



Case study: Megan Baker House

August 2021

Megan Baker House is a registered charity that provides Conductive Education for children and adults with motor disorders such as Cerebral Palsy, Parkinson's, and other movement disorders. Conductive Education is a holistic educational movement approach for individuals with movement disorders to actively learn new ways to achieve activities and actions for everyday life. Megan Baker House is based in Herefordshire.

Megan Baker House received £65,686 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 impacted Megan Baker House's ability to fundraise. A significant proportion of their income comes from community fundraising and events like their Bi-Annual Ball, which all had to be cancelled. Without additional grant funding, their reserves to pay staff salaries would have only lasted a few months.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted their service delivery, which was based on face-to-face interactions. The organisation had to close during the first lockdown for several months. During this time, Megan Baker House made use of the Government's furlough scheme. While staff were on furlough during the first part of the COVID-19 pandemic, they engaged in training for Conductive Education as well as marketing and digital training. Before Megan Baker House received the CCSF grant, they were able to develop their digital service with a number of smaller grants they had received.

The main purpose of the CCSF grant was to develop the project REACHOUT. The aims of this project were to move their service into the community and set up several venues in different areas. The CCSF grant was also used to bring back staff from furlough and recruit new staff to provide virtual sessions for children and adults during the pandemic so they could continue their services. Megan Baker House also employed a part-time digital marketing specialist to strengthen its external communications.



[Without CCSF] we would have been in a precarious position by now because we would have used most of our reserves or made staff redundant. Making staff redundant would be a terrible decision for a Conductive Education centre. – Grantholder

Quick facts:

Grant period: **August 2020-February 2021**

125 people supported

6 outreach venues set up in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Cheltenham

1 digital marketing specialist employed

Three key messages:

- ① Moving to virtual delivery enabled Megan Baker House to continue delivering their services.
- ② The REACHOUT project enabled them to set up venues in different areas resulting in better access for adults and families. This also increased their visibility and recognition in other areas.
- ③ The CCSF grant made it possible to invest in digital marketing, which strengthened their digital profile and helped build new links.

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What difference did the CCSF grant make?

For people and communities

Across the whole of the UK, there are only a very few organisations offering Conductive Education. With no other service in the area providing similar support, some beneficiaries would travel as far as 40 miles to Megan Baker House. With the help of the CCSF grant, support continued for both children and adults virtually throughout the pandemic when it otherwise may not have. The move to offering services online was strongly appreciated by beneficiaries. As one adult beneficiary described: “throughout the pandemic, right from front to back, they've been very helpful and accommodating”.

Some beneficiaries and their families felt that Megan Baker House was the only aspect of their life that “gave them a little bit of normality” when other services closed during the pandemic. It was described as “our lifeline” by the parents of beneficiaries. The online sessions further enabled parents to learn techniques to support their children at home, and parents were able to access a support group virtually with other parents.

Without the service continuing, the beneficiaries interviewed were sure that their conditions would have deteriorated during the pandemic. As a holistic approach, Conductive Education is not limited to improving physical outcomes, but also people’s wellbeing and confidence. Parents described how their children looked forward to the next weekly virtual session and enjoyed the physical and social aspects of them.



I thought [the online sessions] were great, they did the best they could when they couldn't do the in-person sessions. [The child] has always had the same therapist and so that has worked really well for him. They've always been there and they've always done whatever they could to help. If we needed to make any changes, they've always been very amenable to those.”

– Parent of beneficiary

Key legacy from the experience:

Virtual delivery of Conductive Education was new for Megan Baker House. They found that having clear technical set-up instructions for beneficiaries and adjusting their learning goals for the home environment was crucial. They were able to reach new people and will continue to offer services online.

For the organisation and its staff

The CCSF grant enabled Megan Baker House to set up new venues in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Cheltenham as part of the REACHOUT project. Their original location was very remote and difficult for some families to access. Although many individuals and families travel long distances because they value the services provided by Megan Baker House, moving into the community with several venues eased access for beneficiaries and parents,



It's made a massive difference, because we were quite isolated where we were. Now we're getting much more well-known, and therefore people can access our services a lot better.”

– Staff

The CCSF grant further enabled them to bring two staff back from furlough and hire one classroom assistant and one Conductive Education specialist. This allowed them to deliver their sessions online. Without the CCSF grant or any other funding, staff would likely have been made redundant, meaning support for people would not have continued. The employment of the digital marketing specialist also resulted in a stronger digital profile and new links with other organisations such as Parkinson's groups.

Moving out to different areas and working virtually had the added benefit of increasing the charity's recognition more widely. People joined virtual sessions from different areas as far away as London and Manchester.



We're grateful for this money because it's put us in a really good position to move on. We have come out of this in a stronger position with client numbers back to pre-lockdown levels and rising. I think we've only come out of this with strengths and I think a lot of that is due to the support we've had, especially from [the CCSF].”

– Grantholder

Want to know more?

Website: www.meganbakerhouse.org.uk/

Twitter: twitter.com/MeganBakerHouse

Facebook: www.facebook.com/meganbakerhouse/

YouTube:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC_jm3Dh0gsH5Dz7pnJYfBJw

Instagram: www.instagram.com/meganbakerhouse/