

Case study: HQ Can

August 2021



HQ Can (HQ) is a Community Interest Company based in Leicester City Centre. It provides mentoring, creative workshops and access to professional recording environments to unemployed young people experiencing mental ill health.

HQ received £37,577 from 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?

HQ generate most of their income from a commercial recording studio. Prior to the pandemic, they had just created a second studio and were on course for their most successful year yet with multiple new income streams and high demand for their services. However, the commercial side of the business had to close following the COVID-19 outbreak and associated Government restrictions. As a result, HQ were facing having to stop delivering support to the young people they work with during a time when they needed it most due to the impact of lockdown restrictions on their mental health and wellbeing, as well as on access to employment opportunities.

Prior to the pandemic, all support to young people (mentoring, workshops and access to recording professionals and equipment) was delivered face-to-face at the studio. The CCSF grant was used to buy technical equipment to enable HQ to shift to delivering this support online. This included equipment for the studio, as well as equipment for staff, volunteers and beneficiaries, such as laptops, iPads and microphones. It was also used to buy materials aimed at making the studio COVID-safe, such as additional cleaning products, hand sanitiser and signs.

Most of the staff at HQ are freelancers and were not eligible for the Government furlough scheme. The CCSF grant was used to provide income to them to enable them to continue delivering support to young people during the pandemic.



Without the CCSF grant, we would have struggled to continue – everyone would have been at home, either on Universal Credit or furlough. Without the grant, there was nothing we could have done. It was make or break really. It had a massive impact.” – Grantholder

Quick facts:

Grant period: **July 2020-January 2021**
27 direct beneficiaries (20 of which were new)
10 supported into paid work experience
48 additional staff hours per week
3 volunteers

Three key messages:

- ① HQ lost their commercial income due to lockdown restrictions and were facing closure – the CCSF grant enabled them continue to operate and respond to increased demand for support as a result of the pandemic
- ② Around one third of beneficiaries were supported into paid work experience opportunities and several others are working towards starting their own business
- ③ The shift to digital delivery has opened up new audiences for their services

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What difference did the CCSF grant make?

For people and communities

The CCSF grant enabled HQ to continue to deliver support to young people during the pandemic. This was reported by staff to have contributed to improved self-confidence, reduced feelings of isolation and better mental health and wellbeing amongst those supported. Ten young people were supported into paid work experience opportunities through the CCSF grant – five through the DWP Kickstart scheme and five through the Graduate Championship scheme.

One young person supported by HQ was an audio engineering graduate. Prior the pandemic, they had been working as a bartender and struggling to make progress pursuing a career in the music industry. During the first lockdown, their employer stopped paying them furlough, which put them in a very difficult financial position resulting in them ending up homeless and in poor mental health.

They contacted every recording studio in Leicester and HQ was the only one to respond. Within one week of initial contact, HQ had provided equipment for them to access support remotely. They have since received mentoring, coaching and career advice and guidance. They are now preparing to start their own guitar repair business and HQ are supporting them on all aspects of this, including finance and business planning.



HQ gives me purpose, it gives me a reason to get up in the morning and it occupies my mind. I'm not ruminating on my past or negative thoughts. I'm thinking 'Oh I'm going to do this repair, oh I'm filming this person today, I'm recording this, fixing that.' If it wasn't for HQ I would either be very unhappy or not alive.

– Beneficiary

For volunteers

HQ worked with three volunteers during their CCSF grant. HQ is a close knit community where volunteers work closely with freelancers, directors and beneficiaries. As the grant enabled HQ to continue to deliver services to young people, it meant that volunteers were also able to continue to provide support. This was believed to have contributed positively to their mental health and wellbeing.



The fact that we could remain open meant that volunteers could continue to come in, socially distanced, and feel like they were still part of something and doing some good. That they've still got young people they can pass on some mentoring or music skills. – Grantholder

For the organisation and its staff

The CCSF grant replaced some of the income lost by HQ as a result of the pandemic, enabling them to continue to operate and provide support to young people experiencing unemployment and mental ill health. It enabled them to shift delivery online, which has resulted in them being able to reach much wider audiences. For example, they recently streamed a live event to over 20,000 online viewers. Prior to the pandemic, the same event would have been attended by less than 100 people.



It meant that we could stay open. I believe myself and other people would have been possibly out of a job, and not been able to keep providing what we do for the people we work with. Overall it helped us keep going throughout the pandemic, and it helped us to come up with new ways to be able to help people. It was invaluable to be honest. – Staff member

Key legacy from the experience:

The CCSF grant enabled HQ to start delivering activities and support remotely for the first time. This has enabled them to reach much wider audiences, including those living in remote or rural areas. The legacy of the grant is the expansion of their digital offer and learning about how to deliver support through digital channels.

Want to know more?

Website: www.hqcan.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/hqrecording/