



# Case study: StrongMen

August 2021

StrongMen is a charity and bereavement support service for men in England and Wales. Their flagship service (pre-COVID) is their 'Weekender' trips to Snowdonia, Wales. More recently, they have started a new telephone peer support service called "Man2Man" facilitated by volunteers who are previous beneficiaries of the Weekender trips. By supporting men who have suffered bereavement with services designed especially for men, StrongMen aims to reach and support as many men going through bereavement as possible.

StrongMen 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?

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions impacted how StrongMen operated in multiple ways, including disrupting its typical fundraising activities, for example through group events (e.g. marathons, Tough Mudder). Since their Weekender trips could not go ahead due to COVID-19 restrictions, they developed a new telephone peer support service "Man2Man" and submitted an application for the CCSF grant to fund its implementation.

The CCSF grant enabled them to start the new Man2Man service as an alternative to the Weekender trips while restrictions were in place. StrongMen used the CCSF grant to recruit a part-time administrator to help launch and facilitate the new service. The grant was also used to purchase equipment for the administrator, provide website upgrades, and facilitate the overall management of the new Man2Man service.

Additionally, some of the funding was used to train volunteers who previously took part and attended the Weekender service to become peer supporters for the new service.

As such, the CCSF grant was vital for ensuring that men suffering from bereavement were still able to access to a targeted bereavement support service throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



***We couldn't have done it without it, it's as simple as that... We may have been able to do something, but nothing as professional, nothing as widespread as it is... Having had £10,000 of that from the grant has made a huge difference... Without it, it probably would have been a very different service.*** – Grantholder

### Quick facts:

Grant period: **Oct 2020-June 2021**  
**92** people supported  
**186** Man2Man peer support sessions  
**12** volunteers trained

### Three key messages:

- ① Having the security of the funding gave the charity the confidence and the means to deliver an alternative support service to beneficiaries throughout the pandemic.
- ② Provision of training and equipment to volunteers will support beneficiaries in the longer-term through a future 'blended' approach of offering both Weekender trips and the Man2Man service in parallel.
- ③ StrongMen supported more beneficiaries as a result of Man2Man's service delivery and the flexible approach via telephone.

Funded by



In partnership with

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
COMMUNITY FUND

Independently evaluated by





## What difference did the CCSF grant make?

### For people and communities

The key benefit of the CCSF grant for StrongMen's beneficiaries was that the charity was able to adapt its delivery from the Weekender service to the Man2Man peer support service. This meant that men suffering from bereavement throughout the pandemic could continue to access their support, albeit virtually rather than face-to-face. This was especially important given the additional stresses and isolation caused by the pandemic that negatively impacted many of these individuals.

For many, the Man2Man service improved their mood, lowered their anxiety and/or depression. It gave beneficiaries the feeling they were no longer in it alone by being able to talk to someone who could more closely understand where they were coming from, providing them with life-changing support. One beneficiary noted traditional therapy had never worked in the past, as they never felt the counsellor could understand what they had been through. For the first time, through Man2Man, the person on the other end of the phone had been through a similar experience as them, which allowed them to finally feel comfortable speaking about their grief.



***Just being able to talk around a lot of real-life issues, to get the conversation going, allowed us to hit some of the nitty-gritty stuff – that was really important for me.*** – Beneficiary

### Key legacy from the experience:

The adaptation of service delivery from the Weekender trips to the Man2Man service during the CCSF grant period opened up new opportunities for the charity, including the ability to reach additional beneficiaries through the move from face-to-face delivery to remote delivery. The move to virtual delivery provided an alternative service for those who preferred a more convenient or flexible service option compared to the face-to-face Weekender trips.

### Want to know more?

Website: <https://www.strongmen.org.uk/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/StrongmenOrgUK>

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

YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBf1dAPjSfU\\_bQBz\\_g8DDdwA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBf1dAPjSfU_bQBz_g8DDdwA)

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

### For volunteers

As part of the development and launch of their new Man2Man service, StrongMen identified volunteers to deliver the peer support. All of the volunteers were previously beneficiaries who attended the Weekender trip in Snowdonia, which highlighted the cycle of ongoing support.



***To see the benefits it's had, not just on the beneficiaries, but our volunteers... It's like completing a circle. They come to us vulnerable, in need with the Weekenders, and by the time they've finished, they're confident enough to be a volunteer to help somebody else.*** – Staff member

The CCSF grant enabled the training for volunteers on how to provide peer support. Without the funding and the means to train volunteers, the Man2Man service would have been significantly scaled back. Furthermore, StrongMen would not currently have a group of fully trained volunteers, who continue to deliver support.

### For the organisation and its staff

Overall, staff reflected that they would not have been able to go live with the Man2Man service without the CCSF grant.

As mentioned, the CCSF grant enabled the employment of a part-time peer-support administrator, which was critical for the successful adaptation of services and development of the Man2Man service. The new staff member was responsible for running the internal processing side of the organisation, which allowed other staff to respond to increased demand. StrongMen were receiving a larger number of referrals throughout the pandemic and would not have been able to take these on without the Man2Man service.

StrongMen will continue to offer Man2Man alongside the Weekender trips in the future.



***The Weekender and the Man2Man service are so complementary, they lean one onto the other so nicely. The reality is that the Weekenders can only happen so many times in a year, and if you have accessibility issues, or if there's a reason why you can't do the Weekender, then absolutely you should be able to use the Man2Man service. It's a complementary service.*** – Staff member