



Case study: Cosmo Community CIC

August 2021

Cosmo Community CIC supports vulnerable people in the Eastern European Community in Hull, most of whom are over 50 and have minor mental health problems as well as physical health issues. Other challenges faced include social isolation, unemployment, debt and difficulties accessing services.

Cosmo received £10,000 through the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF). The CCSF is a funding programme supported by a grant of £200 million from Government, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund, to help organisations in England respond to the COVID-19 crisis and increase community support to people affected by the pandemic.

How was the CCSF grant used?

Prior to the pandemic, Cosmo supported people in several ways. They ran English classes, helped people to access employment, took people on cycling trips, and ran a local community garden.

Across all of their activities, Cosmo work hard to establish trusting relationships. They have expanded their network through referrals, word of mouth and social media. Therefore, when the pandemic struck, they already had strong links with the Eastern European community and a good understanding of their needs and assets.

At the start of the pandemic, Cosmo found they had to work hard to ease people's fears and help those with limited English to understand the new restrictions. As the lockdown continued, they had to address further hardships such as reduced employment / income, and loneliness and isolation.

The CCSF grant enabled them to continue helping the community, and also to offer new services to meet changing needs. Most significantly, they started delivering food packages, including organic fruit and vegetables purchased at discount from a workers' cooperative. Cosmo reached out to people and kept in touch with them, both when delivering food parcels and by phone / internet. In some cases, they helped people get online by providing second-hand equipment along with training. Cosmo also provided practical support with collecting prescriptions and accessing services through advice and translation.



We had some type of panic. People who were just ringing up constantly saying, 'What's going to happen?' They've read lots of information online and social media, and it's telling them all sorts of rumours which wasn't helping at all" – Director, Cosmo CIC

Quick facts:

Grant period: **June-December 2020**

100 people supported

490 food packages delivered

6 additional volunteers recruited

Three key messages:

- 1 Cosmo used Facebook to make contact with people in the community and to recruit new volunteers.
- 2 Language barriers affected people's ability to access services during the pandemic, particularly if they were not used to accessing services online. Cosmo organised video calls with people to show them how it worked.
- 3 Two significant examples of support provided include helping a person with severe mental health issues return to their family in Lithuania; and negotiating someone's debt down from £12,000 to £2,000.

Funded by



In partnership with

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND

Independently evaluated by





What difference did the CCSF grant make?

For people and communities

Cosmo's food parcels ensured that some of those most severely impacted by the pandemic had enough food. During the Christmas period, Cosmo volunteers dressed in Santa costumes to deliver the food, which helped lift people's moods.

Cosmo's outreach enabled them to identify people who were most in need of support and how best they could support them. They often acted as an intermediary between people and public services - for example, helping people to understand letters and information, allaying fears, and joining them for appointments.

Contact from Cosmo, combined with efforts to connect people with each other online, helped the community to stay in touch with the outside world and feel supported and listened to.

There is also evidence that Cosmo's work helped maintain or improve people's mental and physical health. For example, one elderly person fell ill at the start of the pandemic and was in a lot of pain. However, she was not receiving help because she had English as a second language and she thought GPs would be too busy. Cosmo supported her to get her the medical assistance she needed.



I have a pension, so while the food packages were useful, the main benefit I've received from Cosmo during the pandemic is human connection of the vegetable man arriving!
– Beneficiary*

*Quotes have been translated by Cosmo staff attending interviews

Key legacy from the experience:

Since the grant, Cosmo has received more referrals from council services and other beneficiaries. The directors believe this is partly due to them being able to continue to support people during the pandemic as a result of the CCSF grant.

Want to know more?

Email: info@cosmotic.co.uk

Website: <https://www.cosmotic.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Cosmotic/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cosmotic/>

For volunteers

Cosmo worked with ten volunteers during the grant period, who delivered food packages and reached out to people in different ways. Six of the volunteers were new: including ex-beneficiaries looking to give back and people on furlough. Cosmo's active Facebook page helped recruit volunteers.

Through their work with Cosmo, volunteers felt useful and 'needed' and kept socially active themselves. One volunteer had been supported by Cosmo for several years through the allotment and business training. She started volunteering with Cosmo when a member of the community had to return home and needed someone to look after their house. During lockdown, she baked bread for Cosmo food parcels and helped people in other ways. As a result of this she felt 'in demand', which was great for her confidence.



Volunteering made me feel useful and that I was helping other people. I felt happy that I was needed. I'm from a country where my parents told me to help others no matter what
– Volunteer*

For the organisation and its staff

Cosmo is a small organisation run by two directors who felt under huge pressure due to the level of need amongst the people they supported and the variety of challenges they faced. The CCSF grant relieved some of this pressure and helped the directors feel that their work mattered.

Without the grant, Cosmo would have continued to support the community, but they would have reached fewer people and had less to offer them. The funding also meant that they could take more referrals from the local authority and set up partnerships with new organisations.



Even the grant can't cover the things we're doing for the local community, but it was a great, great help for us – Director, Cosmo CIC