

Case study: Search Newcastle

August 2021



Search Newcastle delivers services to older people and their carers. Search aim to reduce social isolation, increase engagement in positive activities and improve the mental and physical health of those they support. This is done through regular face-to-face contact, via in-home visits and community hubs.

Search received £23,375 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 had a major impact on the way in which Search operated. Its community hubs had to close and staff had to shift to home working. At the same time, a high proportion of the people they supported had to shield due to being older and / or having underlying health conditions.

Search was keen to continue to offer support to those who had relied on their services prior to the pandemic. It therefore created the 'Safe at Home' project, which was a package of services designed to encourage better physical and mental wellbeing when shielding. The project also incorporated help to access food and essential household items. It offered beneficiaries a weekly shop and drop service, medication collection and doorstop delivery, a weekly lunch delivery (providing a two-course meal) and activity pack and a telephone befriending service.

The project was popular, with demand increasing week on week. Search used the majority of the grant to increase staff hours in order to meet the high levels of demand. The grant was also used to recruit a temporary project coordinator to manage the project on a day-to-day basis. Finally, the grant was used to purchase food and essential household items, alongside wellbeing products, such as craft packs and afternoon tea.



The most significant impact for the people we supported was knowing that we could continue to deliver this service. The most significant impact for us was knowing we had the funding to be able to do that. That we weren't letting people down by saying "we haven't got the capacity" – Grantholder

Quick facts:

Grant period: August 2020–February 2021

174 people supported

20 new volunteers recruited during pandemic

1 new staff member recruited

Three key messages:

- ① In enabling Search to continue to operate during the pandemic, the CCSF contributed to a reduction in social isolation and loneliness among older people in Newcastle.
- ② By delivering support face-to-face, Search was able to check on the physical and mental wellbeing of clients and identify early if they needed to be referred to additional support.
- ③ Search developed stronger connections with other community groups as a result of activities delivered through their CCSF grant.

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What difference did the CCSF grant make?

For people and communities

The key benefit of the CCSF grant for Search's clients was that the charity was able to remain operational and continue to deliver support throughout the pandemic. This contributed to improved mental health amongst those they supported by reducing loneliness and social isolation.

In continuing to visit clients face-to-face, staff and volunteers of Search were also able to note any changes in the physical health of beneficiaries, and intervene as necessary, organising medication or arranging hospital visits. In this sense, the CCSF grant enabled Search to act as an early warning system for public services in the local area.



They would ring the doorbell, put the shopping in the passage, they'd just say, 'How are you doing today?', it was, 'Let's have a chat at the front door,' which broke the monotony of the day. I wasn't seeing anybody, so it was really lovely to know somebody was coming"

– Beneficiary

For volunteers

In response to the pandemic, Search saw a change in the profile of volunteers at the organisation. A number of existing volunteers had to shield and were therefore unable to continue to offer support during lockdown. At the same time, the organisation saw an increase in offers of support from younger people, including those who were on furlough as a result of the pandemic.

Search did not use any of the grant funding to recruit volunteers, rather it worked closely with the Newcastle Volunteer Centre and other local third sector organisations who referred suitable volunteers into the project. Around 20 volunteers joined Search during the pandemic. These people assisted in the delivery of all activities as relevant, with tasks assigned based on geography, relevant

Key impact from CCSF:

Increasing staff hours during the pandemic enabled Search to offer a personalised experience to each beneficiary, allowing staff to spend time during deliveries connecting with clients and checking in on their mental and physical wellbeing.

prior experience and available time. Volunteers commented that their experience had given them a sense of purpose and improved their wellbeing.



Our volunteers have really enjoyed being part of the project, they've really enjoyed the sense of giving back, the sense of helping people throughout the pandemic." – Granholder

For the organisation and its staff

At an early stage in delivery, Search noted that deliveries were taking staff longer than expected. When asked why, staff reported that this was because beneficiaries were lonely and wanted to talk. At the same time, demand for services was increasing week on week and Search was experiencing capacity constraints. In response, Search used the CCSF grant to increase staff hours at the organisation. This had multiple benefits: enabling Search to take on additional clients; but also enabling them to increase delivery slots by around 10 minutes, allowing staff more time with clients, and reducing the chance of loneliness and isolation as a result.

In enabling Search to continue to operate during the pandemic, the CCSF also supported Search to build relationships with other community groups and partner organisations in the local area. This improved lines of communication between organisations and reduced the likelihood of duplication.



The network's have given us more communication, more partnership working, we all know each other a little bit more." – Staff Member

Want to know more?

Website: <https://www.searchnewcastle.org.uk/index.php>