



Case study: Happy at Home

August 2021

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 project received £32,075 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?

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions changed the way in which Happy at Home operated overnight. Its community hubs were forced to close and staff members told to work from home.

Simultaneously the organisation saw an increase in demand for its services since other organisations in the local area had been forced to close.

Supporting older people, many of whom suffered with mobility issues and/or did not have access to the internet, Happy at Home felt it was important to maintain face-to-face contact with as many beneficiaries as possible to reduce isolation. The project used the CCSF grant to adapt to deliver activities within social distancing guidelines. Volunteers and staff visited beneficiaries in their gardens and offered support accessing food and essential items. The grant was used to provide staff with personal protective equipment (PPE) and to develop health and safety protocols to ensure visits were carried out in a way that was COVID compliant.

The grant was also used to cover the salaries of two additional part-time staff members, enabling Happy at Home to better manage the coordination of volunteers and referrals during the pandemic. Each staff member took responsibility for a given area of South Tyneside, managing volunteer workload and assisting in the delivery of activities as needed.

Lastly Happy at Home used part of the CCSF grant to deliver food, activity and well-being products and parcels to doorsteps, including flowers on Mother's Day, Easter Eggs in April, and a VE Day parcel.



The most significant impact has been being able to say 'yes' more. When you're applying for funding you often say, 'you'll have to wait, I'll have to see what funding we get'. But to know that the core costs were covered, and a lot of the project costs too, it was nice to say, 'Yes, you can, just do it and don't worry about it'

– Grantholder

Quick facts:

Grant period: August 2020-February 2021

228 people supported

63 volunteers

2 new staff members recruited

Three key messages:

- ① In enabling Happy at Home to adapt to continue to deliver face-to-face support during the pandemic, the CCSF grant enabled a reduction in loneliness and isolation among older people in South Tyneside.
- ② The recruitment of two additional part-time staff members enabled Happy at Home to respond to an increase in demand for its services.
- ③ By helping Happy at Home to remain open during the pandemic, the CCSF grant raised awareness of its services in the local area.

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What difference did the CCSF grant make?

For people and communities

The key benefit of the CCSF grant for Happy at Home's clients was that the charity was able to remain operational and continue to deliver face-to-face support throughout the pandemic. Overall, they supported 228 people during the grant period. The support helped people maintain good mental health and reduced feelings of loneliness and social isolation. A partner of Happy at Home noted increased levels of confidence in those supported by the organisation versus other people supported in the local area. Happy at Home's clients were more likely to be comfortable returning to society once lockdown had eased, the partner commented.



I look at what Happy at Home has achieved with its clients, and then some of my clients who didn't have its service...[and] their confidence is reduced...Happy at Home's impact is almost immeasurable in terms of the people that they worked with are in a much better place.

– Partner

By continuing to visit clients face-to-face, staff and volunteers of Happy at Home also noted changes in the physical health of beneficiaries, and intervened if necessary, booking doctors appointments or organising medication. In this sense, it was felt that the CCSF grant enabled Happy at Home to act as an early warning system for public services in the local area.

For volunteers

In response to the pandemic, Happy at Home saw a change in the profile of volunteers at the organisation. A number of existing volunteers were told to shield and were therefore unable to continue to visit clients in-home. At the same time, the organisation saw an increase in offers of support from younger people, typically those who were on furlough as a result of the pandemic.

Happy at Home did not see a drop in volunteer numbers as a result of the pandemic since they assigned tasks to volunteers based on their

Key legacy from the experience:

The recruitment of two part-time staff members using the CCSF grant enabled Happy at Home to trial an alternative way of managing referrals and volunteers, which it will take forward to enable the organisation to sustain an increase in capacity in the future and support more people.

vulnerability to COVID-19. Older and / or shielding volunteers helped to provide a telephone befriending service while younger volunteers continued to offer face-to-face visits to clients.

Volunteers commented that their experience had given them a sense of purpose during the pandemic and helped to maintain positive wellbeing as a result.



We got quite a few new volunteers when people were furloughed... so we did have an increase. When furlough stopped, some of them went back to their jobs, but some of them have stayed, and the profile of our volunteers is now younger. – Grantholder

For the organisation and its staff

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. – Partner

Want to know more?

Website: <https://happyathomesouthtyneside.co.uk/>
Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/happyathomeST/>