

Case study: YoungMinds

August 2021

YoungMinds is a charity dedicated to ensuring that every young person gets the mental health support they need, when they need it, no matter what. They offer services nationally through a website and parents helpline and before the pandemic, they ran face-to-face youth engagement programmes. They provide information to young people, parents, and professionals who work with young people.

YoungMinds received £699,456 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?

YoungMinds saw a significant increase in people accessing their website and parents contacting their helpline for advice and support during the pandemic. Many young people were isolated at home without their usual support networks, creating new mental health challenges for some and exacerbating challenges and increasing complexity for those already experiencing issues. Parents also needed extra help to support their children while they themselves also faced the numerous challenges of the pandemic. At the same time, there was reduced access to other sources of support like NHS mental health services.

Young Minds received a CCSF grant to help the organisation focus on two key services: their digital service of information and practical support, and the Parents Helpline. The grant enabled YoungMinds to expand the content of the advice and information on its website. This included a library of blogs written by a group of 300 young Bloggers who write about their own experiences. This filled YoungMinds' website with reassurance, practical tips, and advice for young people who were struggling.

YoungMinds also used the grant to recruit and train more helpline volunteers. The grant increased YoungMinds' capacity to support parents and carers through a Parents Helpline email service, which saw a huge increase in demand throughout the pandemic.

These activities helped YoungMinds accelerate their Digital First strategy, which had been in development in 2019 but increased in importance when the pandemic started.



This has been a really important conversation, not only have I got a plan but I also have a backup plan. I'm now better armed to ask for the help my son so desperately needs!" – Parent

Quick facts:

- 1.3million page views of YoungMinds' blog during 2020 (compared to 500,000 in 2019).
- **45% more parents and carers** supported compared to the previous year (2019-2020)
- Call-backs increased by 27% on the previous year
- **Over 40** volunteers delivered the helpline service, including **12 recruited using the grant**

Three key messages:

- ① The CCSF grant ensured that YoungMinds could keep operating and helped them to implement a Digital First strategy to meet new needs caused by Covid-19
- ② Young people across the country were able to access the website content.
- ③ In some cases, the practical support offered to young people and parents helped them to better navigate the mental health support system, e.g. a parent talking to their GP about their child's mental health.

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What difference did the CCSF grant make?

For people and communities

Benefits for beneficiaries were significant: Young people received advice and support, co-created with young people who have lived experience of mental health challenges. This helped show those struggling that they are not alone, helping them to feel more hopeful, and equipped them with practical actions they can take to support their mental health.

Often the Helpline simply provided someone to listen for parents who were under emotional strain. On occasions, parents reported that they were better equipped to have conversations with their children about mental health and to seek external support where needed.



"You are so amazing at what you do, I feel so much better after speaking with you because I have let it all out and I have a action plan in place. The power of this one phone call has changed my day for the better, thank you!"

– Parent

The CCSF-funded service supported the use of public services by signposting parents to the help that is available, for example encouraging them to talk to their GP about their child. Where services helped to prevent mental health crises, this may have reduced future use of publicly-funded mental health services.

For volunteers

There are over 40 volunteers working with YoungMinds on the parents helpline, 12 of whom were newly recruited with the help of the CCSF grant funding. Volunteers said the work helped them to feel less isolated and to be part of something positive. Parents who volunteered for the helpline found that they had a shared experience with callers because they were also going through the pandemic, which made it easier to establish trust. Volunteers said they felt they were part of a larger 'movement' which had a positive effect on their mental health.

Key legacy from the experience:

Fortuitously, YoungMinds were already developing their Digital First strategy when the pandemic struck and increased its urgency. With the help of the CCSF grant, it has been a huge success and will mean significant changes to the way YoungMinds provides services for young people and parents in future.



Joining YoungMinds has been the saving grace of lockdown. I would have been so isolated. I now have a purpose and a role." – Volunteer

For the organisation and its staff

With the huge uncertainty around income early in the pandemic, YoungMinds faced the real possibility of having to reduce services in response to the reduced income from cancelled events and community activities. The grant gave YoungMinds confidence to continue all services, and step up to meet increased mental health needs of young people during the pandemic. The CCSF funding also gave a morale boost to staff by showing that their work was being valued. The funding reduced the stress of YoungMinds management team who were anxious to keep the organisation going so it could provide the support that was needed.

The CCSF grant enabled YoungMinds to implement its Digital First strategy, which had been in development in 2019 and had new urgency when the pandemic started. The funding also allowed staff to put time into recruiting and training more volunteers for the parents helpline. This increased capacity within the Parent Helpline team enabled YoungMinds to respond to more parents and carers, which in turn helped more families facing particularly complex situations receive support from the next tier of the service – a 45-minute call-back from a professional adviser, guaranteed within 7 days.



There were a number of occasions during 2020 when our website experienced over 1 million page views in a single month. Just a couple of years ago, we were only seeing this level of traffic over a period of 6 months. Without the grant that we received from The Fund, we would not have been able to commit the resource needed to achieve such incredible reach and impact." – Staff member

Want to know more?

Website: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

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

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

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/youngmindscharity>