

Spotlight Findings Paper 1

Lasting impacts and legacy

for CCSF grantholders

Evaluation of the Coronavirus Community Support Fund

September 2021

The Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF) is a funding programme supported by a grant of £187 million from Government, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund to help Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations in England respond to the COVID-19 crisis and increase community support to people affected by the pandemic. Ipsos MORI and partners have evaluated the programme. This is one of a series of papers which focus in depth on themes that have emerged from the evaluation.

The CCSF provided **emergency grants** to organisations to help them respond to the challenges brought on by the pandemic, for example, sudden changes to their typical funding routes or the need to close their in-person premises. Although organisations were required to use their CCSF grants within the **six-month grant period**, interviews with grantholders uncovered multiple ways in which the CCSF grants will **support the way organisations work and provide support in the future**. This paper sets out these key lasting impacts for the **legacy of the CCSF**.

A shift to virtual working

As with many other organisations, grantholders had to adapt the way they provided support in a **safe and socially distanced way**. In most

cases, this meant transitioning to a virtual mode of delivery support. This was often a seismic shift to the normal way grantholders were used to working. The support some grantholders provided, such as community dance sessions, were completely dependent on face-to-face contact. These grantholders did not always have the appropriate IT infrastructure necessary to conduct support in a virtual way. The CCSF funding allowed some grantholders to **purchase necessary resources such as tablets, mobile phones, and Zoom licences** to continue providing community support. Many grantholders were pleasantly surprised that shifting to virtual working was generally positive for how the organisation worked, in terms of supporting beneficiaries as well as staff members and volunteers working from home.

Digital working allowed **greater flexibility** in terms of **beneficiaries from various locations being able to access support**. Additionally, this enabled disabled people or those shielding to receive care in a safe way. Although many grantholders saw digital working supplementing and forming a part of how they interact with beneficiaries along with in-person care, **most planned to continue providing at least some form of virtual support** as a flexible and accessible way for people to receive help.

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We found this [moving things online] with some of our other services, being online actually helped some people who would otherwise have had difficulty getting physically to a place. That is very interesting really and so we will be continuing in some of our other services, some of the online work.



Grantholder

Many grantholders also saw the benefits to their organisation of **virtual working**. The equipment purchased by some grantholders using the grant meant staff and volunteers can **continue working from home**, introducing **more flexible working practices** that support their staff members' needs as well. In general, grantholders were supportive of keeping a **hybrid working structure** to better enable their staff to manage their workload more flexibly. For example, administrative tasks could be done remotely with the equipment such as laptops or tablets. This flexibility was seen as **supporting staff morale**, as some grantholders noted that some staff prefer the option to work from home to save time and expenses spent commuting.



I don't think anybody will be in the building 5 days a week ever again, really. I think there's a real value in, at least, doing 1 if not 2 days a week, just around actually not getting sucked into all the other things. People are more productive when they work from home. I don't think it's necessarily good for their mental health, but actually, it's given us that insight into, actually, if somebody needs to do the case notes update, that makes total sense to do it from home, because you don't get disturbed.



Grantholder

Effective change management

Grantholders had to adapt and think flexibly to continue to support their beneficiaries during the pandemic, and many **reflected with pride upon their resilience to manage and continue**

providing support. Grantholders described shifting into 'survival' mode, where their focus was on ensuring that their community had the support they needed and that no one was overlooked. This included using the CCSF funding to put procedures in place that the pandemic catalysed through the need to work online, for example, **digital case management systems and referrals systems**.



Now we've got this case management system, it will continue. Now we've got this in place, we don't have to rely on paper files anymore. Everything is so much more secure. As I was saying before, we're GDPR compliant, we've got a resilient system. Whatever happens, if there are future lockdowns, whatever might happen in the future and we have to revert to this.



Grantholder

Grantholders highlighted the benefits of **shifting bureaucratic processes onto cloud systems**, which can be **accessed anywhere** online. Although there were often plans to move in this direction this, the **pandemic accelerated this shift**, and grantholders now look back thankful that these systems are now in place.

On a more personal note, many grantholders reported **heightened confidence amongst staff and volunteers** because they had overcome many challenges presented during the pandemic and provide support to communities during unprecedented upheaval. Many did not just survive, **they 'thrived'** with the help of the CCSF grant.

Established partnerships

Grantholders explained that, prior to the pandemic, beneficiaries typically approached them for support about a specific need that their organisation specialised in (e.g. childcare). Conversely during the pandemic, grantholders described how this had caused other needs to surface for their beneficiaries, such as needing assistance with accessing food and medicines.

In response, many grantholders no longer operated within the confines of their organisation's core activities and services. The goal was to help people through the crisis, and some **grantholders diversified to provide support in more ways than before**. To do so, some grantholders sought opportunities to partner with other organisations so that **together they could adequately support the needs** of their communities, for example by offering extra services or meeting increased demand.

The forming of **multilateral relationships with other charities** was a natural step for many grantholders to **reach more beneficiaries** and **share resources efficiently**. Grantholders described these relationships as successful too and expressed their desire to continue to collaborate with their partners in the future. **New projects and cooperatives have been planned**, which will continue to support communities as they navigate the continually changing circumstances.



The partnership we forged during the 12 months will allow us to embark on all sorts of ventures with them because we're at a stage now where we're so much closer to the families of young people who use their organisation.



Grantholder

A common legacy of the CCSF funding was **grantholders' profiles being heightened**. Smaller charities described themselves as having a relatively small and local reach, but by remaining open and supporting people during the pandemic as a result of the CCSF funding, they **became more visible to other local organisations**. For example, grantholders credited the funding for enabling their work to be noticed by their **local councils, health workers, private businesses (e.g. supermarkets) and other charities**. Some grantholders of small charities felt the funding helped them **demonstrate their value, which could**

increase their reach in the future. For example, one grantholder described how their local council asked for a full description of their work to distribute across all their departments after they had worked together as part of the CCSF grant project.

Case Study Example:

Happy at Home is a project of Churches Together South Tyneside, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation that supports older people. Through regular face-to-face contact, via in-home visits and community hubs, Happy at Home aims to reduce social isolation, increase engagement in positive activities, and improve the mental and physical health of those they support.

The CCSF grant enabled Happy at Home to recruit two additional part-time staff members, allowing it to respond to an increase in demand for its services. The additional staff enabled Happy at Home to trial an alternative approach to the management of referrals and volunteers, which was successful and a key legacy of the grant for the organisation.

In enabling Happy at Home to continue to operate the CCSF grant also raised awareness of the organisation in South Tyneside. A number of partner organisations were forced to close as a result of the pandemic, meaning Happy at Home became the go-to organisation for befriending in the local area. As a result, stronger links were built between Happy at Home and other third sector organisations and statutory bodies, improving lines of communication and reducing the likelihood of duplication.

"It stops duplication, doesn't it? If we hadn't worked together, Happy at Home could've been going around delivering bread and milk, we could've been delivering bread and milk on a different day. The fact that we worked together meant we could identify who was best for what job."

– Delivery Partner

Grantholders also established links with **private companies**, for example, one grantholder teamed up with a digital healthcare company for men, seeing that their work aligned significantly. A partnership was launched to make it easier for men to request medical help. In addition to supporting beneficiaries, it has a potential **mutual benefit for the grantholder** as this could generate some income in the future, which in turn means the grantholder can support more people.

Partnerships were often described as **positive and collaborative**, and grantholders felt **valued and appreciated**, and that their work was being recognised as achieving positive outcomes for people. Despite many partnerships being new, many grantholders saw them as **sustainable relationships** to provide better and more fulfilling help for their communities.

Improved staff and volunteer coordination

Many grantholders used the CCSF grants to recruit staff and / or volunteers to meet the increased needs of their communities. This recruitment sometimes created **resourcing challenges** for grantholders who did not have the capacity, nor the appropriate processes in place to onboard and effectively manage the new virtual uptake at a time when many safety protocols had to be in place. One way grantholders coped with this was by using the CCSF funding to **employ a coordinator** who was responsible for managing the recruitment or deployment of volunteers. This included **adapting established processes to efficiently vet, train, and manage volunteers**.

Reflecting on the success of these new roles, grantholders reported that **bringing in a staff or volunteer coordinator had been imperative** to the success of the organisation and their ability to continue to provide support to beneficiaries during the pandemic. Coordinators brought **expertise in management and aided the shift of resources to an online format**. Other staff members also often found that they had **more**

time to concentrate on other administrative tasks and **helping beneficiaries directly**. In this way, coordinators were credited with increasing morale and **helping teams create a cohesive unit** that functioned more smoothly than before.

Some grantholders invested heavily into putting appropriate policies and processes in place, and they viewed the new coordinator role as a significant asset to their organisation. In some cases, grantholders intend to **permanently recruit** their coordinators or maintain the new structure and develop a similar job specification for longer-term.

More embedded within the community

A key takeaway from grantholders' response to the pandemic and helping beneficiaries cope was an **increased sense of community**. By using the CCSF funding to help them continue to deliver new or existing services, grantholders found that their work was being **recognised to a greater extent within and around the communities they served**. Grantholders noted that **beneficiaries were spreading the word** about their services and signposting other members of the community to them. Families who received help also **introduced other family members**, spanning multiple generations, to grantholders. As a result, some grantholders benefitted by becoming more **embedded within their community** and sometimes started to provide **more holistic assistance** to beneficiaries because they knew more about them.



We've become a family, a community, and I think if it wasn't for the grant we wouldn't have that tight knit holistic care for mental health, to wellbeing, how are they feeling, to them not going out, but getting what they need.



Grantholder

It was important to grantholders that their community knew they were open and providing

support, especially at a time when many other services were closed, to help people know that someone was there if they needed support. As a result, grantholders felt that they are more often seen as a **go-to and reliable source of support**. Grantholders sensed there was **better awareness of what they can do and better trust within their community** that there is an established presence of support. By being a dependable contact at a time when some beneficiaries were at their most vulnerable, grantholders anticipated longer lasting benefits from their increased visibility.



The grant and unfortunately the situation has built up our reliability, our reputation and everything else, but that will mean that in the future, more people know where we are and can benefit if they need to.



Grantholder

Key takeaways

Despite the set six-month grant period, grantholders described multiple ways in which they will take forward new ways of working or lessons learned from how they used their CCSF grant into future working. This included:

1. Maintaining some virtual support for beneficiaries and / or a hybrid working structure for staff or volunteers to work more flexibly.
2. Using new digital case management systems and referrals systems.
3. Continuing and / or expanding partnerships with local councils, private companies (e.g. supermarkets) and other charities.
4. Permanently recruiting new staff roles and / or maintaining changes to their staffing or volunteering structures.

5. Working more closely with their community as a result of becoming more embedded and visible during the pandemic.

Evidence sources:

Grantholder survey: Ipsos MORI conducted an online survey with grantholders that received funding from the CCSF. Fieldwork was conducted between November 2020 and April 2021 and a total of 6,712 grantholders responded.

Findings from the grantholder survey were extrapolated to estimate the overall figures among all grantholders. This assumes that the findings among those who did not respond to the survey would have been replicated proportionally among those grantholders that did respond to the survey. Numeric data presented in this paper represents the extrapolated data.

Qualitative interviews: Ipsos MORI, NPC and TIHR conducted a total of 266 depth interviews with grantholders, and a further 33 case studies, including interviews with 72 staff members, 25 deliver partners, 28 volunteers, and 49 beneficiaries.

You can read more evaluation findings at the following weblink:

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/insights/covid-19-resources/responding-to-covid-19/ccsf-grantholder-evaluation>