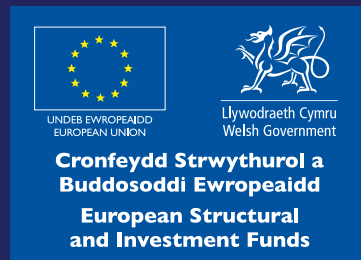


# The impact of European funding in Wales

How voluntary organisations used EU funding to create lasting change for Welsh people and communities

**WcVA**  
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# Foreword

## Tom Jones, Vice President of WCVA



Several decades' worth of economic decline, in both its industrial and rural areas, has led to many social challenges in Wales. As part of a determined effort to turn around these communities, targeted funding from the EU through Welsh Government was distributed to the most disadvantaged areas. To achieve this, local and national government alongside other funders, such as WCVA and the Lottery, worked together with voluntary organisations and social businesses.

EU funded projects run by the voluntary sector, such as those illustrated in this report, have had a big impact on the under-represented groups and vulnerable minorities they support. These funding programmes, though sometimes difficult to access, have also been hugely beneficial to the voluntary sector and its development.

Thanks to support from WCVA, the County Voluntary Councils, the Welsh European Funding Office and the Wales Rural Network, voluntary organisations have learnt skills from their involvement in EU funding that will enable them to continue to provide meaningful interventions for the communities they support.

The framework of co-operation and trust in Wales was admired and copied by many civil society organisations across the EU who were managing their own programmes. This legacy - the mutual learning between Wales, the rest of the UK and Europe - needs to be continued in whatever future relationships we create.

**Cover Image:** Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) Co-Director, Helal at their community centre in Swansea. EYST's Active Inclusion projects helped young Black Asian & Minority Ethnic people into supported employment

# Introduction

In a period spanning over 20 years, voluntary organisations made a huge impact across a range of key social issues in Wales thanks to European Structural Funds.

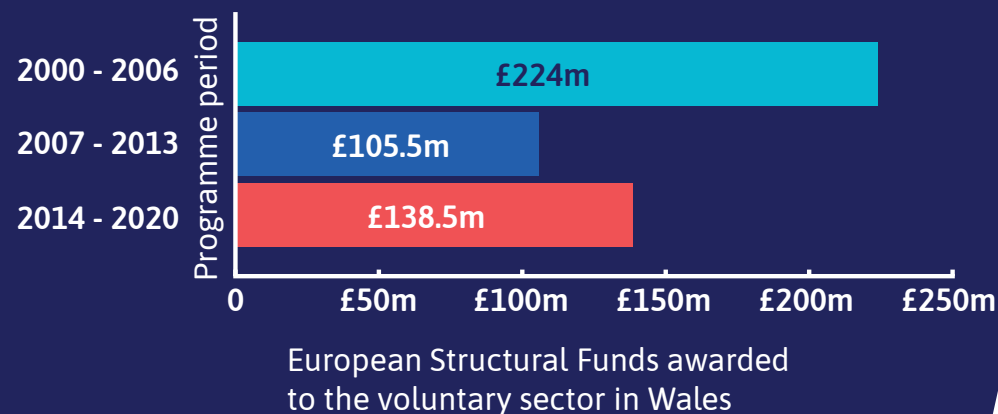
The three funding programmes, starting in 2000, saw the voluntary sector delivering vital projects that supported people and communities, and actively shaping policy and the design of the programmes themselves.

Voluntary organisations that traditionally might not have had the capacity or technical knowledge to access this type of funding were able to show their capability by working with WCVA and other support bodies. This ensured funds got to organisations with local knowledge and specialist expertise and truly supported the communities that needed them.

This report will highlight how Welsh voluntary organisations, through their involvement in European funded projects, were able to contribute to broader policy objectives, including:

- advancing equality, eliminating discrimination and fostering inclusion

- improving employment opportunities and prospects for disadvantaged people
- supporting social enterprises to grow and advance their charitable aims
- addressing ecological issues and economic growth in a socially and environmentally responsible way



# Fostering equality, diversity & inclusion

European funding has been an important driver in promoting equality, human rights and inclusion in Wales over the past 25 years. Large amounts of funding – particularly through the European Social Fund – have enabled voluntary organisations to support disadvantaged people, marginalised communities and people of all ages facing poverty and social exclusion.

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# Key impacts

- Voluntary organisations extended the reach of European funding in Wales thanks to their close relationships with groups that are often under-represented or seldom heard
- Specialised organisations in the voluntary sector were uniquely placed to support the diverse communities of Wales. Their expertise and the trust placed in them by the groups they represent meant they could provide tailored support that traditional public services simply couldn't supply. Individuals that may have fallen through the gaps because of their background, ability or beliefs received the support they needed through European funded projects instead
- Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team (EYST) is an example of one of the many projects that promoted equality, diversity and inclusion using European funding. EYST ran Active Inclusion projects funded by the European Social Fund and used their expertise to provide supported employment opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people
- One of the strengths of European Structural Funds was the 'cross-cutting themes', a set of principles that was built into all funded operations. The voluntary sector was successful in advancing equality, diversity and inclusion through the cross-cutting theme 'equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming', which was embedded within the design and delivery of projects
- Voluntary organisations in Wales with specialist expertise were also able to contribute to the development of the cross-cutting themes over the years. Chwarae Teg, for example, played an important role in the equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming theme

# Case study: Chwarae Teg

**Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation2 used the European Social Fund to give Dee the helping hand she needed to take her career to the next level.**

Thanks to funding from the European Social Fund, Chwarae Teg has spent the last five years working with women throughout Wales to build their confidence and recognise and develop their skills. The charity also worked with businesses to encourage them to identify some of the barriers in their own organisation and encourage more women to join their workforce.

'When we're looking at funding,' says Karen, Learning Development Partner on Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation2 project, 'particularly around gender equality, it needs to be focused, it needs to be targeted and it needs to be around the needs and experiences of women.'

Project participant, Dee, was able to overcome her lack of confidence and take her career to the next level with jobs at the Royal Voluntary Service and Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales following her involvement in the programme.

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‘I would say it was like a defining point in my career, it’s been a turning point for me.

My confidence had been lacking when I first walked into that course and I left really confident, really self-aware. I knew what skills I had, what skills I didn’t have and that the skills I didn’t have weren’t a major weakness or a character flaw.’

**PARTICIPANT, DEE**

**Right:** Karen, Learning Development Partner at Chwarae Teg, attends an online meeting



# Case study: Wales Council for Deaf People

**Wales Council for Deaf People used Active Inclusion funding to prove deaf people can do the job as well as anybody else.**

A key element of Wales Council for Deaf People's (WCfDP) Active Inclusion project was providing supported employment opportunities for deaf people.

'We could place somebody in a job and allow them to do that job with no risk to the employer,' said Gaye, Project Officer at WCfDP. 'That supports the employer to realise that deaf people can, if you put everything in place, that we can do this.'

WCfDP ran a scheme with Transport for Wales that was such a success they were able to put a business case to management and secure permanent jobs for the three participants involved.

One of the participants, Ellie, said 'I feel very relaxed, my work is fantastic, I've been well trained. Deaf and hard of hearing, both are able to do the same job as any hearing person... If their communication needs are supported, then everybody is able to do the same job, there's no difference.'

'Until we get discrimination off the table,' summarises Gaye, 'the voluntary sector's always going to be needed, because they're the ones that support people with differences.'

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**Image:** Project participant, Ellie (right) talks to her Transport for Wales colleague Helen (middle) with the assistance of her interpreter (left)

# Developing skills & employment

Voluntary organisations in Wales used European funding to support some of the poorest and most disadvantaged people in society. The sector ran projects that helped people to find meaningful employment or develop skills that were a key step on their employment journey.

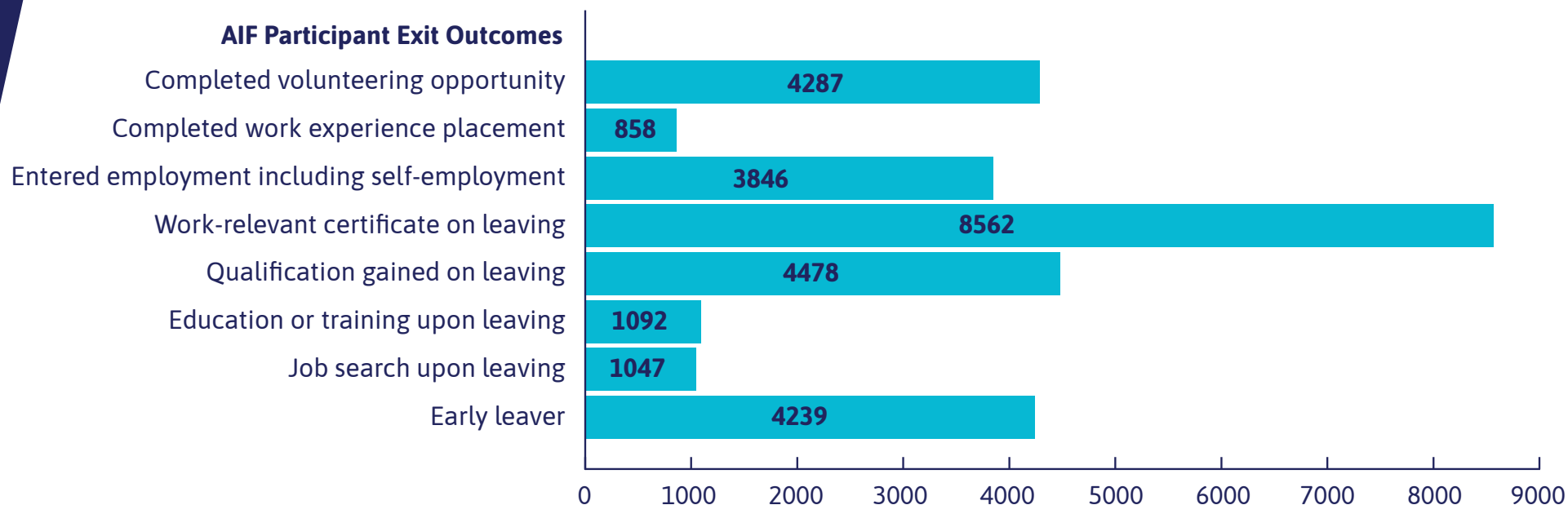
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# Key impacts

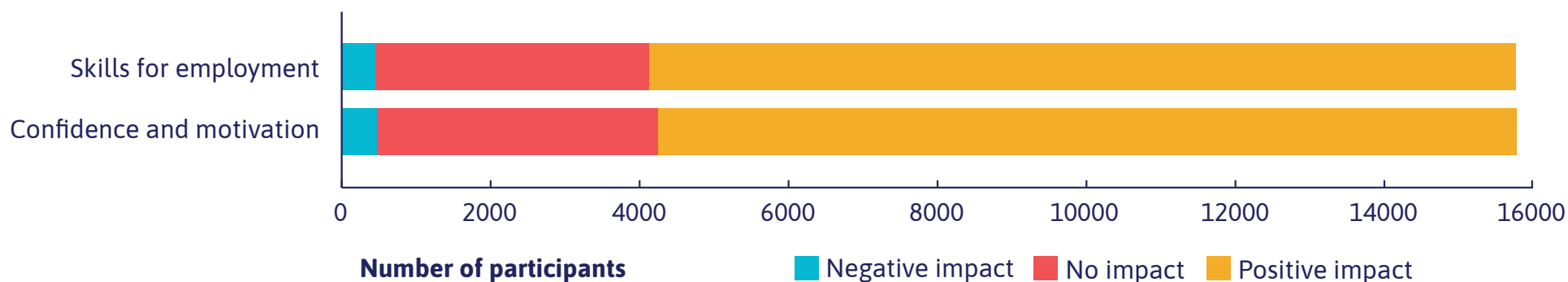
- WCVA's role as an Intermediate Body (IB) allowed us to bridge the gap between the Welsh voluntary sector and European funding, something that was instrumental in the success of the programmes. The IB - the only voluntary sector body of its kind - allowed funding to reach voluntary organisations with the necessary expertise to deliver effective employment projects, groups that traditionally did not have the capacity or technical knowledge to access this kind of funding
- In turn voluntary organisations, through the IB, helped influence the direction and design of the funding programmes themselves, making sure they were fit for purpose to deliver services for those that needed them most
- WCVA's Active Inclusion Fund helped voluntary organisations support some of the most vulnerable in society, those furthest from the labour market, reaching people who might otherwise fall through the gaps
- Active Inclusion projects provided tailored support in a two-stage process. For those in need of most support this might mean help with improving confidence or other 'soft' skills, while supported employment opportunities were provided for those who were ready to go into work
- Over **180 diverse organisations** were funded through the Active Inclusion fund, **supporting over 23,000 disadvantaged people** to move into or towards work since 2015, with most participants consistently reporting positive experiences and benefits. The Active Inclusion fund provided **over £30 million** in grant funding to voluntary organisations in Wales, and had a calculated 'social return on investment' of approximately **£3.37 of benefit generated for every £1 spent\***
- 'Tackling poverty and social exclusion' was one of the cross-cutting themes embedded in the design of all project and programmes funded through European Structural Funds

\*Calculation taken from the [independent evaluation of the Active Inclusion Fund](#)

## WCVA Active Inclusion Fund: Participant exit outcomes



## WCVA Active Inclusion Fund: Projects' overall effect on participants' confidence & motivation & skills for employment





**Image:** Ceri on the MTIB (Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind) furniture refitting factory floor, part of their Active Inclusion project

# Case study: Change Grow Live

**Change Grow Live took advantage of European funding to help Anusha adjust to life in a new country, find confidence in her skills and gain employment.**

The Welsh Government approached Change Grow Live in 2016 to run an employment intervention programme because of their expertise in supporting minority ethnic and migrant communities.

‘There’s just an awful lot of information out of there that is very hard to access if you come into the country from overseas’, said Helen, Wales Employability Service Programme Manager at CGL. ‘If you are lucky, you’ve got people you can ask, but if you are not lucky, then you don’t know who to go to, to find this stuff out.’

Anusha moved to Wales from India with multiple degrees and an impressive CV but was struggling with knowing what to do next for her career.

‘I got low in confidence and doubted my English skills, whether I could go through everything over here,’ said Anusha. ‘But I’ve learned so much from Change Grow Live, it gives you confidence and you can grow in your career and go a long way.’

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**Above:** Helen chats to Anusha, one of the participants who took part in Change Grow Live's employability programme



**Right:** Helen, Wales Employability Service Programme Manager at the Change Grow Live offices

# Growing social business

Since 2000, European Structural Funds have been used successfully to stimulate the growth and development of the social enterprise sector in Wales. The European Regional Development Fund has enabled organisations such as Cwmpas and WCVA to support new and existing social businesses with expert business advice and accessible financial assistance, even turning EU investment into a recyclable source of funding that is re-invested in the sector.

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# Key impacts

- An initial investment of **£2.7 million** in 2006 will continue to support social enterprises in Wales beyond the end of European funding. The Social Investment Cymru team at WCVA has recycled and reinvested the money into an ongoing loan fund
- The groundbreaking and unique Social Business Growth Fund was a mix of grant and repayable assistance, part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, designed to enable social businesses in Wales to grow and create job opportunities. Over the years it's helped fund a wide range of social businesses and activities like galleries, boats that provide alternative learning opportunities, and shops supporting community owned mountain bike trails
- Equally innovative, the Community Asset Development Fund supported social businesses that wanted to bring an asset, like a library, pub or community hall, into community ownership. It saw people taking action for their local community such as rescuing pubs from disuse or upgrading local leisure centre facilities to help keep them running

- WCVA's Social Business Growth Fund and Community Asset Development Fund **awarded £4.8 million across 59 social businesses**
- Our Social Investment Cymru team was able to work in partnership with Cwmpas, combining expertise in advising social businesses with our track record of managing funding to bring organisations' ideas to fruition. It has been a unique and effective way of getting a social and financial return on investments

## WCVA's Social Business Growth Fund & Community Asset Development Fund

**£4.8m**  
Funding  
awarded

**59**  
Social  
businesses  
funded

**282**  
Jobs  
created

# Case study: **Awesome Wales**

**Awesome Wales has become a vital hub for the community after EU funding enabled them to open a series of zero waste shops.**

Awesome Wales received funding through the Social Business Growth Fund (SBGF), managed by WCVA's Social Investment Cymru team. The funding has supported the organisation to open three zero waste shops across South Wales, and they've become a real hub for the local community while making ethical shopping affordable.

The shops allow people to fill up their own containers for things like rice, pasta, herbs and spices, washing up liquid, and toiletries rather than using wasteful plastic packaging. The profits from the shop are then re-invested in local community groups and activities, bringing people from the local community together to connect and support one another through initiatives like their Eco Mums group.

'It makes us feel really proud when people come back to us, you know, week in week out, they trust us to be their Community Hub,' said Awesome Wales Director, Amy.

SBGF was funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

‘Our initial setup costs, the advice that we had from WCVA and the hand holding that we had in our business planning process, we wouldn’t have been where we are now without that.’

**AMY,  
AWESOME WALES DIRECTOR**

**Right:** Awesome Wales Director, Amy receiving a helping hand at a busy Eco Mums coffee morning in Barry



# Case study: Hope Rescue


**Hope Rescue has grown from a small local charity supporting stray, abandoned and neglected dogs, to a thriving social business with its own rescue centre offering holistic services throughout South Wales.**

Originally operating from commercial boarding kennels and foster homes, Hope Rescue saw an opportunity to expand what they were doing and tackle the root causes of irresponsible dog ownership, rather than just dealing with the consequences.

To increase the organisation's impact, Cwmpas - who were funded by the European Regional Development Fund to offer business support to social enterprises - helped Hope Rescue to set up a wholly owned trading arm. Through the Social Business Wales project Cwmpas provided Hope Rescue with VAT guidance, HR and marketing advice and sustainable development support.

With Cwmpas' help Hope Rescue secured funding through the Social Business Growth Fund (SBGF), managed by WCVA, which enabled them to attract other commercial finance and purchase their own rescue centre in Llanharan.

The SBGF funding also allowed them to employ seven new staff members to operate the centre. The organisation has since gone from strength to strength and become a leading animal welfare and wrap-around service provider in Wales.





**Image:** Hope Rescue received business support from Cwmpas to open their own rescue centre

# Putting sustainable development into practice

Sustainable development has been one of the key overarching objectives of EU policies for over 20 years and it has been embedded in the design and delivery of European Structural Funds. Funding enabled voluntary organisations to deliver projects that addressed ecological issues and economic growth in a socially and environmentally responsible way.

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# Key impacts

- Voluntary organisations – particularly social enterprises – have been successful in delivering renewable energy and energy efficiency projects funded by the European Regional Development Fund. These projects benefitted the community and created jobs locally while advancing the shift to a low-carbon economy. For example, Menter Môn's marine energy project, which is creating clean energy and job opportunities in Anglesey
- Funding also supported smaller scale community energy projects as well, such as the Penderi Energy Project, which set out to **install solar panels on 650 homes** in Swansea, enabling them to generate, store and use their own solar energy
- The Social Business Growth Fund has supported Câr-y-Môr, a community benefit society and the first community-owned regenerative ocean farm of its kind in Wales. With three pilot farms off St David's peninsula, their business of growing seaweed and shellfish has led to the creation of 11 new jobs and radical improvements to the coastal environment
- Sustainable development, a cross-cutting theme, has been incorporated into European Structural Funds, ensuring that the protection of the environment and responsible construction and working practices are considered in the design of projects
- Organisations demonstrated their commitment to sustainable development in many different ways, for example, by developing an environmental sustainability strategy or an organisational eco code, delivering awareness raising sessions and training courses on sustainable development, exploring innovative ICT systems to reduce the need to travel, preserving the environment on project sites, or using local suppliers

# Case study: Menter Môn

**Menter Môn's marine energy project set things in motion for creating clean energy and local jobs in Anglesey.**

Morlais is a project that manages a 35 km<sup>2</sup> area of seabed off the coast of Holy Island in Anglesey. Run by the social enterprise Menter Môn, the project aims to benefit local communities and the economy and help tackle climate change by using renewable energy to generate clean, low carbon electricity.

'With action to tackle climate change becoming ever more urgent, generating clean electricity is also becoming increasingly important,' said Gerallt Llywelyn Jones, a director with Morlais.

In the first stage of the project Menter Môn focused on securing consent from Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales and engaging with the community and stakeholders. The application was submitted in the autumn of 2019 and consent was awarded in December 2021.

The organisation has since secured £31 million from the European Regional Development Fund and the second stage of the project is underway. Menter Môn will now put the necessary infrastructure in place for developers of 'tidal stream energy' to deploy their technology in the zone.

**Right:** Coastal views over to South Stack Island in Anglesey, the location for the tidal stream energy installation led by Menter Môn



Jones Bros Civil Engineering, a local North Wales company based in Ruthin, has been commissioned to do the work. The project will be phased, with devices being installed gradually to ensure that the development does not negatively impact marine wildlife.

Magallanes, the first turbine developer linked to the project, has also secured a contract as part of the UK Government's Contracts for Difference scheme. This award is an endorsement of the project, and the guaranteed revenue puts Magallanes in a strong position to work with local businesses as they prepare to deploy their technology off the coast of Anglesey.

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**Right:** An apprentice from local company, Jones Bros Civil Engineering working on site at the landfall substation for Menter Môn's European funded tidal energy project



# WcVA CcGC

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EUROPEAN UNION



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Cronfeydd Strwythurol a  
Buddosoddi Ewropeaidd**

**European Structural  
and Investment Funds**

**Image:** A participant on Gilfach Goch  
Community Association's Active Inclusion  
project practices hairdressing skills

