a few associates also did note that the in-person days posed challenges due to the demands of their day-to-day workloads. Although many associates had the option to approach their managers for support, managing expectations became a difficult task.
- 5.36 The duration of the programme, set at six months, was generally well-received and noted as being a sufficient amount of time. A few associates did express a desire for a longer programme duration. However, acknowledging its impracticality given their existing workload, associates recognised the inherent difficulties of balancing Infuse with their day-to-day job responsibilities.

*Reverse Mentoring / Line Management*

- 5.37 The implementation of reverse mentoring has yielded positive outcomes and facilitated the sharing of skills and knowledge within participating organisations. 21 Cohort 2 associates from 9 different organisations participated in the reverse mentoring sessions. Feedback from one Cohort 2 associate highlighted the immense value of these sessions, describing them as 'invaluable'. Another associate stated that they had reverse mentoring sessions with the Chief Executive at their council, and they had both found the session to be very beneficial. This exemplifies the commitment of the Programme to foster open communication and collaboration at various levels within participating organisations.
- 5.38 The active participation of 30 Cohort 3 associates from 9 different organisations participating in the reverse mentoring sessions demonstrates the continued engagement and value placed on this collaborative learning approach. The majority of Cohort 3 associates expressed satisfaction with the reverse mentoring sessions, which were scheduled with a member from their senior management team. The experience was described as enjoyable, and the senior leaders displayed genuine interest in the knowledge they were acquiring from the sessions. Additionally, one associate noted that the inclusion of reverse mentoring discussions in departmental management team meetings, held fortnightly, ensured that Infuse remained a topic of regular conversation.
- 5.39 An additional significant benefit of Infuse for associates has been the opportunity to collaborate with senior staff members who can champion their ideas and facilitate their implementation. Several associates highlighted that through reverse mentoring, they have been able to sit down with senior staff members, discuss their ideas, and receive valuable guidance and support. This engagement has enabled the establishment of mechanisms and processes to effectively bring these ideas to fruition.

- 5.40 By connecting associates with influential decision-makers, reverse mentoring has empowered them to navigate organisational structures, garner support, and make meaningful progress towards implementing their innovative concepts. This aspect of reverse mentoring has proven to be a crucial enabler, allowing associates to bridge the gap between ideas and tangible actions within their respective organisations.
- 5.41 In addition to the positive outcomes mentioned regarding reverse mentoring, it's important to acknowledge some of the challenges faced in the process. While reverse mentoring has proven immensely valuable for many associates, a delivery team stakeholder noted that securing reverse mentors in some organisations presented difficulties. This variability in the availability of mentors resulted in varying experiences for associates, with some benefiting more than others.
- 5.42 Furthermore, the experience of reverse mentoring has evolved over time, with some alumni expressing that it may no longer be perceived as a top priority within their organisations. This suggests that while the Programme has yielded significant benefits and fostered collaboration, maintaining its prominence and effectiveness may require ongoing attention and adaptation to changing organisational priorities. Despite these challenges, the Programme remains a valuable tool for promoting open communication and collaboration within participating organisations, bridging the gap between associates and influential decision-makers.

## **Barriers and external factors**

### *Key Barriers*

- 5.43 In regard to the challenges and barriers that arose throughout the delivery of Cohort 2 and Cohort 3, delivery stakeholders noted several significant barriers. Firstly, concerning in-person events, it was acknowledged that some associates encountered difficulties attending due to various reasons such as work commitments and location

proximity. Stakeholders suggested that incorporating visits to different areas within the Programme could have fostered better connections amongst associates from diverse regions.

- 5.44 Managing and building relationships with the ten Local Authority partners proved to be a complex task, as each entity possessed its own distinct vision and priorities. It was noted that although the relationships have improved throughout the duration of the Programme, this necessitated continuous efforts to align objectives and address varying needs effectively.
- 5.45 Another key concern raised by delivery team stakeholders was the perceived complexity of the Infuse Programme itself. It was remarked that attempting to encompass a multitude of initiatives within a single programme resulted in an overwhelming breadth of activities. One delivery team stakeholder emphasised that the Programme's initial design may have attempted to tackle too many objectives simultaneously, potentially hindering optimal outcomes.
- 5.46 Cohort 2 and 3 associates highlighted several key challenges that significantly impacted their experience. One prominent issue expressed by associates was the demanding time commitment required by the programme. Furthermore, the blend of in-person and online activities presented unique difficulties. Several associates expressed a preference for complete in-person sessions, as online interactions often tempted them to check work emails or engage in other job-related tasks.
- 5.47 Additionally, one Cohort 3 associate highlighted the difficulty of balancing Infuse with their full-time work, noting that their workload increased during participation in the Programme. They highlighted that they were still being expected to fulfil their regular job responsibilities which posed a significant challenge.
- 5.48 Furthermore, several Cohort 2 associates highlighted that they found it challenging to allocate sufficient time for Infuse amidst their existing work responsibilities. To rectify this, some associates purposely



refrained from logging into their work email accounts to ensure their full focus on Infuse learning. However, others struggled with finding the necessary capacity and time to fully engage.

5.49 The time and spacing of the Programme was repeatedly referenced as a challenge, with delivery team members calling for longer time periods between cohorts, to better enable reflective learning and deepen understanding of the challenges faced in terms of collaboration.

5.50 Whilst, two delivery team members expressed a need for a longer lead in time to recruit participants, suggesting a 12 month period as opposed to six months to get people on board. It was also felt this time could be used to research what each partner wants to gain from the Programme and find mutual agreements amongst everyone on what the content should focus on. One delivery team member asserted that the recruitment approach challenge stemmed more from the recruitment approach rather than the timeframe, emphasising that six months was an adequate amount of time for effective recruitment strategies. This diverse feedback highlights the importance of refining recruitment methodologies rather than solely extending the recruitment timeline.

**Recommendation:** to optimise the effectiveness and impact of future programmes, it is recommended to consider extending the time and spacing between delivery of cohorts. This longer duration between cohorts will allow for more comprehensive and reflective learning opportunities, enabling associates to delve deeper into the challenges associated with collaboration and innovation within the CCR. Moreover, a future delivery team should have longer lead-in times for participant recruitment, providing ample space for thorough research and alignment of partner objectives. This additional time can be utilised to understand the specific goals and expectations of each partner, fostering mutual agreements on the focus and content of the Programme.

**Recommendation:** To enhance collaboration and networking opportunities, a future Programme should consider incorporating visits to different areas in Wales, allowing associates from diverse regions to interact and build stronger connections throughout the duration of the initiative.

## Outputs

### Addressing Cross-Cutting Themes (CCTs)

- 5.51 The primary objective of Cross Cutting Themes (CCTs) is to enhance the quality and long-term impact of the Infuse Programme. The Infuse Programme was required to integrate and address CCTs throughout its delivery. This includes themes such as equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming (including the Welsh language), sustainable development, and tackling poverty and social inclusion.
- 5.52 The Programme addresses CCTs throughout its implementation through various themes. These encompass a range of critical areas, including activity supporting speakers of the Welsh language, local supply chain development, mentoring/advocacy activity, peer support activity, developing CCT champions, and integrating social clauses into activity. By integrating these themes, Infuse sought to foster inclusivity, sustainability, and positive societal outcomes.
- 5.53 The following Cross-Cutting Themes (CCT) case level indicators have been identified for the Infuse Programme:
- Activity supporting speakers of the Welsh language
  - Local supply chain development
  - Mentoring/advocacy activity
  - Peer support activity
  - Developing/engaging CCT champions
  - Integrating social clauses into activity.
- 5.54 Below we set out activity related to each case level indicator, as outlined in the latest progress report, providing a sense of how CCTs are being integrated into Programme activities.
- Activity supporting speakers of the Welsh language*
- 5.55 Delivery team stakeholders highlighted that Infuse has been dedicated to supporting Welsh language speakers throughout the Programme delivery by producing bilingual marketing and communication materials whilst promoting the Programme. This

includes bilingual Twitter and LinkedIn posts, and bilingual case studies uploaded to the MCC website. Furthermore, to enhance accessibility and outreach, newsletters highlighting the significant and outcomes of Infuse are offered in Welsh, ensuring that speakers of the Welsh language are well-informed and engaged with the Programme's developments.

*Local supply chain development*

- 5.56 The Infuse Programme is dedicated to delivering economic benefits through supply chain development at the local level. This objective is reflected in the implementation of various experiments by associates across the CCR. For instance, an associate from Monmouthshire County Council's (MCC) experiment aimed to address the challenge of engaging SMEs in bidding for framework contracts for maintenance in Monmouthshire and Torfaen County Councils. The associate conducted stakeholder engagement events and reviewed the procurement process to make it more accessible to SMEs while ensuring fairness. Their work revealed limited knowledge of the local SME base, the need for a thorough framework contract review, and the importance of regional collaboration. Lessons learned included the necessity of clear communication when introducing new ideas to experienced officers, the value of continued collaboration with Infuse alumni, and the potential for proactively engaging SMEs to drive sustainable procurement practices in alignment with strategic objectives.
- 5.57 Another associate from Rhondda Cynon Taf's (RCT) experiment discussed the difficulty face by RCT in recruiting and retaining care and support staff to meet the community's needs effectively. To address this challenge, the project introduced a novel approach, focusing on empowering local individuals to establish Microenterprises for providing care and support in their communities. A new 'Introduction service' was created to connect individuals in need of care with local providers. The Infuse part of the project played a crucial role in planning the evaluation for the two-year pilot

programme. It ensured the collection of baseline data to measure the improvement and impact of the care service, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In terms of collaborative working, the project benefited from Infuse by providing valuable procurement tools to engage with third-sector organizations for implementing the micro-enterprise project in RCT.

- 5.58 These experiments showcase the concerted efforts being made to foster the growth and resilience of local supply chains across a diverse range of sectors. Whilst the exact impact of these interventions are unclear as of yet, it is evident that post-completion of Infuse, certain efforts are being made to meet this case-level indicator.

*Mentoring / advocacy activity*

- 5.59 The Infuse Programme places significant emphasis on upskilling participants, and as a crucial element of this process, mentoring and advocacy activities play a vital role. To gauge the effectiveness of the labs and ensure continuous improvement, weekly feedback surveys were conducted and shared with Cohort 1 associates<sup>3</sup>. The feedback received has indicated that the Programme has encouraged productive 1-to-1 conversations between associates and their managers. During these discussions, associates actively explore strategies for integrating the knowledge and skills acquired through Infuse into their day-to-day work.
- 5.60 Moreover, the majority of Cohort 2 associates have found that their participation in the lab sessions has provided them with valuable talking points for engaging in meaningful discussions with their Chief Officers. These discussions revolve around practical ways to embed the learnings and insights from the Programme into the broader organisational context. The opportunity to engage in such dialogue with senior leadership has been viewed by associates as a positive

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<sup>3</sup> The April-September 2022 Progress report highlighted the weekly feedback surveys as a part of the mentoring/advocacy activity.

catalyst for fostering greater understanding, collaboration, and alignment towards achieving sustainability goals within their respective organisations.

- 5.61 The mentoring and advocacy aspect of the Infuse Programme has proven to be a significant driver in promoting the application and integration of learnings at both individual and organisational levels. It ensures that the acquired skills and knowledge are effectively channelled into real-world scenarios and decision-making processes. As a result, associates are better equipped to create cultural change around collaboration and innovation within the respective LA's.

*Peer support activity*

- 5.62 The April to September Infuse Progress Report details that the Infuse delivery team has made dedicated efforts to foster collaboration among associates from the various LAs. Recognising the importance of cross-sector cooperation and knowledge-sharing, the team has implemented various forms of peer support to encourage and facilitate collaboration. This includes weekly feedback anonymous surveys about the labs which were completed by Cohort 1 associates. These surveys asked associates whether they had been in contact with other Cohort 1 colleagues outside of the Infuse sessions to share knowledge of the learning. Notably, several associates reported that they had been in contact with associates from Cohort alpha regarding projects that were linked to their challenges. Associates also highlighted that they had actively shared their learnings within their workplaces and even during team briefings on a weekly basis. By doing so, they felt that they were successfully embedding the knowledge acquired through the Programme into their daily practices and work environments.
- 5.63 It is evident that these activities that encourage and facilitate collaboration have been met with tangible success. Associates have embraced the opportunity to share knowledge and learning beyond the formal Infuse sessions, leading to the practical application of

insights and a broader impact on various projects and initiatives. The commitment to cross-sector cooperation and peer support aligns with the Programme's objectives of promoting collaboration and fostering a network of professionals dedicated to increasing regional capacity to tackle societal challenges.

*Developing/engaging Cross-Cutting Theme champions*

- 5.64 As noted in the Interim evaluation, four CCT champions have been strategically appointed to play a key role in integrating CCT principles into the delivery of the Programme. The CCT champions include the Infuse Programme Manager, the Programme Manager for Data Lab, Continuous Evaluation Research Fellow, and the Programme Engagement Manager, each bringing their expertise and perspectives to the initiative. It was noted that their collective efforts were geared towards effectively incorporating CCT considerations throughout the programme's implementation.

*Integrating social clauses into activity*

- 5.65 An essential desired outcome of the Programme is the integration of social causes, and to this end, Cohort 2 associates undertook experiments with a clear focus on achieving this goal. One associate's experiment centred around the theme of 'Embedding sustainable procurement without a dedicated procurement function.' It sought to explore ways of infusing sustainability considerations into the procurement process throughout their organisation. The aim was to ensure that sustainability becomes a collective consideration for everyone involved in procuring and commissioning, thus fostering a more socially conscious approach.
- 5.66 Another experiment focused on 'How local authorities can increase the number of SMEs tendering for contracts'. The primary aim was to enhance the engagement of local businesses with LA contracts and to support the foundational economy. This experiment specifically focused on two LAs and their efforts to rebuild relationships with SMEs in the CCR, ultimately encouraging them to actively access

council contracts. By fostering stronger connections and inclusivity, this experiment aimed to create a more vibrant and resilient local economy.

- 5.67 Both experiments demonstrate a clear focus on social and sustainability considerations in different aspects of programme delivery. This reflects a broader effort to drive positive social impact and support local communities and businesses.

*Contribution to Wellbeing of Future Generations Act*

- 5.68 The Programme contributes to the goals of the WBF GA 2015 in several ways:
- **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language:** A key outcome of this wellbeing goal is supporting people to have the opportunity to use Welsh in their daily working lives. The Programme has supported this goal through offering bilingual capacity at all times.
  - **A Globally Responsible Wales:** The Infuse Programme contributes to a globally responsible Wales by focusing on skills development and innovative approaches to address regional challenges in the thematic areas of decarbonisation and supportive communities. By upskilling associates and fostering collaboration between the various local authorities, the programme is creating a sustainable and inclusive environment that aligns with the WBF GA.
  - **A Prosperous Wales:** The Programme's activities have aligned with / supported the goals of the WBF GA. A key goal for a prosperous Wales is to encourage organisations to develop a skilled population, fit for future change. The findings of the final evaluation show demonstrable increases in knowledge and expertise across associates supported. The collaboration that occurred amongst associates was praised and attributed to increasing further collaboration amongst LAs across the region.



- **A More Equal Wales:** The Programme's emphasis on upskilling and capacity building associates helps support the goal of reducing inequalities and promoting fairness in society.
- **A Wales of Cohesive Communities:** By encouraging collaboration and knowledge-sharing among associates from different LAs, the Infuse Programme helps to foster stronger and more cohesive communities.
- **A Healthier Wales:** A key goal for a Healthier Wales is to ensure people are supported to understand behaviours and choices that benefit the future. Infuse has supported this goal through helping associates develop a stronger understanding of sustainable processes, and their impact on the environment.

### **Output targets**

- 5.69 This section of the reports presents the findings of the final evaluation concerning the progress of the Programme against its (output) indicators.

### **Output indicators**

- 5.70 These indicators refer to the outputs of the Programme – that is, the things resulting directly from its activity. Progress against each indicator is discussed in turn below.

**Table 6.1 – ESF Priority 5 SO1 Output and Result Indicators**

| Infuse Programme Output and Result Indicators |   |                            |  |  |            |   |  |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|--|------------|---|--|
|   |   | West Wales and the Valleys |  |  | East Wales |   |  |
|   |   | Target                     | Achieved to date   | Project Forecast   | Target     | Achieved to date  | Project Forecast   |
| Output indicator                              | Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support   | 3                          | 1<br>Decarbonisation Dashboard   | 3<br>Decarbonisation Dashboard<br>Infuse Lab Handbook<br>Microenterprises for Care                                     | 3          | 1<br>Decarbonisation Dashboard  | 3<br>Decarbonisation Dashboard<br>Infuse Lab Handbook<br>Microenterprises for Care |
|   | Number of entities participating in projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level | 6                          | 6<br>Blaenau Gwent CBC<br>Bridgend CBC<br>Caerphilly CBC<br>Merthyr Tydfil CBC<br>Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC<br>Torfaen CBC | 6<br>Blaenau Gwent CBC<br>Bridgend CBC<br>Caerphilly CBC<br>Merthyr Tydfil CBC<br>Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC<br>Torfaen CBC | 4          | 4<br>Monmouthshire CC<br>Cardiff CC<br>Newport CC<br>Vale of Glamorgan CC | 4<br>Monmouthshire CC<br>Cardiff CC<br>Newport CC<br>Vale of Glamorgan CC          |
|   | Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level                           | 1                          | 1  | 1  | 1          | 1   | 1  |

|                  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Result Indicator | Number of new methods, procedures and tools developed and disseminated | 3 | 0 | 2<br>Infuse Lab Handbook<br>Microenterprises for Care | 3 | 0 | 2<br>Infuse Lab Handbook<br>Microenterprises for Care |
|------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Source: Infuse monitoring data

*Number of new methods, procedures and tools developed and disseminated*

- 5.71 Several new tools have been developed from the Programme, this includes the Infuse Lab Handbook which was produced collaboratively and launched at the Mindsets and Methods for Innovation in Public Services Event. The handbook presents the shared learning and inspiration from Infuse along with the innovative mindsets of the alumni. Evidence produced included a copy of the Lab Handbook, minutes of development meetings, examples of prototyping and feedback with the focus group, and evidence of dissemination across Wales. Delivery stakeholders noted that the output has been claimed and the result claim will take place by October 21<sup>st</sup> 2023.
- 5.72 Additionally, the Decarbonisation Dashboard, which although is a minimal viable product, has been successfully developed and shared with key stakeholders, including the Welsh Government (WG) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). Evidence produced included a copy of the minimal viable product produced, minutes of development meetings with Welsh Government (WG), a letter from WG confirming that they have created a national solution informed by the Infuse Decarbonisation Dashboard, examples of prototype test dashboards from Rhonda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil Council, email exchanges from organisations Infuse worked with, and the unsuccessful tender submission to WG to develop a national product. Delivery stakeholders noted that although this output has been claimed, the final result will not be claimed.
- 5.73 The Microenterprises for Care Innovation Experiment case study outlined how the Programme supported the development of new processes. This included the evaluation plan which was developed with Infuse, examples of new jobs created through the experiment, evidence of dissemination, and collaboration that occurred with other Local Authorities. Delivery stakeholders noted that the output

evidence is currently being collated and will be submitted by October 21<sup>st</sup> 2023.

*Additional outputs*

- 5.74 The Infuse Programme has also yielded a wide array of outputs, reflecting its commitment to fostering innovation and knowledge dissemination. These outputs encompass the development of a portfolio of innovation case studies and the establishment of 102 reverse mentoring partnerships with senior leaders. Additionally, it includes the delivery of 435 coaching sessions, 12 research projects, and the creation of networks such as the CCR Infuse alumni network and internal Infuse networks within four local authorities.
- 5.75 The programme has also facilitated 48 innovation experiments, with 19 currently in progress and nine receiving continuation funding. A significant milestone was achieved with the launch of the Centre for Public Value Procurement.
- 5.76 Infuse has markedly enhanced participants' skills in innovation methods and data-enabled decision-making, as well as their capacity to maximise the value of public spending. Furthermore, it has enriched participants knowledge in building supportive communities and accelerating decarbonisation efforts.
- 5.77 The Programme's outreach extends to engagement with 27 public sector organisations and collaborative partnerships with 13 organisations, contributing to a cumulative investment of 27,450 hours in innovation by participating public servants. A total of 327 individuals have actively engaged in innovation masterclasses, showcasing the Programme's substantial impact on fostering innovation and collaboration within the public sector.
- 5.78 It is evident that Programme has demonstrated its significant impact by fostering innovation, building knowledge, and promoting collaborative efforts across various public sector organisations, paving the way for more effective and sustainable public service delivery.

*Infuse alumni championing the Programme*

- 5.79 The Infuse Programme has actively engaged its alumni in championing the Programme through various means. Regular Infuse newsletters, sent out every three months, have served as a key platform for associates and alumni to stay informed and engaged with the ongoing activities of the Programme. Additionally, a series of videos, regularly produced and shared on the website and social media channels, have encouraged innovative thinking, benefiting both current associates and potential future participants. These videos have often featured alumni, who have shared their insights and reflections on the core values of Infuse, particularly emphasising the importance of collaboration.
- 5.80 Associates have suggested a valuable step forward would be the establishment of regular meetings for alumni within their respective Local Authorities (LAs), with a broader cross-organisational gathering occurring bi-annually. This approach recognises the significance of having Infuse champions within organisations, who can play a pivotal role in preserving the legacy of the Programme.
- 5.81 To-date, the Programme has been successful in establishing a handful of Infuse ‘think-tanks’ or mini alumni networks within some organisations. Furthermore, original alumni from Cohort Alpha have remained in close contact with the delivery team, helping shape experiments and next level funding. On a larger scale, a region wide event took place in April 2023 that brought the Infuse alumni together to take part in three workshops which included ‘Implementing Infuse’, ‘Exploring Experiments’ and ‘Infuse legacy’. Infuse alumni from across the CCR were also invited to a procurement focused workshop. Despite this, some delivery team members expressed scepticism about whether these networks would survive long-term. Furthermore, one delivery team member stated that they regretted Programme staff not devoting more energy to the alumni network, with too much emphasis placed on the networking being self-sustaining, instead of providing the support it needed.

*Additional outputs*

- 5.82 In addition to the result and output indicator targets listed in the table above, several other additional outputs, as a direct result of the Infuse Programme, have been evidenced.

*The Centre of Public Value Procurement*

- 5.83 Launched in October 2022, the Centre will support the Welsh Government's Procurement Reform and Social Partnership and Procurement Bill. Running parallel to Infuse, it offers a scalable approach to delivery through procurement lab sessions for all public bodies within the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) and other regions in Wales. The Centre's broader access to research-led knowledge and expertise supports challenges related to decarbonisation and social value measurement. Moreover, it focuses on localised supply chains, innovative construction methods, and integrated health and social care systems, benefiting the CCR and beyond. By collaborating with new partners globally, the Centre fosters cutting-edge research, knowledge sharing, and access to progressive methods, tools, and a wider community of practice for the CCR.

- 5.84 The Centre of Public Value Procurement is a direct result of the Infuse Programme's impact and legacy. Infuse has played a pivotal role in designing and delivering content related to sustainable, collaborative, and innovative procurement. This content has been successfully delivered not only to procurement professionals but also to a wide range of civil servants from various departments, expanding its reach beyond traditional procurement roles.

*Smarter Spending for Sustainable Societies boardgame*

- 5.85 A public procurement board game was designed by a member of the Infuse delivery team to educate school children about the significance of procurement and its role in enhancing the environment and communities. During interactive workshops, students work in small groups and make decisions on public spending, aiming to build a resilient and globally responsible society in line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 objectives.

- 5.86 In November 2022, three board game-based workshops were organised as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science, held in Cardiff community centres to engage diverse audiences beyond the university. An additional event was conducted in Bangor. Targeted at younger audiences, the board game underwent its first trial with 30 school pupils in February 2023 and was also featured in the Cardiff Science Festival "Be a Scientist" on February 20, 2023.

*Creative Communities- Vale of Glamorgan Council*

- 5.87 A Cohort Alpha associate developed an innovation experiment proposal with their reverse mentee. They successfully secured investment to establish a dedicated community development team focused on supporting all communities within the Vale of Glamorgan, with a particular emphasis on enhancing community well-being and growth. The Creative Communities project is committed to fostering "Strong communities with bright futures," placing paramount importance on co-production, collaboration, and innovation. As part of the Regeneration teams, the new team will primarily support colleagues in various areas, spanning Economic Regeneration, Social and Cultural Regeneration, and Environmental Regeneration, contributing to the management of green spaces, habitats, and land renewal.

*Innovation Advisory Council Wales (IACW): Data and Digital Innovation round table*

- 5.88 At the request of the Welsh Government, the Infuse Programme's expertise was sought to contribute to the development of recommendations supporting the Innovation Strategy for Wales and enhancing the well-being of people in the region. A member of the Infuse delivery team was invited to a prestigious round table event where insightful discussions revolved around various themes, including education, economic development, and public sector data and digital innovation. A notable recommendation arising from the round table emphasised the importance of Welsh Government leading



by example in Data & Digital. It was highlighted that the focus should be on harnessing data and digital practices to drive transformative improvements within the government's internal operations, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in their endeavours.

#### *Green Hydrogen Project*

- 5.89 One of the experiments from Cohort 1 looked into how they could plan to store excess energy generation from solar farms to reduce carbon footprint, bring revenue, and benefit communities. Implementing this project within their Council, the associate collaborated with a member of the Infuse delivery team and the private sector to form a dedicated consortium. The initiative has yielded remarkable results as the Council joined forces with expert partners to explore the potential of green hydrogen utilisation across its activities, aligning with its commitment to achieve net-zero status by 2030. This collaboration facilitated the successful acquisition of external funding for feasibility studies on two significant projects. One study examines non-technical barriers to place-based multi-vector energy solutions, while the other delves into the technical challenges. The Council is also exploring the incorporation of green hydrogen in transportation and heating, thereby reducing reliance on fossil fuels. The Project's success is evident through multiple secured funding bids, and it continues to grow in its positive impact.

#### *Sustainable Procurement into Sport Wales*

- 5.90 Through their involvement in Cohort 2, an associate successfully integrated sustainable procurement practices within their organisation, drawing from insights gained through their Infuse experiment. The associate conducted thorough research on embedding sustainability into procurement procedures at Sport Wales, which involved understanding the existing procurement processes, identifying potential barriers and opportunities, and learning from other organisations with exemplary practices that could be applied. The long-term vision of the Project aimed to position procurement as a

strategic tool capable of making a substantial impact at Sport Wales. This involved emphasising sustainability from economic, environmental, and social perspectives, and broadening the scope of value for money considerations beyond financial costs. The associate's efforts were geared towards fostering a holistic approach to procurement, one that embraces sustainability as an integral part of the organisation's ethos and decision-making process.

- 5.91 Through the work of Infuse delivery members and associates, it is evident that Infuse has demonstrated remarkable contributions across various dimensions, furthering the goals of developing a range of skills from CCR public servants to tackle societal challenges. These wide-ranging contributions and transformative initiatives reinforce the Programme's role in building a globally responsible and sustainable future for Wales.

## 6. Programme Research activity

6.1 Alongside, cohort delivery work, academic staff involved in Infuse have been simultaneously conducting research activity linked to the key themes and topics of the Programme. These have had a notable impact and are set out below.

### *Research on Public Participation*

6.2 Throughout the lifetime of the Infuse Programme, Dr Owain Hanmer (Communities Research Fellow) has been mapping public participation across LAs in the CCR during and beyond the pandemic and the opportunities this presented in terms of democratisation or as a tool for austerity. This was presented with Dr Kelly Buckley (Senior Research Fellow) at the WISERD conference at Swansea University in 2022.

6.3 Dr Hanmer has also been conducting an evaluation of a participatory budgeting exercise in Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), with Dr Oishee Kundu (Research Associate), alongside building on their PhD work conducting research around the commons, an increasingly powerful form of governance. He presented research on how service user participation in the arts contribute to participation in society at WISERD in 2022, as well as at the 'Deep Commons' conference at the end of October in the Department of Government and Politics at the University College Cork, Ireland.

### *Decarbonisation and Social Capital*

6.4 As a research fellow delivering Programme content under the theme of decarbonisation, Dr Muhammad Irfan is part of the consortium delivering the R&D work on the following funded projects:

- Net Zero Caerphilly Whole System Decision Support Toolkit (NetZeroCaer)
- The Caerphilly Hydrogen Techno-Economic Assessment (Caerogen):

- 6.5 The NetZeroCaer project is funded by Innovate UK (through the Net Zero Living Pioneer Places initiative) to carry out a feasibility assessment, developing a prototype Decision Making, Collaborative Working and Engagement Toolkit to overcome the non-technical barriers faced in placed based whole system net zero initiatives.
- 6.6 Conversely, the Caerogen project is funded by the Welsh Government (through the Hybrid-2.0 Phase-1 program) to carry out a technical and economic feasibility of a local hydrogen hub at Coed Top Hill in Caerphilly, taking a placed-based whole-system net zero approach. The system integrates a 10MW (or larger) electrolyser for hydrogen production, powered by renewable electricity (solar, wind, anaerobic digestion) and fed with sustainable water from a reed bed treatment facility.
- 6.7 Perhaps most significantly, Dr Irfan has been instrumental in developing one of the Infuse Programme's main outputs; a prototype Decarb Dashboard for public bodies in Wales to upload their data and compare across other public bodies. This work has been done in partnership with Welsh Government.
- 6.8 He has also been working with previous Infuse associates to design and launch a survey that focuses on Social Capital and Decarbonisation. The Social Capital section of the survey sought to help improve the quality of the Social Capital Map of Torfaen. Questions included residents' views about their neighbourhood, the trust and reciprocity and the volunteer work they carry out for their community and neighbourhood. The Decarbonisation section covers questions about residents' on climate change and net zero targets; their willingness and readiness to adopt low/zero carbon technologies and the support they seek from their local government in this regard.
- 6.9 Dr Irfan got an ethical approval from Cardiff University to use this data to research whether there is a place-based correlation between varying levels of social capital and resident's receptiveness to decarbonisation.

### *Procurement*

- 6.10 Amina Imam (Research Assistant) has conducted research into the procurement plans of each of the authorities across the CCR, exploring whether the current procurement strategy used by the local councils as an existing tool is suited to address economic, environmental, and societal needs, such as Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015. Additionally, the research focused on whether the current procurement strategy is addressing the new policy frameworks and regulations, as well as exploring the opportunity to leverage the strategy to increase the impact of procurement through collaboration.
- 6.11 In September, she presented the public procurement paper at a writing retreat workshop in Vienna led and hosted by editorial board of Journal of Supply Chain Management (JSCM), from which she will seek substantial peer review feedback and comments to develop the paper for publishing in this journal.
- 6.12 At a public level, a procurement board game has been designed by Dr Oishee Kundu to help teach school children the value of procurement and the important role it can play in improving the environment and communities. Three boardgame-based workshops were organised in November 2022 as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science. The events were held in community centres (Cathays Community Centre, Grange Pavillion) in order to engage with audiences beyond the university. One of the events was also held in Bangor. The boardgame is aimed at younger audiences and the first trial with a group of 30 school pupils took place on 13 February 2023.
- 6.13 Furthermore, Dr Kundu was invited to speak about Infuse in ProcureX National in May 2022 in Birmingham. The talk was titled “Procuring innovation through collaboration”. She was also awarded a Widening Participation and Outreach small research grant from Cardiff University to develop a workshop for school pupils on the topic of public spending choices. The grant ran from August 2022 to April

2023 and provided funding to develop resources for the workshop and covers costs of hosting educational events.

- 6.14 Further research activity linked to the theme of procurement included research on CCR collaborative contracts and evaluating the innovative impacts of public procurement. This was presented at IPSEERA in Barcelona to an international audience.
- 6.15 Subsequently, research staff have started collaborating with Manchester University to expand the data set across the UK with the aim of publishing in a high quality international leading journal.

*Internal evaluation*

- 6.16 Delivered by colleagues at Cardiff University, there has been an ongoing internal evaluation of the Infuse Programme. Working in collaboration with external evaluators Miller Research, the internal evaluation has sought associate feedback through focus groups, weekly Mentimeter surveys, as well as baseline and exit surveys from the respective cohorts. They have also carried out a survey of associates six months following Programme completion. This data has been supported the iteration between the four cohorts.

*Research support*

- 6.17 Rob Callaghan (Research Associate) has provided support in developing an evaluation plan for the microenterprises for care innovation experiment in RCT CBC. Furthermore, he has been integral in facilitating the link between MSc Data science students and LAs.

## 7. Outcomes and impacts

- 7.1 This section of the report presents the findings of the final evaluation regarding the outcomes and impacts produced as a direct consequence of the Infuse Programme.
- 7.2 Overall, evidence collected from associates and delivery team stakeholders demonstrates that engagement with Infuse has led to several benefits for individuals, with positive effects also being extended to organisations and the CCR region as a whole, but to a lesser extent.
- 7.3 Feedback from stakeholder interviews and Programme monitoring data are examined below, providing analysis of performance to data for each of the outcome and impact indicators outlined in the evaluation logic model (see Annex A). A counterfactual assessment is also included to understand the extent to which effects would not have occurred in the absence of the Infuse Programme.

### Outcomes

#### *OC.1 Development of transferable processes, tools and techniques disseminated to a wider audience*

- 7.4 Infuse has been relatively successful in the development of process, tools and techniques, as evidenced by the three Programme outputs of the Innovation Lab Handbook, Decarbonisation Dashboard and the innovation experiment Microenterprises for Care.
- 7.5 The Lab Handbook was produced collaboratively, informed by the development of a prototype and feedback via focus group and has recently been launched and disseminated across Wales via the Infuse Mindsets and methods for Innovation in Public Service event, as well as the September 2023 edition of the Infuse newsletter.
- 7.6 The Decarbonisation Dashboard was produced in development with Welsh Government, with the latter confirming they have created a national solution informed by the Dashboard. Evidence of wider dissemination can be seen by the prototype test dashboards in the LA

areas of Merthyr and RCT CBC. However, it is important to note that Infuse was unsuccessful in a bid to Welsh Government to develop a national product.

- 7.7 As for the Microenterprises for Care experiment, it is clear that the Programme was integral to the development of this new process. This has subsequently led to the creation of new jobs, as well as wider dissemination and collaboration with other LAs. An external evaluation has recently been commissioned to further understanding and share learnings.
- 7.8 Beyond the immediate outputs produced, associates interviewed also referenced the development of day-to-day tools through the data lab, most frequently in the form of data collection and analysis. An example of wider dissemination includes the delivery of tailored data training by an associate to council employees.
- 7.9 Associates also highlighted the tools learned from reflective practice, claiming their intention to implement it in their own workplace.

*OC.2 Increased knowledge sharing across organisations within the CCR*

- 7.10 Delivery stakeholders described regional development as a key focus of the Infuse Programme. At the time of this final evaluation, the extent to which associates across all cohorts have been working professionally across organisations has been limited.
- 7.11 Conversely, at an internal level, collaboration within organisations has increased across departments and directorates. The extent to which this has taken place is subject to the number of individuals from an organisation that have been on Infuse, as well as the concentration of associates within specific departments. Those who readily found colleagues who had been on Infuse, regardless of the cohort, described “being on the same page” when it came to delivering change. In one local authority this took the form of a newly formulated decarbonisation team, following three decarbonisation officers all attending Infuse on the same cohort. However, if an associate



returned to an organisation where only a small number of colleagues had been on Infuse, if any at all, then they expressed facing a significant challenge in terms of fostering collaboration and convincing colleagues of new ways of working.

7.12 This phenomenon demonstrates the limitations and constraints on the impacts Infuse can have, particularly in terms of delivering on long term goals, when there is a relatively small number of public sector employees who have participated in the Programme.

7.13 Despite the fact that external, professional collaboration on Programme experiments has not taken place on a large scale, several associates from both cohorts 2 and 3 have cited external collaboration in terms of learning and networking. For instance, several personal connections they have made with colleagues from the same cohort have been maintained post-Infuse. This has frequently taken the form of becoming aware of a contact in a particular field in another organisation who they can reach out to on a specific issue, if they need any help and advice. These contacts have also been cited by associates as a useful comparison point for those who are attempting to “do the same thing but in a different context”. One associate pointed to the existence of a WhatsApp group, where Infuse colleagues from across organisations stay in touch.

7.14 Furthermore, cross-pollination of ideas has also taken place through Infuse, with Cohort 3 associates citing how colleagues would identify how other’s experiments would be useful for the services within their own organisation. The sharing of best practice, whilst on a relatively small scale, appears to have grown and developed as the Programme has progressed. It was noted that if there is equal take-up and adoption of ideas and practices from all participating organisations, then it will scale up to become a regional benefit, as opposed to a purely organisational benefit.

7.15 For the associates who stated they had not engaged with associates outside of their organisation up until this point, there was a clear

consensus that they were more confident and likely to do so as a direct result of Infuse.

*OC.3 Increased use of data gathering and models to inform skills development and improve decision making*

7.16 As a result of the data lab, several associates across Cohorts 2 and 3 expressed an improved ability to present the need for their project, developing a narrative and ‘build a story’. Learnings also included how to share information and effectively collect data by utilising existing systems, contacts and networks. Delivery team stakeholders cited the data science academy and data lab masterclasses as evidence of shared learning as a follow on to Infuse. Another example of the benefits stemming from the data lab has been the adoption of ‘social capital mapping’ in one LA; utilising data to inform resource allocation and decision making to target areas with low social capital. Finally, one Cohort 3 associate stated how they implemented certain training sessions on data they had learned from Infuse, into their own local authority.

7.17 Despite these positive outcomes, some associates expressed concern about their organisation’s lack of flexibility, inhibiting the learnings from data lab that could bring about change.

*OC.4 Understanding and buy-in of Infuse from public servants, senior leaders and public bodies*

7.18 The exposure that Infuse offered to areas of work outside of associates’ day job was referenced as a benefit, enabling them to think about issues they would not normally consider. This had the knock-on effect of associates taking a wider, more strategic view of the challenges faced in the public sector, linking this to a solutions-led, innovate approach to ‘troubleshooting’ these challenges. Having the opportunity to compare how other organisations operate was also seen as insightful and beneficial.

7.19 At a managerial level, the level of buy-in from senior leaders and chief executives across participating organisations differed on a case by

case basis. Some Cohort 3 associates felt Infuse had “made a difference and were open to change”, whilst others felt their organisation’s culture was still too bureaucratic and not forward thinking enough. Overall, Cohort 2 associates generally felt they were supported in their Infuse journey. This continued to develop, with several associates from Cohort 3 not only stating they had support from senior leadership, but also their understanding and engagement in terms of what Infuse is about and the benefits it can deliver.

7.20 Furthermore, Cohort 3 associates recognised the benefits Infuse has delivered in terms of “putting [the organisation] in good stead” when it comes to compliance with new legislation, ranging from energy efficiency to property and planning. Associates cited how Infuse has encouraged organisations to collectively take a step back and think about how to manage the issues.

7.21 From a delivery team perspective, Infuse was credited with highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of various organisations in the CCR, both in terms of the expertise they possess and culturally.

7.22 Overall, it was felt that “little tweaks” at an organisational level, including increasing the skillset of its employees, could have a big impact over the longer term.

*OC.5 Increase in the number of projects and potential solutions to tackle regional problems*

7.23 Despite the experiments of associates interviewed largely being a ‘work-in-progress’ and not fully implemented at the time of engaging with the evaluation, it is clear that in the long-term, the Infuse Programme will continue to strengthen in terms of delivering against this outcome. This is evidenced by the facilitation of 48 innovation experiments, with 19 currently in progress and nine receiving continuation funding.

7.24 There is proof of experiment delivery across a range of regional challenges, from energy generation via the Green Hydrogen Project, to social care in RCT, outlined in the Microenterprises for social care

pilot project. The review of the procurement process in Monmouthshire and Torfaen Councils, seeking to make it more accessible for SMEs bidding for contracts is a further example.

- 7.25 Throughout Infuse, associates actively sought to contribute to this outcome, as demonstrated by Cohort Alpha associates actively helping shape the experiments of subsequent cohort participants, or the facilitation of the Infuse Alumni event in April 2023, with one of the three segments focusing on ‘Exploring Experiments’.

### **Unintended outcomes**

#### *OC.6 Intangible effects on associates*

- 7.26 Having the confidence to challenge assumptions in the design and development of projects was also highlighted by several associates. One Cohort 3 associate framed it as “having the bravery to say no, that should not be happening”. Furthermore, associates from Cohort 3 referenced how Infuse had endowed them with heightened awareness and self-reflection when undergoing the project management process as a whole, actively thinking about how and why certain decisions are made.
- 7.27 Overall, this has typically resulted in a more proactive, collaborative approach adopted by associates, seeking the help, advice and partnership of stakeholders both within and outside of their organisation.
- 7.28 This notion was supported by delivery team stakeholders who claimed those who had been on Infuse approached challenges differently, ranging from service design to the tools they employ, as well as the terminology they use. However, they caveated that the extent to which this transformation took place was dependent on the nature of the individual and how much they were willing to change and increase their skills.
- 7.29 Alongside this increase in confidence and connections, several associates claimed that Infuse has reignited their passion in public service delivery that was previously at risk of “fizzling out”.

*OC.7 Reinforcing divisions between LAs rather than enhancing collaboration*

- 7.30 As identified during the assumptions mapping phase of the baseline evaluation, a key assumption the Programme's design is that its activity will automatically result in closer collaboration between participating authorities. However, delivery stakeholders recognised the potential risk that the intervention could instead reinforce divisions.
- 7.31 Upon a final assessment it is clear that, despite the relative lack of engagement from a minority of organisations in the CCR, on the whole organisation are nonetheless working closer together as a result of the Infuse Programme, as opposed to reinforcing divisions. This is supported by associates, who expressed interest in learning and networking with associates of other organisations. Impacts
- 7.32 Impacts are difficult to measure due to the length of time taken for them to be realised and reflected in any monitoring data. The following section summarises the key evaluation findings in respect to long-term and future impacts resulting from the Infuse Programmer.

*IM.1 Innovative public services that provide sustainable leadership*

- 7.33 As outlined by the delivery of associate experiments above, there is activity taking place that is facilitating change at an individual and departmental level. At this final evaluation stage however, it is clear that this has not yet translated into a larger scale of innovative public services at an organisational level. Both delivery stakeholders and associates recognised the limitations Infuse has had in achieving this impact during the life cycle of the Programme, due to the relatively low number of individuals participating in Infuse when compared with the total number of public service employees of the CCR organisations. This is further demonstrated by the fact that the shift toward innovative public services seem to be most prominent in organisations or departments where there have been a cluster of associates who have completed Infuse.

- 7.34 The extent to which this impact is met longer term will be determined by the proactiveness and ability of associates to share their learning and knowledge with colleagues, combined with the willingness and receptiveness of senior leaders within organisations to be open to new ways of working and enabling sustainable leadership.

*IM.2 Effective collaboration and partnership working across the region*

- 7.35 It is clear that as a direct result of Infuse, there has been notable collaboration and partnership working within organisations. However, to-date, with a few notable exceptions, regional collaboration has been limited to learning and networking, as opposed to external collaboration on shared experiments. Feedback from associates indicates that “seeds of growth” have been planted with some individuals planning on reaching out with fellow associates from other organisation to facilitate partnership working.

*IM.3 Effective empowerment and engagement with citizens and communities*

- 7.36 On the whole, stakeholders interviewed did not frequently reference the direct benefits the Programme would deliver for service users. Instead, both delivery team members and associates referenced the indirect benefits public service users would experience as a result of improved and more efficient decision making within organisations, alongside more skilled public sector employees delivering innovative and impactful experiments.
- 7.37 Associates across Cohort 2 and 3 identified the importance of creating a mindset shift when thinking about delivering benefits for the public, stating, “it is not about creating services for people, they should be creating services for themselves and we should be helping them facilitate that”. Another framed it as “participation with the community, rather than to the community”.
- 7.38 Overall, training of staff was viewed as important in enabling service users to feel the benefits of Infuse. The role of data collection was also emphasised in terms of conducting an analysis on the profile of

residents and who they are providing services to, as a means of ensuring they are supporting residents effectively. As aforementioned, democratising decisions and engaging with the community was described as paramount to delivering benefits to service users.

*IM.4 Societal challenges are addressed through an embedded open and proactive approach*

- 7.39 The content delivered through the Infuse Programme, primarily the labs, has resulted in a mind-set shift of associates, with them now viewing societal challenges in a different way. This has meant that associates has typically looked to address these through experiment designs that are proactive and engaging with service users. Whilst the merits of this approach is being more widely disseminated through methods and tools such as the Infuse Handbook and Alumni network, further work is required to ensure it is fully embedded into organisational practice across the CCR.

*IM.5 Efficient investment of public spending opportunities in the CCR*

- 7.40 Continued progression and implementation of associate experiments will provide opportunities for efficient investment of public spending opportunities on multiple fronts going forward. These opportunities will be furthered by embedding a culture of innovation in public sector organisations, with senior-level buy supporting the strategic prioritisation of Infuse experiments, with shared learning achieved.

*Impact and Counterfactual assessment*

- 7.41 As was the case with the interim, the final evaluation conducted an impact and counterfactual assessment to determine the ‘true’ impact of the Infuse Programme and the extent to which activities and benefits would have accrued in its absence.
- 7.42 The assessment took the form of a self-evaluation of interviewees, with questions posed to associates and delivery team members such as ‘what would have been lost in the absence of Infuse?’. The findings of this assessment are set out below.

- 7.43 Associates were clear that the level of collaboration and networking that has taken place would not have been possible without Infuse, citing a network of support that had developed, directly as a result of the Programme. This included being able to collaborate with fellow associates to explore ideas and solutions. Behaviour which several associates felt would otherwise have been “put on the backburner” if not for Infuse. The support received also extended to relationships formed with the Infuse delivery team, with associates citing their ability to “run ideas past them”.
- 7.44 As was the case during the interim evaluation, associates praised Infuse for allowing them the time and space to reflect on wider issues. This is in contrast to their day jobs, where without Infuse, many associates felt they would be continuing to only focus on short-term, day-to-day problems.
- 7.45 This encompasses a wider approach associates adopted as a direct result of the Programme of pushing boundaries and making changes. Without Infuse, many associates claimed they would have “given up and stopped trying”. Associates stated that Infuse offered them validation that what they wanted to achieve was possible and that they should push back against a culture that is risk averse. They felt they had the tools and support to implement newer, more effective ways of working. Associates also claimed that Infuse had given them the reassurance that they need to push to change, whereas previously they may have acquiesced or not tried at all, due to being relatively new to a role or lacking in confidence.
- 7.46 Furthermore, associates identified Infuse as offering them a holistic perspective on how to manage a problem, from analysing data to using procurement, which they otherwise would not have had. They cited how the Programme had made them consider how they can add social enterprise or green initiatives to their existing work, inspired by the Programme’s twin themes of supportive communities and decarbonisation.



- 7.47 One Cohort 3 associate attributed Infuse to redefining their understanding of success, now focusing on the added value an intervention offers, as opposed to whether they have simply hit targets or spent the allocated funding.
- 7.48 Delivery team members were equally emphatic about the direct impact of the Infuse Programme. Similar to associates, they recognised participants would not have had the time and space to think differently and tackle difficult problems in the absence of Infuse, with the likelihood that LAs would instead be in an increased state of ‘panic and stress’. They highlighted how associates would be unfamiliar with various tools, methods and approaches, as well as not being exposed to academic research, nor establishing useful contacts, all of which will help in the tackling of regional challenges.
- 7.49 Interestingly, one delivery team member noted that in the Programme’s absence, there is the possibility that the Circular Economy Innovation Communities (CEIC) Programme<sup>4</sup> would have had twice as many participants as it currently has.

*Extent it can deliver on ambitious, long-term goals*

- 7.50 With the Infuse Programme coming to an end in its current form, we asked stakeholders what needs to happen to ensure that Infuse can deliver on its ambitious, long-term goals.
- 7.51 Delivery stakeholders cited that this was dependent on the extent to which associates have the opportunity to influence their work environment and apply their knowledge, particularly at a regional level. Reservations were expressed due to the way that LAs are typically structured and have operated in silos, with one delivery team stakeholder stating, “we will not know for a while whether organisations are thinking in terms of regional level change”. They also cited the South East Wales Regional Fund, with its apparent poor

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<sup>4</sup> The CEIC Programme is designed to support public and third sector organisations in Wales to develop new service solutions to enhance productivity and deliver circular economy benefits.

level of collaboration, as an indication that collaborative thinking is not being taken forward.

- 7.52 Despite this, the importance of ensuring that outcomes feed into, compliment and contribute to wider, independent work was also highlighted by delivery team members. Examples included the obligations LAs have to WG in terms of reporting annual carbon emissions and wider innovation programmes.
- 7.53 Overall, delivery team members were clear that they did not expect Infuse to be able to deliver on these ambitious goals for at least two years, with others claiming it will take over ten years “as nothing in innovation happens in the short term”.

*Ensuring the sustainability and legacy of Infuse*

- 7.54 In order to secure the legacy of the Infuse Programme, associates across both cohorts 2 and 3 cited the importance of sharing knowledge, ideas and best practice across the various organisations in the CCR.
- 7.55 Fostering networks and collaboration was seen as vital by both associates and delivery team members, ensuring stakeholders remain motivated and engaged to delivering long-term goals. This included organisations ‘leaning’ on partners to help devise and deliver solutions post Infuse. The role of the alumni in this was repeatedly referenced by Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 associates alike. It was proposed by some associates that alumni in respective LAs should meet regularly, with a larger meeting across all organisations taking place biannually. The importance of Infuse champions’ within organisations was seen by delivery team members as crucial to securing a legacy.
- 7.56 Beyond connecting with those who have been involved with Infuse, the importance of integrating those who did not participate in the Programme was also stressed. The creation of the lab handbook, which will be ‘out for testing’ by the end of July 2023 was cited by delivery team members as a key instrument in ensuring the

sustainability of Infuse by enabling people who have not been on the Programme to learn its key teachings. The concept of having ‘innovators’ across organisations who meet once a month to compare approaches and activity was suggested.

- 7.57 The importance of breaking down barriers and relaxing processes amongst organisations, primarily local authorities was also highlighted by a Cohort 3 associate. They explained how, as things stand, each authority has their own processes for approving decisions, with cabinet scrutiny and other methods; all of which make it hard to collaborate on a larger scale.
- 7.58 From a delivery team perspective, some stakeholders felt that Infuse would naturally create a legacy over time, as its reputation will spread and it will appear “on people’s radar”. However, several other delivery team members expressed reservations about the security of Infuses’ legacy moving forward.
- 7.59 Similar to associates, the importance of the alumni network, ‘infuse think tanks’ and champions was repeatedly emphasised, with the need for the alumni to be become self-sustaining and driven by participants themselves. Some delivery team stakeholders expressed regret that more time, effort and resources had not been put into ensuring this was the assured by the end of the Programme.
- 7.60 Promoting continued conversations across and within organisations across the CCR was repeatedly referenced as key in ensuring the legacy of Infuse. This entailed delivering reports and presentations on the learnings from the Programme, especially on the barriers faced when trying to foster collaboration and how to overcome these. The need for these learnings to be taken on board by organisations and future programmes themselves was stressed.
- 7.61 Continued access to training and learning hubs was viewed by several delivery team members as a critical success factor, with the potential for training to be delivered without the original team, or with fewer people. It was also noted that, as training materials had already

been tested and perfected through Infuse, there was no need to reinvent them. The importance of accessing funding to keep training materials active/hosted was mentioned. This extended to ensuring the website had all available resources and output documents accessible, to be promoted and disseminated by communication contacts within CCR organisations.

- 7.62 One delivery team member highlighted the importance of organisations adopting a culture that has an openness to learning and making mistakes, whilst recognising the challenges of this happening “during an age of austerity in public services”.

*Future roll-out*

- 7.63 Delivery team members were largely supportive of the concept of rolling out the Infuse Programme to include public sector organisations across the whole of Wales. One delivery team member claimed there was demand for Infuse outside of the CCR following the positive feedback they had heard about the Programme. However, another delivery team member questioned how roll out would affect organisations that bordered England, as they may have slightly different funding arrangements.
- 7.64 Cohort 3 associates were enthusiastic about extending the Infuse Programme beyond the CCR, viewing it as an opportunity to further collaborate and “achieve so much more”, not only across organisations but also across regions, linking up the public sector in North and South Wales respectively. One associate did express reservation about the possibility of extension leading to the inclusion of too many organisations, with the risk of mission creep and loss of focus.
- 7.65 Associates from across both Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 all said they would recommend Infuse to a colleague, framing it as a useful opportunity to “think differently”. Associates from Cohort 3 claimed they knew and had spoken to colleagues outside of the CCR who are keen to be involved with Infuse. One associate cited a colleague who

has the same job as them, with similar ideas, experiencing similar frustrations they had pre-Infuse. As such, they viewed the extension of the Programme as an opportunity to share the resources they had access to other colleagues who needed that support.

- 7.66 It was acknowledged that those who enter the Programme without a clear idea of what they want to develop will find it harder.

## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

### General conclusions

- 8.1 It is evident that the Infuse Programme has remained relevant with the strategic and policy context throughout the lifetime of its delivery, especially given the increasing interest in strengthening Welsh public services and their connectivity to leverage social value. As such, the rationale for the Programme has also remained valid.
- 8.2 Infuse has been successful in meeting the majority of its objectives, including increasing the skills, tools and methods of public sector employees, as well as fostering collaboration and networking. However, challenges faced in terms of engaging some organisations within the CCR has hampered achieving widespread cultural change.
- 8.3 As for the resourcing available to the Programme, delivery team members felt this was sufficient. Despite some criticism, the marketing and communication activity surrounding Infuse was generally praised. Furthermore, the team responsible for the delivery of the Infuse were universally praised by all stakeholders, with recognition that they were 'exemplary', credited with "innovating the mundane", in what was viewed as a difficult Programme to deliver. Associates praised them for "going above and beyond" actively avoiding a 'teacher-student' dynamic throughout delivery, instead being "genuinely interested in what people had to say".
- 8.4 The challenges faced between the delivery partners were widely recognised, with some delivery team members feeling this went unresolved throughout the Programme's duration, whereas others thought they , were effectively contained and minimised.
- 8.5 In terms of Programme delivery, experiment coaching, data lab, the in-person bootcamp and wrap events were all highlighted as particular strengths. The procurement lab and reflective practice, on balance, received more mixed feedback. As for Programme-level outputs, Infuse achieved or exceeded the targets set. Furthermore, it demonstrated added value through the achievement of several

additional outputs, often captured through individual associate experiments. The Programme showcased strong integration of CCTs, as well as contributing to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

- 8.6 It was observed by both associates and delivery team members that those who participated in Infuse “loved being pulled from their headspace to think differently in an environment with like minded people”. This, in turn, led to inspiration, enthusiasm and creativity amongst associates, many of whom claimed to feel ‘powerless’ before the start of the Programme. The ability to establish new contacts, learn about different organisational cultures and understand colleague’s points of view were also viewed as key benefits by associates.
- 8.7 Collaboration and knowledge sharing was evident within organisations and between colleagues who had participated in Infuse. However, to ensure Infuse has a long lasting impact, professional collaboration will need to take place more at a regional level, with widespread buy-in from organisations across the CCR. Delivery stakeholders acknowledged that the full impact of Infuse could take as long as anywhere between two to ten years to fully emerge.
- 8.8 Overall, delivery team stakeholders were very positive about Infuse as a whole, stating how it was unfortunate that the Programme is coming to an end. This sentiment was echoed by associates from across Cohort 2 and 3.
- 8.9 As such, there was widespread support for the concept of a future roll-out of the Infuse Programme pan-Wales.

## **Recommendations**

### *How Infuse could be delivered differently*

- 8.10 When we asked delivery team stakeholders what they would have done differently if they have the opportunity to deliver Infuse again, a couple of key themes were reiterated.

- 8.11 The time and spacing of the Programme was repeatedly referenced as a challenge, with delivery team members calling for longer time periods between cohorts, to better enable reflective learning and deepen understanding of the challenges faced in terms of collaboration.
- 8.12 Similarly, delivery team members felt they needed a longer lead-in time to recruit participants, suggesting a 12 month period as opposed to six months to get people on board. It was also felt this time could be used to research what each partner wants to gain from the Programme and find mutual agreements amongst everyone on what the content should focus on.

**Recommendation 1:** to optimise the effectiveness and impact of future programmes, it is recommended to consider extending the time and spacing between delivery of cohorts. This longer duration between cohorts will allow for more comprehensive and reflecting learning opportunities, enabling associates to delve deeper into the challenges associated with collaboration and innovation within the CCR. Moreover, a future delivery team should have longer lead-in times for participant recruitment, providing ample space for thorough research and alignment of partner objectives. This additional time can be utilised to understand the specific goals and expectations of each partner, fostering mutual agreements on the focus and content of the Programme.

- 8.13 In terms of Programme content, one delivery team member also suggested they should have incorporated an element of tackling organisational culture into delivery. Another felt there should be more of a practical, than an academic focus. Increasing the integration of key organisations, such as Welsh Government, which have a substantial influence over Local Authorities, was also proposed. In the context of decarbonisation, the failure to include the Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES) was viewed as a potential missed opportunity.



**Recommendation 2:** Programme participants should sustain and continue to establish collaborative partnerships with Welsh Government services to ensure that best practice is shared and innovation continues.

- 8.14 Searching for alternative sources of funding was repeatedly mentioned given the perceived lack of flexibility of the current funding model, collectively viewed by delivery team stakeholders as restrictive and a drain on resources.
- 8.15 When posed with the question of improvements that could be made to the Programme, several associates from Cohort 3 had no suggestion, praising the structure, time commitment and communication. However, other associates did identify some recommendations they felt could positively impact any future participants experience.
- 8.16 This included the chronology of the labs, with the suggestion by one Cohort 3 associate that the procurement lab should precede the data lab, as the latter is more closely linked to experiments which became more prominent as the Programme progressed. Another Cohort 3 associate proposed extending the experiment stage to enable them to have more sessions and support to help them get their experiment off the ground.
- 8.17 Conversely, several associates questioned whether the procurement lab needed to be mandatory, with an alternative option of voluntary attendance for guest speaker sessions, given they felt the content of the lab was not always relevant to their day job. On this theme, both Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 associates proposed rethinking the context of where procurement lab sits and who the target audience is, with the potential to tailor it more to associates own experience. This notion was extended to the Programme as a whole, with a minority of associates indicating that the thematic areas of supporting communities and decarbonisation were “too broad”.

- 8.18 One Cohort 3 associate claimed that Infuse would benefit from being more condensed, with a greater emphasis on the mentoring and coaching elements, as opposed to the whole Programme.
- 8.19 Even though Cohort 3 associates recognised they had more in-person days than previous cohorts, there was still calls for more face-to-face delivery, with the potential to have two labs in-person.
- 8.20 Associates also suggested that incorporating visits to different areas could have fostered better connections amongst associates from diverse regions.

**Recommendation 3:** To enhance collaboration and networking opportunities, a future Programme should consider incorporating visits to different areas in Wales, allowing associates from diverse regions to interact and build stronger connections throughout the duration of the initiative.

- 8.21 The marketing and communication surrounding the Infuse Programme was viewed as a clear success by the delivery team. They felt there was a clear brand created throughout the course of the Programme which became clearly recognisable both internally and within partnering Local Authorities.

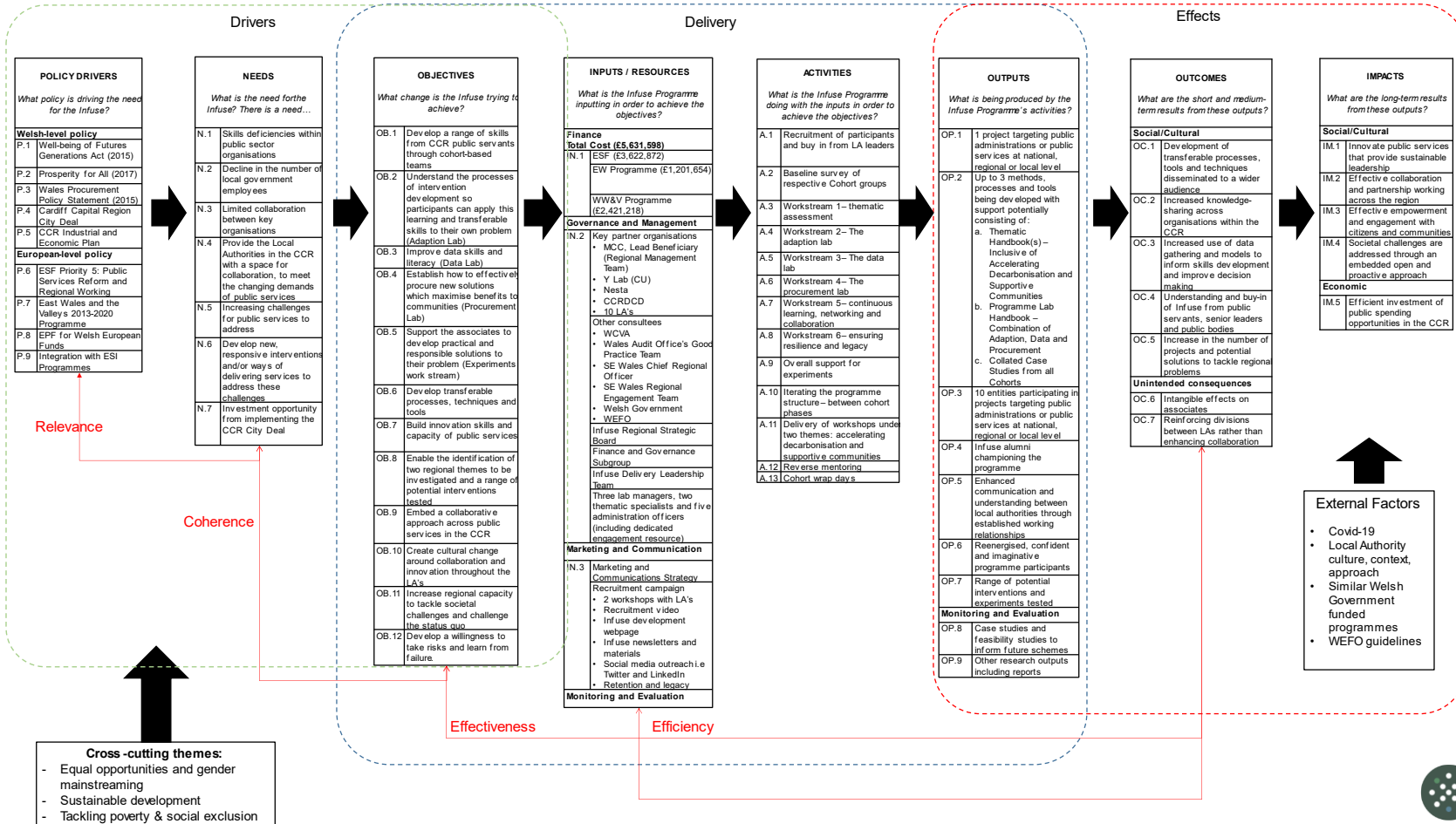
**Recommendation 4:** To maximise the impact of the Infuse Programme and increase engagement, a continued focus on marketing and communication is essential. Continued promotion of the Programme by Infuse associate champions within their organisation to share case studies, experiment developments, and forms of best practice. This approach will facilitate knowledge-sharing, inspire others to get involved, create a wider network of support and collaboration within the Infuse community, and continue to promote the alumni network.

*Lessons for others*

- 8.22 We also asked delivery team stakeholders what key lessons others would need to adopt if delivering a similar programme in future.
- 8.23 The importance of clear and equal partnership to ensure sufficient cohesion amongst delivery partners was emphasised. This included the formulation of a consistent vision with mutual aims between teams. Delivery team members also discussed actively thinking in the Programme's early stages about legacy and what this would look like in practice.
- 8.24 The approach of directly asking what Local Authorities and other participating organisations want from the Programme to ensure its design met their needs, was also proposed. Furthermore, the importance of including all public sector organisations from the start, as opposed to halfway through the Programme, was mentioned.
- 8.25 As aforementioned, building in enough reflective time to effectively iterate the Programme was emphasised, as was the importance of reverse mentoring in ensuring skills and knowledge are shared within organisations.

## Annex A: Infuse Programme external evaluation logic model

Diagrams illustrating the Infuse Programme external evaluation logic model.



## Annex B – Delivery Team Stakeholder Topic Guide

| Question  | Answer |
|---|--------|
| Can you confirm your role within the Infuse Programme?  |        |
| <b>Needs / Objectives</b>   |        |
| <p>Has the rationale behind the Infuse evolved over the lifetime of the Programme?</p> <p>Are the challenges the sector is facing remain the same as the start of the Programme or have new challenges emerged?</p> |        |
| To what extent has the Infuse Programme successfully met its objectives?  |        |
| <b>Resources</b>  |        |
| <p>In your opinion, has the Infuse Programme been sufficiently resourced? (People, funding, external stakeholders)</p> <p>Has this always been the case throughout the lifetime of the Programme?</p>               |        |
| The Programme has experienced significant staff turnover in recent months. Why do you think this is? What impact has that had on the delivery of the Programme?   |        |
| <p>How effective has the Governance and Management of Infuse been?</p> <p>How is the relationship between the different delivery partners? How has this changed over time?</p>                                      |        |
| <p>Since the start of Infuse, have there been any changes in the delivery approach/management?</p> <p>If so, why?</p> <p>What impact did this have?</p>   |        |
| <p>What have been the key marketing activities to promote Infuse?</p> <p>How effective have these been in increasing awareness/understanding of Infuse?</p>   |        |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>To what extent do you think the Infuse Programme has achieved buy-in from participating organisations?</p> <p>Has this improved over time?</p>   |  |
| <p>Has the programme experienced any difficulty in recruiting/engaging participants?</p> <p>If so, why?</p> <p>To what extent were these addressed?</p>   |  |
| <p>In your opinion, have the changes in delivery between the respective cohorts strengthened or weakened the Programme?</p>   |  |
| <p>To what extent has the inclusion of associates from organisations beyond local authorities (e.g health boards and third sector organisations) made a difference to the Infuse experience?</p> <p>What have been the benefits/draw backs of this?</p> <p>Moving forward, do you think Infuse should be expanded to include other sectors?</p> |  |
| <p><b>Activities</b></p>  |  |
| <p>What would you say have been the most effective elements of the Infuse Programme? <i>Probe for labs, themes, bootcamp guest speakers, reflective practice, experiment coaching etc</i></p>   |  |
| <p>What aspects of Infuse have not been so effective?</p>   |  |
| <p>What has been the effect of bringing in external consultants to deliver experiment coaching?</p>   |  |
| <p>Have there been any challenges/barriers in delivering Infuse-related activities? <i>Probe internal and external factors</i></p> <p>How have they impacted the Programme, if at all?</p> <p>How were they mitigated?</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Outputs</b></p>   |  |
| <p>How successful has the Programme been in meeting its intended output indicator targets?</p>  |  |

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| Are there any areas where the Programme has particularly over or under performed?  |  |
| To what extent has the Programme performed against CCT aims?   |  |
| To what extent has Infuse delivered against the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act?  |  |
| <b>Outcomes and Impacts</b>  |  |
| <p>What outcomes have already emerged since the start of Infuse?<br/><i>Probe for implementation of new processes/tools/techniques</i></p> <p>What are the longer term outcomes and impacts that will result from the Infuse Programme?</p> <p>Who are the expected beneficiaries?</p> <p>Will this be felt at a local/regional level?</p> <p>How long will it take for the benefits brought by Infuse to be realised?</p> |  |
| <p>How effective was the programme in increasing skills capacity and levels</p> <p>of regional collaboration in entities on the Infuse Programme?</p>  |  |
| What would have been lost in the absence of the Infuse Programme?  |  |
| How can the programme ensure the long-term sustainability/legacy of its initiatives?   |  |
| Do you think the Infuse Programme should be rolled out more widely? What form should this take?  |  |
| <b>Close</b>   |  |
| <p>In retrospect, if you were to deliver Infuse now, what, if anything, would you do differently?</p> <p>What are the lessons for others wishing to run similar programmes in the future?</p>  |  |

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| Do you have any other final comments? |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|



### Annex C – Associate Interview Topic Guide-Cohort 3

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please could you tell us about your day-to-day role and the organisation you work for?</li> </ul> |  |
|--|--|

#### Rationale

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|--|--|
| <p>What are the <b>main reasons</b> why you decided to participate in the Infuse programme?/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were there any gaps in your own knowledge and expertise that you hoped could be filled by infuse?</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>Prior to engaging with the programme, how confident did you feel in developing and testing new innovative approaches during your day to day role?</p>   |  |
| <p>To what extent has Infuse helped increase your understanding of the challenges/issues faced by local communities and the wider region?</p>  |  |

#### Programme delivery

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>What are your thoughts on the structure of the Infuse Programme? Is there anything that is particularly good or could be improved? <i>Probe for the structure of the labs/tools/thematic content alongside the days and times of the Programme / phases i.e. bootcamp etc, inclusion of guest speakers</i></p> <p>how did you find the blend of online and face-to-face delivery?</p> <p>To what extent is 6 months the correct length of time?</p> |  |
| <p>What elements of the Infuse Programme have you found most useful and why?</p> <p>Is there any areas missing that Infuse should have focused / placed more emphasis on?</p>  |  |
| <p>To what extent has the inclusion of organisations beyond local authorities (e.g health boards and third sector organisations) made a difference to the Infuse experience? What have been the benefits/draw backs of this?</p>   |  |
| <p>Experiment coaching from PPR</p> <p>Has targeted experiment support enhanced your experience of Infuse?</p> <p>How confident do you now feel in experimentation. Has the experiment coaching influenced that?</p> <p>Has experiment coaching made collaboration easier?</p>   |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Did the experiment coaching give you any other skills they might apply in your work outside the programme? i.e. problem solving, collaboration, experimentation etc.</p>   |  |
| <p>Reflective Practice</p> <p>Has it increased your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence in disrupting, exploring and making sense of problems</li> <li>• Listening and reflection skills</li> <li>• Collaboration and ability to work as part of a team (<i>they undertook reflective practice in different groupings to their experiment groups</i>)...i.e. softer skills around providing support to one another, coaching each other, unleashing curiosity together etc.</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>To what extent has your organisation supported your participation in Infuse??</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has your organisation been receptive of your skills and innovative ideas?</li> <li>• Do you think your organisation would be open to other employees joining infuse</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p>Have you developed any of the project ideas that you initially came into the project with? If so, what stage are they at? <i>Probe the extent to which projects are the same or differ from initial ideas</i></p>  |  |
| <p>Overall, what would you say have been the key barriers/enabling factors during your participation of Infuse?</p>   |  |

**Outcomes and Impacts**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>How has participation in the programme informed or influenced your daily work? What are you doing differently now/ or will do differently in the future? <i>Probe for implementation of new processes/tools/techniques</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>has participating in infuse led to an increase in knowledge sharing/collaboration both within and across organisations within the CCR</i></li> </ul> |  |
| <p>Can you provide any details of any new innovation projects/ideas that you have become involved in testing and/or implementing in your organisation, as a result of participation in the Infuse Programme? <i>Probe for the nature of new collaborative projects as a result of Infuse</i></p>   |  |

|  |  |
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| <p>To what extent has your participation in the Infuse Programme led to increased knowledge sharing/collaboration both within and across organisations within the CCR?</p>   |  |
| <p>Did you experience any unintended/unforeseen consequences as a result of your participation in Infuse?</p>  |  |
| <p>In summary, what do you feel are the main benefits from you participating in the programme: (a) for you as an individual, (b) for your organisation and the CCR region, and (c) for people using services?</p>  |  |
| <p>What would have been lost in the absence of the Infuse Programme?</p>   |  |
| <p>Based on your own experiences of the Programme, to what extent do you think Infuse can deliver on its more ambitious, long-term goals <i>i.e. innovative public services, efficient public spending, effective regional collaboration, addressing societal challenges, effective empowerment and engagement with citizens and communities</i></p> <p>What steps does the Programme need to take to ensure it has a legacy/long-lasting impact? <i>Probe for creation of networks of public sector innovators, use of alumni etc</i></p> |  |

**Conclusion**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Are there any aspects of the programme that you would change and if so, why?</p>  |  |
| <p>What are your thoughts on the future roll out of the Infuse model to include organisations beyond the CCR region? Do you think this is a good approach?</p> |  |

## Annex D– Associate Interview Topic Guide-Cohort 2

### Background

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Please could you introduce yourselves, telling us your day-to-day role and the organisation you work for? |  |
| How did you become aware of the Infuse programme?   |  |

### Rationale

|  |  |
|--|--|
| What are the <b>main reasons</b> why you decided to participate in the Infuse programme?                                       |  |
| What are the <b>key challenges</b> that you are currently facing within the public sector? Is it something Infuse can address? |  |

### Programme delivery

|  |  |
|--|--|
| What are your thoughts on the structure of the Infuse Programme? Is there anything that is particularly good or could be improved? <i>Probe for the structure of the labs/tools/thematic content alongside the days and times of the Programme</i>   |  |
| What elements of the Infuse Programme have you found most useful and why? <i>Cite survey examples if necessary.</i> Is there anything currently missing that Infuse should be focusing on? Are there any elements that Infuse should place more emphasis on during delivery?   |  |
| <p>Experiment coaching from PPR</p> <p>Has targeted experiment support enhanced your experience of Infuse?</p> <p>How confident do you now feel in experimentation. Has the experiment coaching influenced that?</p> <p>Has experiment coaching made collaboration easier?</p> <p>Did the experiment coaching give you any other skills they might apply in your work outside the programme? i.e. problem solving, collaboration, experimentation etc.</p> |  |
| <p>Reflective Practice</p> <p>Has it increased your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence in disrupting, exploring and making sense of problems</li> <li>• Listening and reflection skills</li> <li>• Collaboration and ability to work as part of a team (<i>they undertook reflective practice in different groupings to their</i></li> </ul>   |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>experiment groups)...i.e. softer skills around providing support to one another, coaching each other, unleashing curiosity together etc.</i>  |  |
| Throughout the Programme, how supported did you feel to participate in Infuse by your organisation?  |  |
| How has your experience of the Infuse compared to the initial expectations you had at the start of the Programme? How has your experience of the programme changed from your first involvement to now? <i>Probe for structure of delivery, connections made, potential benefits it has delivered etc</i> |  |
| Have you developed any of the project ideas that you initially came into the project with? If so, what stage are they at? <i>Probe the extent to which projects are the same or differ from initial ideas</i>  |  |
| What are the main takeaways/ learning points for you from participating in the Infuse programme? <i>Including participations in the three labs; experiments and reverse mentoring scheme, if applicable).</i>  |  |
| Overall, what would you say have been the key barriers/enabling factors during your participation of Infuse?   |  |

### Outcomes and Impacts

|  |  |
|--|--|
| How has participation in the programme informed or influenced your daily work? What are you doing differently now/ or will do differently in the future? <i>Probe for implementation of new processes/tools/techniques</i>   |  |
| Can you provide any details of any new innovation projects/ideas that you have become involved in testing and/or implementing in your organisation, as a result of participation in the Infuse Programme? Probe for the nature of new collaborative projects as a result of Infuse   |  |
| To what extent has your participation in the Infuse Programme led to increased knowledge sharing/collaboration both within and across organisations within the CCR?  |  |
| Has participation in the Infuse Programme informed or changed the way in which you define and approach collaborative working (e.g within your organisation, at a local, regional or cross-border level). <i>What form has this taken and what have been the benefits of this? Probe barriers/enabling factors and nature of new contacts/networks/relationships.</i> |  |
| Since your completion of the Infuse Programme, to what extent have you encountered receptiveness to your learnings ideas in your organisation/team? <i>Probe why/why not</i>   |  |
| Have there been any unintended/unforeseen consequences as a result of your participation in Infuse?  |  |
| In summary, what do you feel are the main benefits from you participating in the programme: (a) for you as an individual, (b) for your organisation and the CCR region, and (c) for people using services?   |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Based on your own experiences of the Programme, to what extent do you think Infuse can deliver on its more ambitious, long-term goals <i>i.e. innovative public services, effective regional collaboration, addressing societal challenges</i> |  |
|--|--|

**Conclusion**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Are there any aspects of the programme that you would change and if so, why?                                   |  |
| Based on your experiences, would you recommend the Infuse Programme to a colleague? <i>Probe why, why not.</i> |  |
| Is there anything else you would like us to know in order to plan for future cohorts?                          |  |