

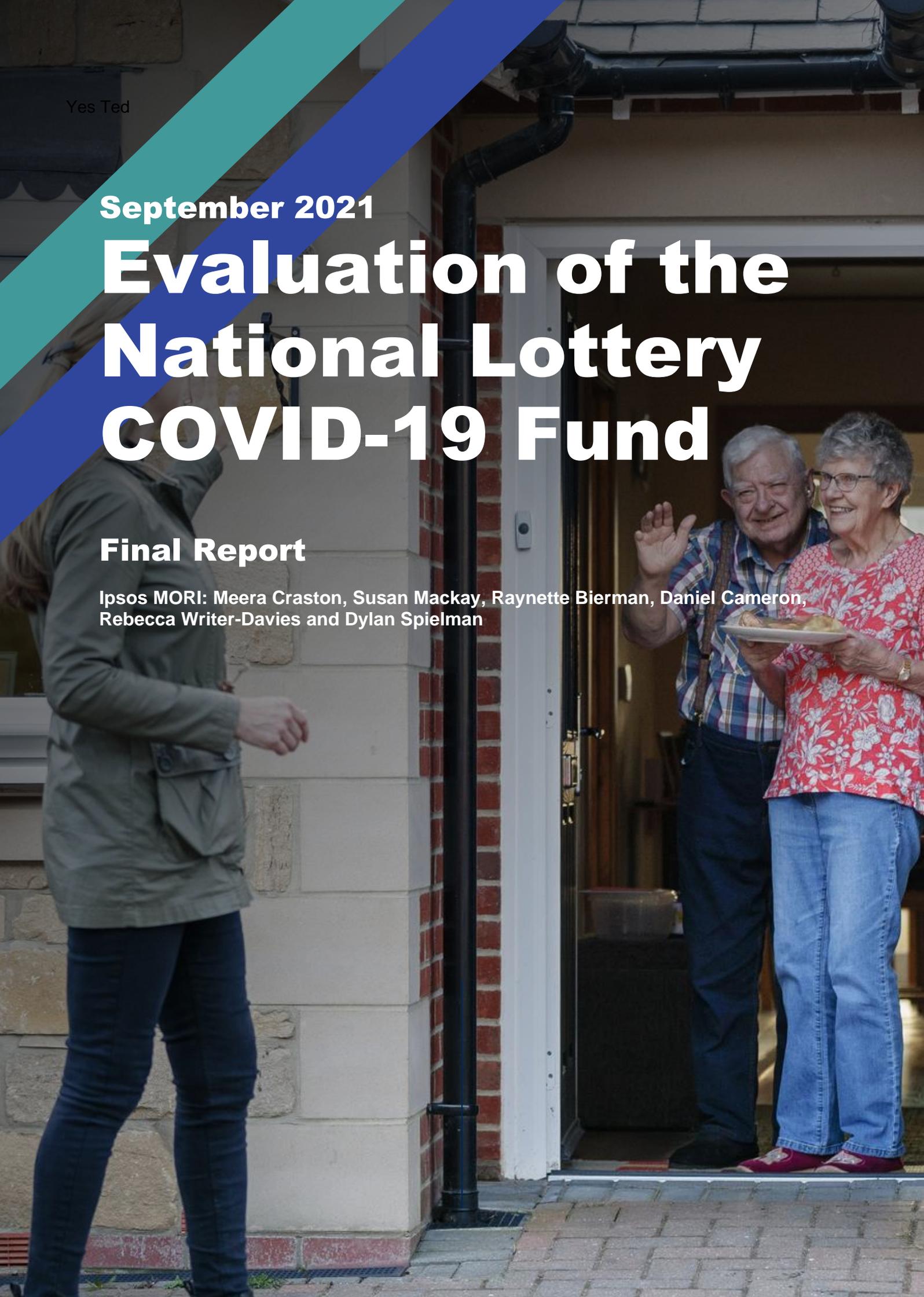
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September 2021

# Evaluation of the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund

## Final Report

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# Evaluation of the National Lottery Covid-19 Fund: Executive Summary

September 2021



## Introduction

The **National Lottery COVID-19 Fund** was targeted at small and medium sized community organisations delivering activities and support to people affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The National Lottery Community Fund (The Fund) provided a total of **£151.3m** of funding to support the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, including £20.5m of contract variations to existing grantholders and £53.9m through External Delegated Agreements (EDAs)<sup>1</sup>, which involved partner organisations using their networks and specialist knowledge to enable fast funding decisions to particular areas and sectors. The funding was administered alongside separate Government funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), who made £187m available to disburse to the sector via the **Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF)**.

Alongside the evaluation of the CCSF, Ipsos MORI was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund. The scope of the evaluation was those grants awarded between 1 April and 30 November 2020 with an end date no later than 31 July 2021 (to align with the CCSF). A total of **£139m emergency funding** was therefore in scope for the evaluation, incorporating 5,451 grantholders. This document summarises the findings from an assessment of **the impact the funding had on the people and communities that were supported, the organisations that were funded, and the volunteers involved**.

Like the CCSF, the funding had two primary objectives to:

- **Increase community support to vulnerable people affected by the COVID-19 crisis**, through the work of civil society organisations.

- **Reduce temporary closures of essential charities and social enterprises**, ensuring services for vulnerable people impacted by COVID-19 had the financial resources to operate.

The funding was distributed via The Fund's existing products – **Simple** (grants up to and including £10k) and **Standard** (grants over £10k). Grants were awarded between **April and November 2020** and grantholders had up to six months to spend their grant<sup>2</sup>.

A Theory of Change (ToC) for the funding was developed, which set out the intended outcomes for the following groups:



PEOPLE and  
COMMUNITIES



GRANTHOLDERS  
and STAFF



VOLUNTEERS

The impact analysis is based on the **triangulation of three quantitative data sources** (from two online surveys with grantholders and volunteers respectively and data from The Fund's Grant Management System) against each of the underpinning hypotheses set out in the ToC.

As qualitative research was outside the scope of this evaluation and given the similarity of the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund and the CCSF, assessment of the hypotheses also **draws upon additional evidence from the qualitative research strand of the comparative and larger-scale CCSF evaluation**.

For reference, the CCSF evaluation reports can be downloaded [here](#).



Data was collected between  
**November 2020 and April 2021**



**7,308** people completed online surveys

3,574

GRANTHOLDERS

3,734

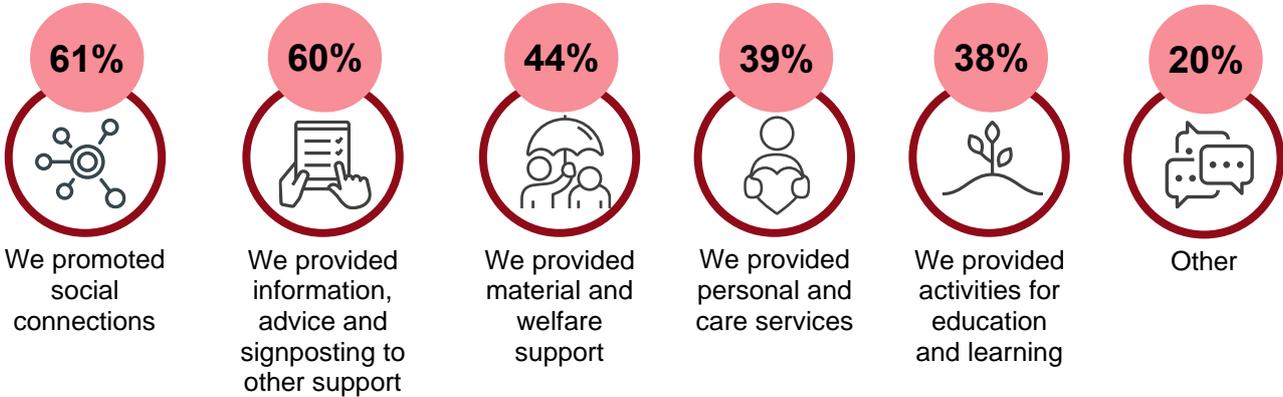
VOLUNTEERS

<sup>1</sup> A total of £59.2m was disbursed including all administrative costs and a direct grant to one EDA, however, in line with the other figures, administration costs have been excluded.

<sup>2</sup> A small number of grantholders were provided with extensions to the timeframe within which they could spend their grants as a result of the national lockdown in the first three months of 2021, which limited their ability to deliver the relevant activities.

 Overview

The Fund distributed 7,216 grant awards<sup>3</sup>. Most grantholders (81%) used the funding to **adapt new (61%) and/or existing (55%) activities**. Around half used the grant to **continue to operate (47%), and/or to respond to increased demand (48%)**. Most used their grant to meet **more than one of these needs**. Those who used the funding to respond to increased or changed demand used their grant for a wide range of purposes as shown below:



Grantholders who delivered activities or support did so in several ways, including:

- Widespread reliance on **phone** (71%) and **online** (66%) delivery methods.
- Most (59%) carrying out some **face-to-face delivery** despite the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place throughout the funding period.
- Extensive use of other forms of communication, including **messaging** by text, email or WhatsApp (56%); **written advice or materials** (52%); and **social media** (51%).

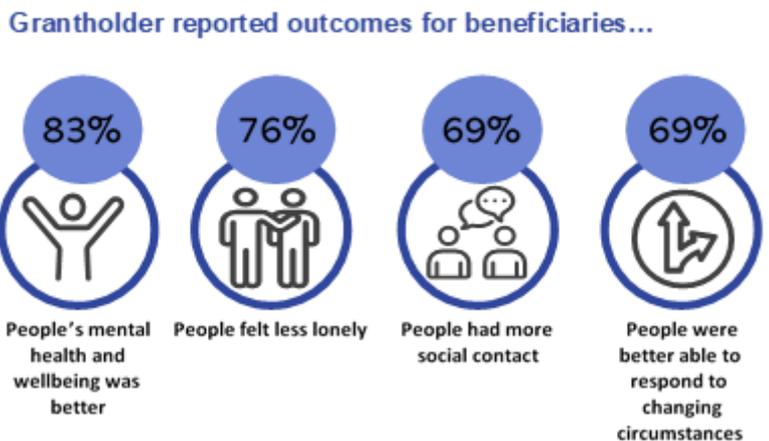
Across delivery modes, **one-to-one support** was the most common approach, and most grantholders engaged beneficiaries for **three months or more**, with relatively few delivering one-off activities.

 People and Communities

Grantholders reported working with a median of **150 beneficiaries** each. Extrapolating the survey results up to all grantholders that were in scope of the evaluation (i.e. £139m out of a total of £151.3m awarded) suggests that an estimated **4.31 million people**<sup>4</sup> were reached by grantholders (this excludes £20.1m grants awarded as variations).

Grantholders delivered support to a wide range of beneficiaries. The most common groups were people with **mental health conditions** (40%), people **facing financial hardship** (37%), people with a **long-standing illnesses or disability** (36%), and **children and young people** (36%). Most grantholders (68%) supported **more than one beneficiary group** and two in five (40%) supported **four or more groups**.

Grantholders reported a **wide range of positive outcomes** for beneficiaries as a result of the support delivered via the funding. Nearly all (94%) said their beneficiaries had experienced **more than one** positive outcome and the majority (80%) thought their beneficiaries had experienced **four or more** positive outcomes.



<sup>3</sup> This figure differs from the total no of grantholders that were in scope to take part in the evaluation and therefore the grantholder survey (5,451), as the latter included grants that were awarded between April and November 2020 and that completed no later than 31 July 2021 only.

<sup>4</sup> This figure is likely to include some double counting of individual beneficiaries that were supported by more than one of the grantholders.

Around half of grantholders reported that their activities had helped **reduce or prevent the need for public services** (52%) and / or **supplement the use of public services** amongst their beneficiaries (49%).

Some of the support delivered by grantholders, such as signposting to other sources of support, could have contributed to an **increase in demand for public services** in the short term. However, this could be expected to contribute to reduced demand in the longer term through **early intervention**. CCSF grantholders interviewed reported **increased resilience in beneficiaries** through the development of better skills, strengths and assets than they would have without the support. This was also expected to contribute to a reduction in demand for public services in the **longer term** as they are better able to deal with challenges.



## Grantholders and Staff

The National Lottery COVID-19 Fund contributed to ensuring an estimated **2,560 grantholders** had the **financial resources to continue to operate** during the pandemic.

One in five grantholders (20%) used their grant to bring back or prevent staff from going on furlough. In total, grantholders **brought back or prevented an estimated 3,530 employees** from furlough (a median of two staff per organisation, this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).

The funding supported an estimated **4,940 grantholders to respond to increased and/or changed demand**. Grantholders used the funding to adapt to online delivery (60%), reach new beneficiaries (58%), increase capacity to deliver existing activities (50%), begin new activities (43%) and adapt face-to-face activities (40%).

Without the funding, grantholders would have...



To meet demand, grantholders used their grant to adapt their staff resourcing in one or multiple ways:

- Almost half (49%) increased staff hours, totalling an estimated **73,450 additional hours/week** (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).
- One in four (27%) recruited staff, totalling an estimated **2,550 new employees** this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).

Combined with those brought back or prevented from furlough, an estimated **6,080 staff were retained/recruited** through the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).



## Volunteers

The majority (79%) of grantholders worked with volunteers during their grant period. An estimated **168,000<sup>5</sup> volunteers** were involved with activities funded through the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund, with (an estimated) **52,410<sup>6</sup>** of these (just under a third) being **new volunteers that grantholders had not worked with previously** (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations). The average number of volunteers reported per organisation **increased in line with annual income and / or grant value**, reflecting the fact that such organisations tended to operate at a larger scale, reporting a higher number of beneficiaries and / or staff.

The funding contributed to an estimated **2,850 grantholders** being able to adapt their volunteer resource to meet an increase or change in demand, which was achieved through:

- More than half (60%) increasing their volunteer hours, totalling an estimated **122,000 additional hours per week** (median of 16 additional hours per organisation, this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).
- Two in five (39%) recruiting new volunteers, totalling an estimated **52,410<sup>7</sup> new volunteers** (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).

Grantholders also **adapted the types of activities volunteers delivered** in response to changed demand from people and communicated impacted by the pandemic. Volunteers reported **undertaking new activities** in response to pandemic-related circumstances. For example, more volunteers helped people access food and essential items.

Almost all (**99%**) of those who volunteered for grantholders reported **at least one positive benefit** to themselves as a result of this experience. Most felt they were **making a difference** by volunteering (85%) and it had given them a **sense of purpose and / or personal achievement** (65%).

The most notable positive benefits reported by volunteers were:

- Greater **sense of connection** to the local community (52%).
- **Improved mental health** and wellbeing (43%).
- **Reduced loneliness** and social isolation (27%).
- **Skills development** (32%) and increased **confidence** (24%).

The majority (92%) of volunteers said they **would volunteer again in the future**.

<sup>5</sup> Please note that this figure may include some double counting, as it is based on an extrapolation of the findings reported by individual organisations in the grantholder survey, and volunteers may have worked with more than one grantholder.

<sup>6</sup> This figure may also include double counting for the same reasons as noted above.

<sup>7</sup> This figure may include some double counting as volunteers may have provided support to more than one grantholder.

## Conclusions

The figure below summarises how the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund grants were used. These figures, with the exception of the total number of grants distributed, are estimates based on an extrapolation of the grantholder survey results.



The evidence suggests that National Lottery COVID-19 Fund achieved its first objective to **increase community support to vulnerable people affected by the COVID-19 crisis**, through the work of civil society organisations. Grantholders were successful in **reaching people and communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic** and most organisations reported they would have delivered fewer services without their grant.

The evaluation also found **promising evidence in support of the second objective to reduce temporary closures** of essential charities and social enterprises, though this was less notable for larger organisations. Overall, the evidence supported contribution claims that the funding helped ensure organisations had financial resources to operate and continue to provide their support.

However, the **evidence was less clear regarding the impact on public services**. In some cases, the support delivered through the funding may have **reduced demand** for public services amongst beneficiaries in the short or longer term. At the same time, grantholders provided advice, guidance and signposting, which could potentially have **increased demand** for public services the short term.

It is important to situate the evidence within the wider context of factors that also appeared to influence some of the outcomes observed. For example, findings from the Evaluation of the CCSF identified **other funding sources** also contributed to grantholders' ability to remain financially viable and/or continue delivery. CCSF grantholders also acknowledged that there were **other potential sources of support available to beneficiaries**, and that these could also have contributed to positive outcomes. It is likely that the **National Lottery COVID-19 funding was not alone in the complex configuration of factors that influenced outcomes**.

The evaluation has also contributed to **an evidence base for evaluating emergency funding programmes** and identified learning for designing future evaluations.

# 1 Introduction

Ipsos MORI was commissioned to undertake an **evaluation of the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund**. This is referred to as ‘the funding’ throughout this report.

## 1.1 Context and background to National Lottery COVID-19 Fund

COVID-19 and the associated lockdown enforced by the UK Government in late March 2020 disproportionately affected some people and communities. Widespread recognition of these challenges led Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector representatives to voice their concerns about the financial health, limited resource and ability of VCSE organisations to meet the increased and often changed nature of demand in the absence of Government intervention.

The National Lottery Community Fund (The Fund) provided a total of **£151.3m** of funding to support the sector between 1 April 2020 and 30 November 2020 through **7,216** grant awards. This was made up of:

- **£76.9m** awarded through new applications to the Fund (3,423 grants).
- **£53.9m** awarded through External Delegated Agreements (EDAs), which involved partner organisations using their networks and specialist knowledge to enable fast funding decisions to specialist areas and sectors (3,127 grants)<sup>8</sup>.
- **£20.5m** awarded to existing grantholders via contract variations (666 grants).

The funding was administered alongside separate Government funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), who made £187m available to disburse to the VCSE sector. This Government support was allocated via the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF), with The Fund appointed as Principal to manage, distribute and oversee the overall funding.

The funding had two primary objectives, shared with CCSF:

- To **increase community support to vulnerable people affected by the COVID-19 crisis**, through the work of civil society organisations.
- To **reduce temporary closures of essential charities and social enterprises**, ensuring services for vulnerable people impacted by COVID-19 have the financial resources to operate, and so reduce the burden on public services.

The main difference between CCSF and the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund was that the latter grants could be used to support a third objective of providing funding to organisations to enable them to connect

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<sup>8</sup> A total of £59.2m was disbursed including all administrative costs and a direct grant to one EDA (CAST), however in line with the other figures, administrative costs have been excluded. A small number of these grants were made after November 2020 due to their design.

and support their communities. This was to be achieved via a range of means including increased collaborative working and the funding of infrastructure related activities. This third purpose for the funding was outside of the scope of this evaluation.

Grants allocated through The Fund's existing products or to existing grantholders between 1<sup>st</sup> April and the end of November 2020 were classified as part National Lottery COVID-19 Fund. All those awarded funding (*hereafter referred to as grantholders*) had up to 6 months to spend their grant<sup>9</sup>.

During the period the funding was awarded and used by grantholders, the context continued to change for people and communities, and for the organisations that received grant funding. There were further England-wide lockdowns, as well as a variety of local and tiered restrictions applied in different places. In addition to the effect these changing restrictions had on people and communities, there were further challenges for organisations, their staff and volunteers in delivering the activities and support funded by the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund. It is important to consider this changing context when interpreting the findings from the evaluation.

The funding was distributed via the Fund's existing products:

- **Simple product:** grants up to and including £10k delivered via National Lottery Awards for All.
- **Standard product:** grants over £10k.

## 1.2 Aims and objectives of the evaluation and this report

This report sets out the findings from an assessment of the impact the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund has made to the organisations that were funded, the people and communities that were supported, the volunteers and wider society. The scope of the evaluation was those grants that were awarded between 1 April and 30 November 2020, and which had an end date no later than 31 July 2021. The rationale for setting these parameters was to ensure alignment with the CCSF grant period so that the insights from the qualitative research with CCSF grantholders could be drawn on to inform the analysis and interpretation of the survey findings from National Lottery COVID-19 Fund grantholders and volunteers.

The total value of the grants that were eligible for inclusion in the evaluation was **£138.8m**, which was distributed through 5,451 grant awards. This was made up of:

- **£69.1m** awarded through new applications to the Fund (3,134 grants)
- **£49.2m** distributed through EDAs (1,651 grants)<sup>10</sup>
- **£20.5m** awarded to existing grantholders via contract variations (666 grants).

## 1.3 Theory of change and evaluation hypotheses

The Theory of Change (ToC) sets out how the programme's inputs and activities were expected to result in the intended outcomes and impacts, which informed the design of the evaluation and act as the foundation against which we have assessed the success of the programme. It was primarily designed for

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<sup>9</sup> A small number of grantholders were provided with extensions to the timeframe within which they could spend their grants as a result of the national lockdown in the first three months of 2021, which limited their ability to deliver the relevant activities.

<sup>10</sup> This is less than the full amount awarded as it excludes grants made outside of the evaluation period, a direct grant to CAST, and all grants awarded via Buttle UK which is making ongoing small grants to families and individuals.

the purpose of the CCSF evaluation, with some minor additions made to ensure it could also act as the basis for the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund.

A number of key stakeholders were involved in shaping and refining the ToC for the CCSF and the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund. Following an initial draft developed to inform the evaluation proposal, a series of familiarisation consultations and a desk-based review of programme documentation and wider literature were conducted to inform the second iteration of the ToC. Feedback was collected from stakeholders from the Fund and DCMS during a workshop, as well as from our CCSF Evaluation Expert Advisory Group<sup>11</sup>. From here, an iterative approach to incorporate feedback was applied to inform the design of the ToC. This is set out in more detail below.

The ToC was based around the four main groups that were most likely to be affected by the funding:

- **Grantholders:** This refers to community support organisations that were awarded the funding. Grantholder organisations encompass two groups described below: staff and volunteers.
- **Staff:** This includes individuals – who were directly employed by the grantholder as either full-time or part-time staff, including those furloughed due to the pandemic – who were specifically retained, redeployed or recruited to deliver activities/support funded by National Lottery COVID-19 Fund.
- **Volunteers:** This includes individuals who either (1) gave unpaid help through a group, club or organisation (formal volunteering) or (2) provided unpaid help as an individual to people who were not a relative (informal volunteers)<sup>12</sup>, and were specifically redeployed or recruited to deliver activities/support as part of the funding. Insights from informal volunteers were perceived to be harder to establish because these volunteers may not provide their contact details to the organisations or they may not self-identify as a volunteer, for example, viewing this as ‘neighbourliness’. The analysis therefore focuses on formal volunteers.
- **People and communities:** This includes people and communities who received support from grantholder organisations as a result of the funding. It was anticipated that this would include those disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each of these four main groups was associated with its own anticipated outcomes as a result of the funding. The funding was distributed directly to grantholders with immediate implications for staff and volunteers. Subsequently, people and communities were supported by the grantholders, staff and volunteers through activities made possible by the funding. This support for people and communities was the primary purpose of the funding, with the grantholder acting as an intermediary. As such, the evaluation defined outcomes for people and communities as indirect compared with the direct outcomes for grantholders, staff and volunteers.

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<sup>11</sup> The Evaluation Expert Advisory Group for the impact strand of the evaluation comprised of: Geoff White, an associate of Ipsos MORI with over 30 years’ experience of advising UK Government departments and agencies on policy and programme evaluations and appraisals; George Barrett, an associate of Ipsos MORI who was the Chief Economist and Research Director for the Ecorys Group for over 20 years; Dan Corry, the Chief Executive of NPC; and Professor John Mohan, the Director of the Third Sector Research Centre.

<sup>12</sup> Using international definitions of formal and informal volunteering.

Figure 1.1 overleaf depicts the logic model for the funding, which is a diagrammatic representation of the ToC. The logic model shows the key inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes for each of the four main groups, as well as for the Fund. The arrows in the diagram represent the anticipated pathways whereby activities were expected to lead to outputs and then outcomes, providing a set of causal chains to be assessed by the evaluation.

The causal chains in the ToC – describing how the programme intended to achieve its aims – have been framed as a set of hypotheses that were tested by the evaluation. The overarching programme hypothesis (see Box 1.1) aligns with the two objectives of the funding set out above (see Section 1.1).

### What is the purpose of evaluation hypotheses?

Evaluation hypotheses form the basis upon which we are able to develop a Theory of Change. They should ideally:

- Be framed by a set of contextual and programme related assumptions
- Include all the primary theories you wish to assess/test
- Be as specific as possible
- Be manageable in number

It's also important to note that hypotheses do not need to be mutually exclusive.

### Box 1.1: Overarching programme hypothesis

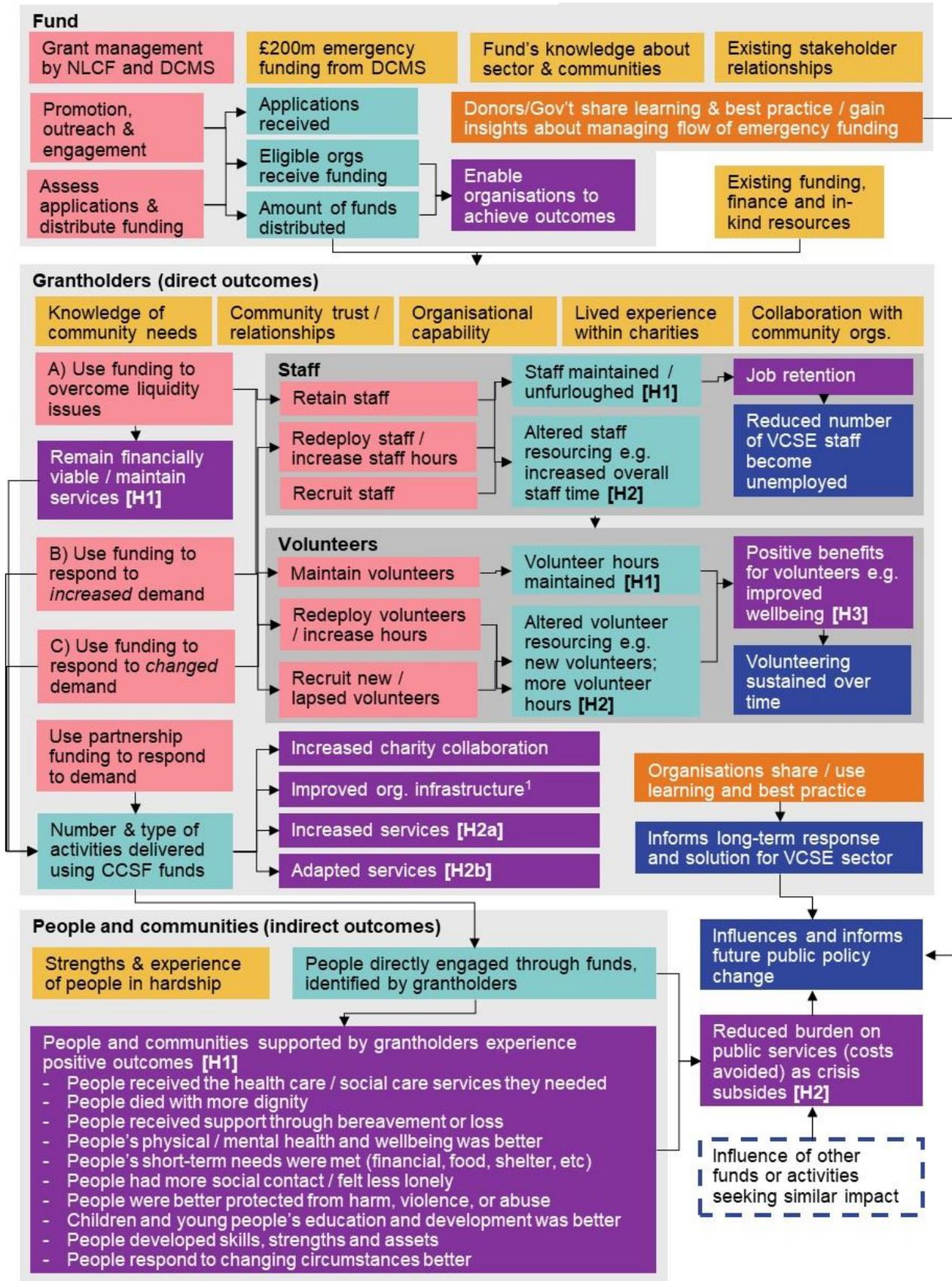
The National Lottery COVID-19 Fund has been provided to organisations that have identified and worked with the individuals and communities who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. These organisations have funded activities that have assessed immediate needs, delivered appropriate support/activities and achieved positive outcomes for individuals and communities. By funding this work, the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund has also contributed to the financial health, capacity and capability of some organisations.

Specific hypotheses for grantholders, staff, volunteers and people and communities sit under this overarching hypothesis, and these are labelled in the logic model using the shorthand [H1], [H2], etc. By collecting evidence against each of these underpinning hypotheses, the evaluation sought to aggregate the evidence to test the overarching hypothesis. Further details of the hypotheses set out in the ToC for each of the four main groups are included in the relevant chapters setting out the evidence that forms the basis of this report (see Chapters 3-5).

All hypotheses were framed to provide a statement of intent that would not have been possible in the absence of the funding. It was anticipated that there would be strong associations between hypotheses and it is important to note that they are not mutually exclusive. Additionally, the hypotheses were developed to reflect the short-term nature of the grant period, and hypotheses about the longer-term outcomes and impacts fall outside the scope of this evaluation.

The aim of this report is to provide an assessment of the extent to which the findings are supportive of these hypotheses. Further details of the analytical approach and data informing this report are described below.

Figure 1.1: Logic model for the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund



Inputs    Activities    Outputs    Outcomes    Impacts<sup>2</sup>    Learning

<sup>1</sup> Organisational infrastructure is specific to the Fund's COVID-19 Emergency Response programme.

<sup>2</sup> Given the limited evaluation timeframe, only indicative evidence will be available to extrapolate longer term effects using existing evidence, where possible.

## 1.4 Analytical approach

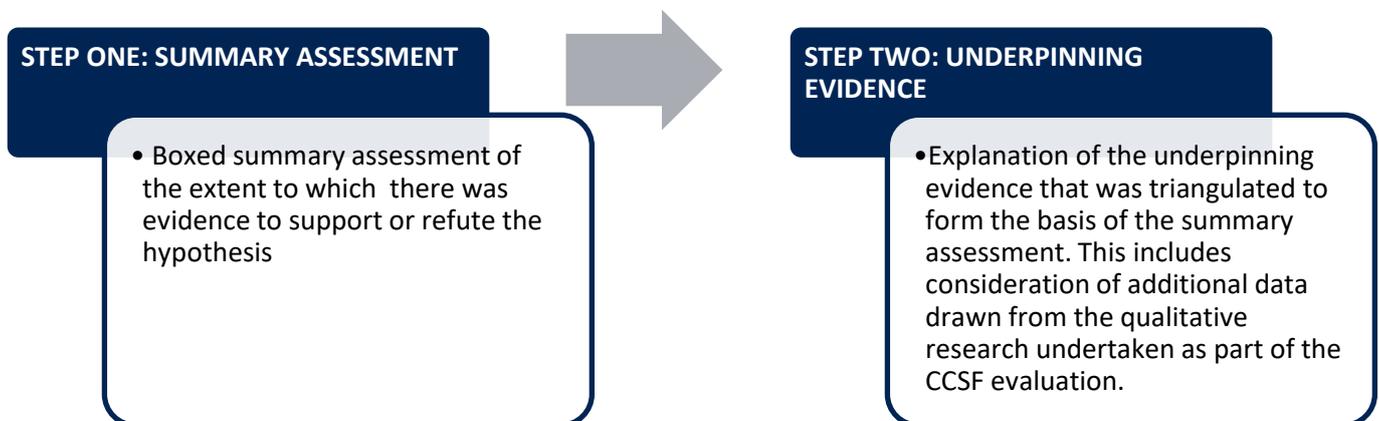
### Overarching analytical approach

The impact analysis is based on a triangulation of three quantitative data sources (see methodology section) against each of the underpinning hypotheses set out in the ToC. Where possible, analysis was undertaken at three levels that examined evidence (1) **within singular data sources** and (2) **across data sources** for each underpinning hypothesis, and ultimately examined the evidence (3) **across underpinning-hypotheses** to assess the overarching hypothesis.

As qualitative research was outside the scope of this evaluation and given the similarity of the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund and the CCSF, assessment of the hypotheses also draws upon additional evidence from the qualitative research strand of the comparative and larger-scale CCSF evaluation. This is referred to as the CCSF qualitative research throughout the remainder of the report.

The selection of key variables for analysis was largely guided by the evaluation taxonomy developed during the scoping study (see Annex C) with some additional analysis undertaken using supplementary variables in cases where further exploration of the data improved understanding of the evidence in support of the hypotheses.

Chapters 3-5 of the report provides detailed assessments of the underpinning hypotheses. These are set out using the following convention for each hypothesis and include a **rating for the degree of confidence** (using a 3-point scale), which takes into account whether the evidence **relies** heavily on data that was **direct or indirect** (e.g. grantholder reported outcomes for beneficiaries) and the strength of evidence derived from the complementary qualitative research from the CCSF evaluation.



## 1.5 Methodology and interpretation of the data

### Data used for analysis

In addition to contextual information from The Fund's Grant Management System (GMS), which contained data gathered as part of the application process for the funding, the analysis is primarily based on the following:

- **Grantholder survey findings** in this report are based on a total of 3,574 responses received from 5,451 eligible grantholders who were invited to take part in the online survey in the sixth month of their grant. This was a response rate of 66%.

- This included a total of 666 grantholders who received contract variations, 421 of which provided a response to the survey. Given the differing nature of this group of grantholders, who were provided with additional funding to further support existing grant-funded activity, the full grant award amount rather than the variation was used as the reference point for the surveys. This decision was made as it would have been challenging to separate the number of beneficiaries reached, and staff and volunteers that support activities as a consequence of just the variation. As a result, the numeric data that has been provided by this group of grantholders is not directly comparable with the remaining data and has therefore been excluded from the dataset (see section on reporting conventions below for further detail).
  - It also included a total of 1,651 EDA grantholders, 1,076 of which provided a response to the survey.
  - Findings are based on all grantholders unless otherwise specified.
- **Volunteer survey findings** in this report are based on 3,734 volunteers who took part in the online survey. The survey was distributed by grantholders, who were asked to send survey links to their networks of volunteers. This means that it is not possible to calculate a response rate for the survey, as there is no record of how many people were invited to participate.

A more detailed breakdown of the profile of grantholders is provided in Chapter 2.

In addition, and as described above, additional information is drawn upon from the qualitative research of the comparative CCSF evaluation. This included 266 interviews with CCSF grantholders, and a further 33 case studies with CCSF grantholders, staff, volunteers, partner organisations and beneficiaries.

### Strength and quality of the evaluation evidence

The data collection methods employed by the evaluation, successfully captured large-scale and broadly representative quantitative evidence, that provided logical and generally consistent findings across the sequential waves of research that were delivered. This suggests that we can place a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of the evidence collected, with the exception of a few notable limitations which are described below.

### Interpreting the grantholder survey data

All survey findings are subject to a margin of error, and confidence intervals are used to express the degree to which any given answer might differ from that observed in the population of interest. The confidence intervals for the grantholder survey are +/- 1% at a baseline of 50% (where tests of confidence are most sensitive). This means that there is a 95% likelihood that the true population value is +/- 1% of the figure reported in the survey.

There are specific elements of the grantholder survey where more caution should be taken when interpreting the figures reported. At several points in the survey grantholders were asked to estimate key numeric data (for example, the number of beneficiaries supported with the grant received, the number of volunteers worked with during the time period of the grant, and the number of staff recruited).

Extraneous data was internally validated by the evaluation team and the Fund<sup>13</sup> (details of the approach taken and the resultant outcomes can be found in Annex B: Table 1.1), but despite this a small number

<sup>13</sup> Verifying the figures with grantholders was beyond the scope of the evaluation.

of outliers remain that skew survey figures. As a result, such data should be treated with a degree of caution. Where applicable we have used medians to describe numeric data since this calculation is less prone to being skewed by a small proportion of extremely large or extremely small figures<sup>14</sup>.

It should also be noted that findings from the grantholder survey:

- May be subject to positive bias and do not take into account any substitution or displacement effects that may have taken place (i.e. they are self-reported gross figures as opposed to net figures)
- That relate specifically to volunteers are based on those grantholders who worked with volunteers (see Chapter 5 for further details).

### Interpreting the volunteer survey data

For the volunteer survey it is not possible to calculate confidence intervals as this is a non-random self-selecting sample. However, it is important to note that the survey may have been completed by more engaged volunteers given the way in which the survey was administered (i.e. via grantholders).

### Outcomes experienced by people and communities

The evaluation did not include research with beneficiaries as it was decided that conducting further research with beneficiaries would have placed too much of a burden on grantholders, who would have had to have systems and processes in place to enable them to record beneficiary profile and contact details securely and to collect appropriate permissions for these to be shared with a third party. It would also have placed additional burden on those people who were being supported by grantholders, many of whom were already facing significant challenges. As a result, an indirect account of the outcomes experienced by the people and communities supported through the funded activities was collected as part of the grantholder survey, which for clarity are described as '*grantholder-reported outcomes*' throughout the report.

### Reporting conventions

Findings from the grantholder survey have been extrapolated to estimate the overall figures among all grantholders<sup>15</sup>. This assumes that the findings among those who did not respond to the survey would have been replicated proportionally among those grantholders that did respond to the survey. The high survey response rate and the similarity between the profiles of grantholder survey respondents and all grantholders suggests this is a reasonable assumption (see Table 1.2 in Annex B).

Extrapolated numeric data does not account for contract variations given the differing nature of this set of grantholders (see explanation above). The calculation used to extrapolate numeric data therefore differs to that used for all other grantholder data in that it is based on an adjusted response rate that removes the contract variation grantholders (see Table 1.4 in Annex B).

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<sup>14</sup> The median is the middle number, found by ranking all data points and selecting the one in the middle (or if there are two middle numbers, taking the mean of those two numbers).

<sup>15</sup> The extrapolations have been calculated assuming that the numeric figures would increase proportionately for the grantholders that did not respond to the survey (i.e. by dividing the key numeric figures by the response rate and multiplying by 100). The upper and lower bounds of each survey response have been provided in Table 1.4, Annex B.

Percentage results from the survey have been provided alongside estimated (numeric) extrapolated data throughout the report. Where figures do not add up to 100% this is the result of computer rounding or multiple responses. An asterisk (\*) indicates a score of less than 0.5% but greater than zero.

Data tables setting out more detailed survey findings are included in Annex B. These are referenced in the appropriate sections throughout the report.

The impact assessment contained within this report is based on the evidence gathered and subsequent interpretation of this by the experienced Ipsos MORI evaluation team. Ipsos MORI did not predict or assume any particular substantive results of the evaluation in advance, nor do they accept any liability for (i) Client's interpretation of Ipsos MORI's reports or data produced as part of the evaluation, or (ii) any inaccuracies caused by errors in the data provided to Ipsos MORI.

## 1.6 Structure of document

The remainder of the document is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** – presents a profile of the funded grantees, including EDA grantees and those that received variations to existing grants, and summarises how the grants were used, including the types of activity funded, the beneficiaries reached, the outcomes achieved, and the role of volunteers.
- **Chapter 3** – presents an assessment of the impact the funding had on the people and communities that were supported by grantees.
- **Chapter 4** – presents an assessment of the impact the funding had on its grantees, including staff.
- **Chapter 5** – presents an assessment of the impact the funding had on the volunteers involved in delivering the relevant activities of the grantees.
- **Chapter 6** – sets out a summary of the evidence that has been collected in support of the individual hypotheses.

The report is also accompanied by a series of Annexes that can be found in a stand-alone document for reasons of brevity. This includes the following:

- **Annex A** – sets out more detail on the approach used to undertake the evaluation.
- **Annex B** – presents a comprehensive set of data tables that are referenced at the relevant points of the report.
- **Annex C** sets out the evaluation taxonomy that was developed during the scoping stage, which has been used to underpin the analysis presented in this report.

# 2 Overview of the funding

## Key findings

- Those grantholders that were in scope for the evaluation received a combined total of **£139m in grant funding** through the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund. Of this, **£69.1m** was distributed through applications made directly to the Fund, **£49.2m** was distributed through External Delegated Authorities (EDAs) and **£20.5m** was made available to Fund grantholders via an extension to existing grant agreements.
- The majority (81%) of grantholders used this funding to **adapt to deliver new (61%) and/or existing (55%) activities**. Around half used the grant to **continue to operate (47%)**, and/or to **respond to increased demand (48%)**. Most used the grant to meet **more than one** of these needs (56%).
- Grantholders that delivered support did so in several ways. There was widespread reliance on **phone (71%) and online (66%) delivery**, although most also carried out some delivery **face-to-face (59%)**. Across all activities, one-to-one support delivered for three months or more was the typical approach.
- A wide range of beneficiaries received support. The most common groups were people with **mental health conditions (40%)**, people and families **facing financial hardship (37%)**, people with a **long-standing illnesses or disability (36%)** and **children and young people (36%)**. Over two thirds of grantholders (68%) supported **more than one beneficiary group** and two fifths (40%) supported **four or more groups**.
- Aggregating the survey results up to the funding as a whole suggests that an estimated **4.31 million beneficiaries**<sup>16</sup> were reached by grantholders excluding grants that were awarded as variations.
- Grantholders reported a **wide range of positive outcomes** for beneficiaries as a result of the funding. Nearly all (94%) said their beneficiaries had experienced **more than one** positive outcome and the majority (80%) thought their beneficiaries experienced **four or more** positive outcomes.
- The most common outcomes reported by grantholders were that people's **mental health and wellbeing was better (83%)**; **people felt less lonely (76%)**; **had more social contact (69%)**; **and were better able to respond to changing circumstances (69%)**.
- An estimated **168,000**<sup>17</sup> **volunteers** were involved with funded activities, with (an estimated) **52,420**<sup>18</sup> of these (around a third) being **new volunteers** that grantholders had not worked with previously. Both these figures are based on estimates that exclude grants that were awarded as variations.

<sup>16</sup> This figure is likely to include some double counting of individual beneficiaries that were supported by more than one of the grantholders.

<sup>17</sup> This figure may include some double counting of individual volunteers that may have worked with more than one grantholder.

<sup>18</sup> This figure may also include double counting for the same reasons as noted above.

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the engagement and reach of the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund and the profile of grantholders. This is followed by a summary of how the grants were used, what activities were delivered and to whom and the outcomes grantholders reported for their beneficiaries. The chapter concludes with a summary of the role of volunteers working with grantholders.

## 2.2 Engagement and reach

The National Lottery COVID-19 Fund covers grants awarded by the Fund between 1 April 2020 and November 2020. Successful applicants were given up to six months to spend their grant.

The Fund undertook a range of promotion and engagement activities to raise awareness of the emergency funding:

- **Direct communications** to organisations they had an existing relationship with.
- **Amplification** of Government communications about emergency funding.
- **Online promotion** through their website and social media channels, as well as the sector press.
- **Targeted outreach** through partners and stakeholders at national and regional level.

The National Lottery Community Fund (The Fund) provided a total of **£151.3m** of funding to support the sector between 1 April 2020 and 30 November 2020 through **7,216** grant awards. The grants included in the evaluation were those awarded between the same dates and with an end date no later than 31 July 2021. As referenced in the previous chapter (Section 1.2), this amounted to 5,541 grantholders who were awarded a total of **£138.8m** of emergency grant funding. This was distributed in three ways:

1. **The Fund.** Organisations applied directly to the Fund and were successful based on their ability to meet one of three criteria (the criteria are outlined in the introduction). A total of £69.1m in grant funding was distributed in this way to 3,134 grantholders.
2. **External Delegated Authorities (EDAs).** The Fund worked in partnership with other funders through EDAs to complement the broader COVID-19 activity, using their networks and specialist knowledge to enable fast funding decisions to specialist areas and sectors. A total of £49.2m was distributed by eight EDAs on behalf of the Fund, through 1,651 grants.
3. **Contract variations.** The Fund made £20.5m available to existing grantholders via an extension to 666 existing grants.

## 2.3 Profile of grantholders

The funding reached those organisations it was intended to, with **the majority (89%) going to small or medium sized community organisations**. Grant funding was distributed to **every region** and **almost every local authority** in England, with the highest concentrations going to the **Northern regions** and **London**<sup>19</sup> (see Annex B, Tables 1.2 and 1.3).

<sup>19</sup> Some caution should be taken in the interpretation of this. Grantholder delivery offices are not always in the same region as their target beneficiaries, particularly for larger projects. For example, activities delivered to people living in the South East are often delivered by organisations based in Greater London.

**Not-for-profit companies** accounted for the highest number of grants. A **quarter (23%)** of grants were made to not-for-profit companies, while a similar proportion (**20%**) were made to registered charities (see Annex B, Tables 1.2 and 1.3).

**Half (52%)** of the grants awarded were simple grants, with a median grant value of **£10,000**. EDAs and contract variations tended to award standard grants (**80%** and **84%** respectively) with a median grant value of **£25,000** and **£24,877** respectively (see Annex B, Tables 1.2 and 1.3).

EDA grant funding was **concentrated in the Greater London area**, with over a third (36%) of all successful applicants based in this region<sup>20</sup>. Successful EDA applicants were no more or less likely to come from small or medium sized organisations than all grantholders (see Annex B, Tables 1.2 and 1.3).

The profile of grantholder survey respondents was similar to that of all grantholders.

The profile of those who responded to the grantholder survey **closely matched** to the profile of all grantholders in relation to **income, region, organisation type, and grant size** (see Annex B, Table 1.2).

### 2.4 How were the grants used?

The majority (**81%**) grantholders reported using the grant to **adapt their delivery models** to deliver new activities (61%) and/or to continue to deliver existing activities (55%). Just under half said they had used the grant to **continue to operate** (47%) and/or to **respond to increased demand** (48%).

In addition, most grantholders (**56%**) reported using the grant to meet more than one need (see Figure 2.1 below).

**Figure 2.1: Overall use of National Lottery COVID-19 grants**



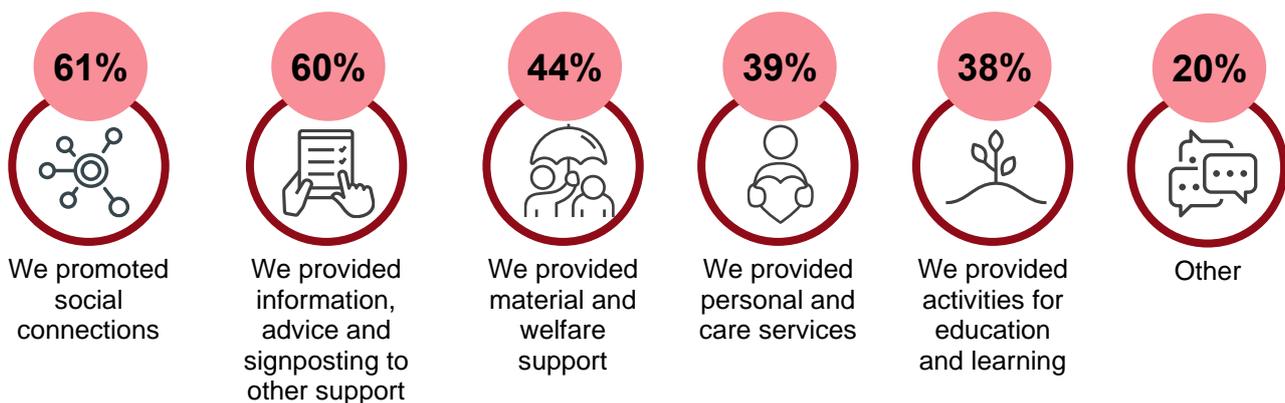
<sup>20</sup> One of the EDAs was 'London Funders', which explains the high concentration in the Greater London area.

This overall assessment of how the grants were used has informed the approach to survey analysis that is presented throughout this the report, which is structured around the following two groups:

- **All grantholders who responded to the survey** – to reflect the non-discrete nature of most of the data, with most grantholders falling into more than one category in terms of the use of their grant.
- **The ‘mutually exclusive’ sub-groups** – that is those shown in Figure 2.1 as falling into a single category rather than multiple. Where presented, these are referred to as grantholders who used the funding ‘exclusively’ to continue to operate / respond to an increase in demand / adapt existing or new services.

## 2.5 What activities were delivered as a result of the grants?

As set out in Section 2.4, the majority of grantholders (94%) used the funding to adapt their activities, develop new ones, or respond to increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among these grantholders<sup>21</sup>, the majority (61%) used the emergency funding to **promote social connections** and three in five (60%) reported providing **information, advice and signposting to other support**. Around two in five **provided material and welfare support** (44%), **personal and care services** (39%) or **activities and support for education and learning** (38%).



*Base: Grantholder survey respondents who used their grant to adapt existing services, develop new services or respond to an increase in demand (3,242)*

Across all funded activities, most grantholders engaged beneficiaries for three months or more, with one-off support much less common (see Annex B: Table 2.1 and 2.2).

Grantholders that delivered activities or support did so in several different ways. This included:

- Widespread reliance on **phone** (71%) and **online** (66%) delivery.
- Most carrying out some **face-to-face delivery** (59%), despite the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place (at different levels) throughout the emergency funding period.
- Extensive use of other forms of communication, including **messaging** by text, email or WhatsApp (56%); **written advice or materials, including on websites** (52%); and **social media** (51%).

<sup>21</sup> This includes all grantholder survey respondents who used the funding to adapt to existing services, develop new services, or respond to an increase in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic (3,242). The remaining grantholders used the funding to continue to operate or for other reasons.

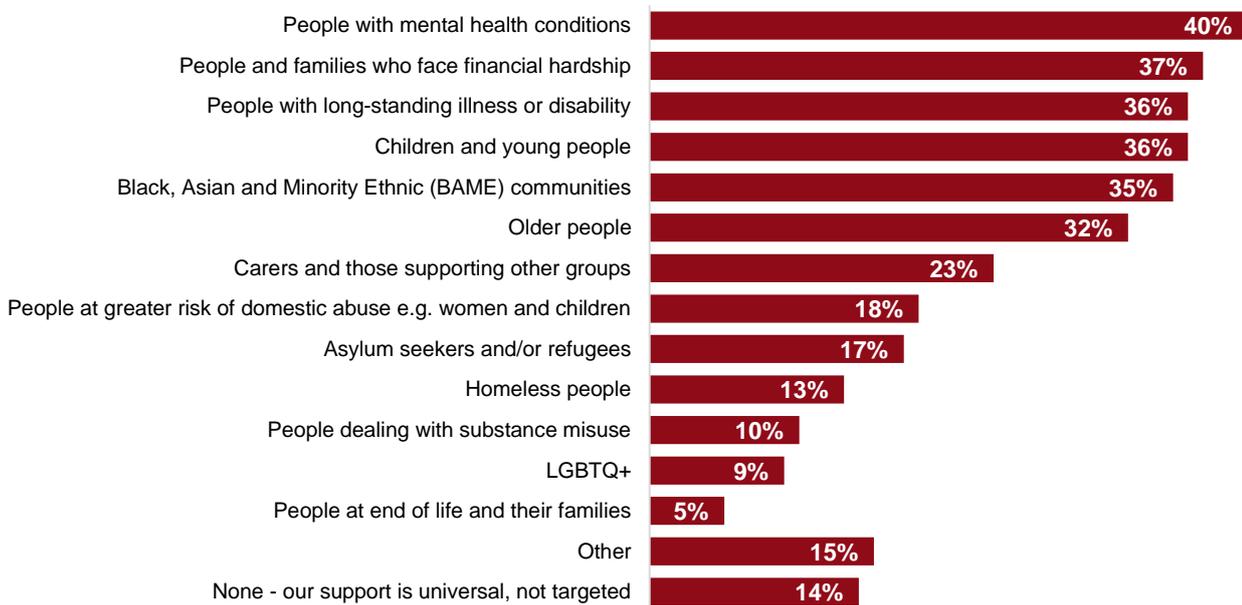
Across delivery modes, **one-to-one support** was the most common approach, with group or family support not used as extensively (see Annex B: Table 2.5 and 2.6). The intensity and frequency of the support provided through grantholders is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

## 2.6 Who were the ultimate beneficiaries of funded activities?

Grantholders reported **supporting a range of beneficiary types** as a result of the funding (see Figure 2.2):

- The majority had supported **multiple beneficiary target groups**, with over two thirds (68%) saying they had supported **more than one group** and two fifths (40%) saying they had supported **four or more groups**.
- The most common beneficiary groups were people with **mental health conditions** (40%), people who faced **financial hardship** (37%), people with a **long-standing illnesses or disability** (36%) and **children and young people** (36%).
- An estimated **1,928** grantholders targeted **Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME)<sup>22</sup> communities** (35%)
- Around one third (32%) targeted **older people** and a quarter (23%) supported **carers and those supporting other groups**.

**Figure 2.2: Types of people supported by grantholder organisations in receipt of funding**



Base: All grantholder survey respondents (3,574)  
 Source: Ipsos MORI Grantholder Survey

Grantholders were asked to report the specific number of beneficiaries they had supported and 89% of those responding to the survey were able to do so. A further 9% were able to estimate the number supported within a range. As noted in Chapter 1, beneficiary numbers need to be treated with some

<sup>22</sup> We recognise there are issues with this term as it emphasises certain ethnic minorities and excludes others. However, it has been used here as that is the name of the field that captured this data in the Grantholder Survey.

caution given that they were self-reported by grantholders. There is also a risk of some double counting given that individuals could have accessed support from multiple grantholders – there was one example from the qualitative research with CCSF grantholders of where a group of grantholders in a local area had formed a group and were cross-referring beneficiaries to each other for support.

Grantholders reported working with a **median of 150 beneficiaries** per organisation<sup>23</sup> as a result of the funding. This included significant variation in the number of beneficiaries reported **by size of organisation and size of grant** received. As might be expected, **larger organisations** (with a higher annual income) and / or those in receipt of a **larger grant value** reported working with the highest number of beneficiaries (see Annex B: Tables 2.9 – 2.12). This suggests that those operating at a larger scale in terms of organisational size or funding, were able to engage and deliver support to larger numbers of people.

A simple sum of the self-reported beneficiary numbers reported in the survey suggests that an estimated 2.84 million beneficiaries<sup>24</sup> were supported by the funding awarded through these grants. It is possible to estimate the total number of beneficiaries associated with the funding in scope for this evaluation, based on the assumption that a similar number of beneficiaries were supported by the other grantholders who did not complete the grantholder survey. On this basis, the self-reported beneficiary numbers suggest that the funding in scope for the evaluation supported an estimated **4.31 million beneficiaries**<sup>25</sup>. Please note that both beneficiary estimations cited here exclude grants that were awarded as variations.



**4.31m\*** estimated total beneficiaries supported by the funding in scope for the evaluation

**2.84m\*** estimated total beneficiaries supported by grantholder survey respondents

**150** beneficiaries supported per grantholder on average (median)

\* These two figures may include some double counting as beneficiaries may have been supported by more than one grantholder.

All estimations exclude grants that were awarded as variations.

Beneficiary numbers varied by type of support delivered. Grantholders that offered **material and welfare support** (such as support accessing household items, food, or emergency accommodation) **reported supporting the highest number of beneficiaries** – a **median of 250** (see Annex B: Tables 2.13 – 2.16). In contrast, those who **offered personal or care services** (such as mentoring, counselling, or psychological support) **reported supporting the fewest beneficiaries** – a **median of 145**<sup>26</sup>.

The majority (83%) of grantholders **had supported some new beneficiaries**<sup>27</sup>. This translated into these grantholders supporting a **median of 64 new beneficiaries**<sup>28</sup> as a result of the grant (see Annex

<sup>23</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, all mean and median figures should be treated with caution and as gross output/outcomes that do not take into account any potential positive reporting bias, double counting, substitution or displacement effects. This figure excludes those grantholders who received funding through a variation to their existing contract but includes those who received funding through EDAs.

<sup>24</sup> This figure may include some double counting, as it is based on an extrapolation of the findings reported by individual organisations in the grantholder survey, and beneficiaries may have been supported by more than one grantholder.

<sup>25</sup> This figure may include some double counting for the same reasons listed above.

<sup>26</sup> The figure excludes those grantholders who received funding through a variation to their existing contract.

<sup>27</sup> This proportion increases to 95% if the 'don't know' category is removed. The 83% total is made up of 73% who supported both new and existing beneficiaries and 9% who only supported new beneficiaries.

<sup>28</sup> The figure excludes those grantholders who received funding through a variation to their existing contract but includes those who received funding through EDAs.

B: Tables 2.17 – 2.20). As with all beneficiaries reached, those grantholders in receipt of a larger grants and with higher organisational incomes reported working with the highest number of new beneficiaries.

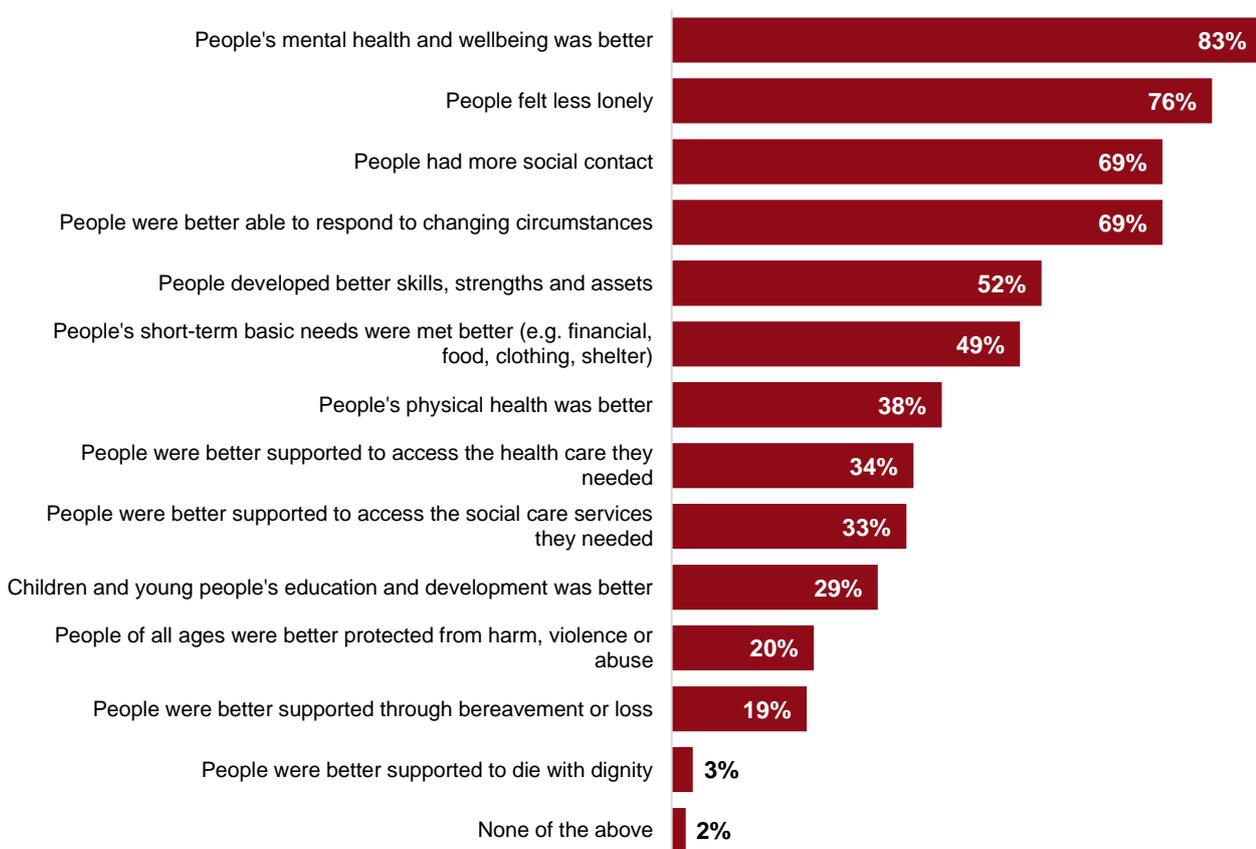
### 2.7 What outcomes did grantholders report for beneficiaries?

Grantholders said their beneficiaries had experienced a wide range of positive outcomes as a result of funded activities and support (see Figure 2.3):

- Nearly all grantholders (**94%**) reported that some of their beneficiaries had **experienced more than one positive outcome** and four in five (**80%**) said some of their beneficiaries had **experienced four or more positive outcomes**.
- The most common outcomes were that **people’s mental health and wellbeing was better (83%); people felt less lonely (76%); people had more social contact (69%); and people were better able to respond to changing circumstances (69%)**.
- Approximately half also reported that some of their beneficiaries **had developed better skills, strengths and assets (52%)** as a result of the grant and had their **short-term basic needs had been better met (49%)**.

Grantholders were asked to estimate what proportion of their beneficiaries had experienced the outcomes reported. The findings from analysis of the responses to this are discussed in Chapter 3.

**Figure 2.3: Grantholder reported outcomes achieved by beneficiaries**



Base: All grantholder survey respondents (3,574)  
 Source: Ipsos MORI Grantholder Survey

## 2.8 What role did volunteers play in the funding?

Eight in ten (**79%**) grantholders **reported having worked with volunteers** during their grant, and these grantholders worked with an estimated **168,000**<sup>29</sup> volunteers in total (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations). The average number of volunteers reported per organisation **increased in line with annual income and / or grant value** (see Tables 2.21 in Annex B), reflecting the fact that such organisations tended to operate at a larger scale, reporting a higher number of beneficiaries and / or staff.

Two in five (39%) grantholders that worked with volunteers reported using the grant received to **recruit new volunteers**, with a total of up to an estimated **52,410**<sup>30</sup> recruited (31% of the volunteers reported overall, and this excludes grants that were awarded as variations). While EDA grantholders were more likely to report using the grant received to recruit volunteers (**45%**), the median number of volunteers recruited per organisation aligned with that among all grantholders (**6 and 7** respectively) (see Table 2.26 in Annex B).

Among those who worked with volunteers, three in five (**60%**) reported using the grant received to **increase volunteer hours** at their organisation, with an estimated **122,000** additional hours made available as a result of the funding (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations). The average number of volunteers recruited per organisation, and additional volunteer hours made available, **increased in line with annual income and / or grant value** (see Tables 2.27 and 2.28 in Annex B). Those in receipt of a contract variation were less likely to report using the grant received to increase volunteer hours (**53%**).

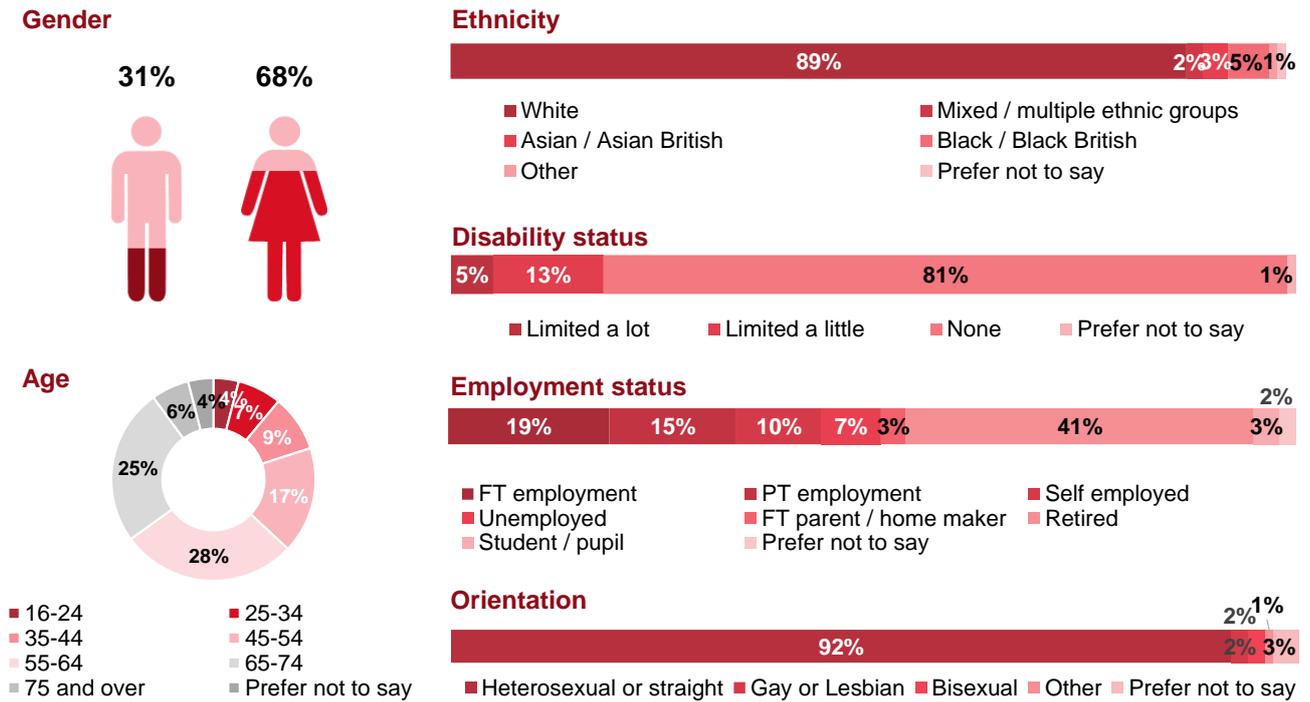
The majority of those who volunteered during the pandemic had done so before. Nine in ten (**89%**) had **prior experience of volunteering**, either for the grantholder organisation, or another community group or charity. Of this group, six in ten (**63%**) **offered unpaid help to another community group or charity whilst also volunteering for the grantholder** during the COVID-19 pandemic (**36%** of volunteers overall).

**Seven in ten (68%)** of those who volunteered were **female** while **three in ten (31%)** were **male**. The average (median) age of a volunteer was **59**, and **half (54%)** were **out of work**. The proportion of volunteers that **identified as an ethnic minority (10%)** was in line with national statistics (at present **13%** of the UK population identify as an ethnic minority).

<sup>29</sup> Please note that this figure may include some double counting, as it is based on an extrapolation of the findings reported by individual organisations in the grantholder survey, and volunteers may have worked with more than one grantholder.

<sup>30</sup> This figure may also include double counting for the same reasons as noted above.

**Figure 2.4: Demographic profile of those volunteered for a grantholders during the period of their grant**



Base: Volunteer survey respondents (3,734)

Source: Ipsos MORI Volunteer Survey

Comparisons with the Community Life Survey 2019 / 20 show that those who volunteered during the pandemic were **more likely to be female** (68% relative to 56% in the year before the pandemic) and **aged 50 or over** (69% relative to 53% in the year before).

# 3 Impact on People and Communities

## Key findings

### **People and Communities Hypothesis 1:**

Grantholders working with people and communities who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 were enabled to maintain / increase / adapt activities to identify, reach and deliver appropriate support / activities, which result in positive outcomes for individuals and communities (e.g. more social contact than they would otherwise have had during the crisis).

**Grantholders were found to have been successful in reaching people and communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.** This included people with mental health conditions, people and families facing financial hardship, people with longstanding illnesses or disabilities and children and young people. The funding enabled them to maintain, increase and / or adapt their activities to deliver

appropriate support to meet the needs of different groups of beneficiaries during the pandemic.

**Grantholders reported that the support delivered through the fund had contributed to a range of positive outcomes for beneficiaries**, with most reporting that those supported had increased social contact, better mental health and wellbeing and felt less lonely.

**There were other potential sources of support available to beneficiaries**, including other local and statutory services, that could also have contributed to positive outcomes. For some short-term outcomes (such as basic needs being met) the contribution of the funding is clear, whilst for others (such as improved mental health) it is more speculative in the absence of direct measurement and there are likely to have been other contributing factors.

### **People and Communities Hypothesis 2:**

Grantholders deliver activities to support beneficiaries that can (a) result in a range of positive outcomes for individuals that reduce the need for public services e.g. supporting children and young people, (b) strengthen the skills and assets of people and communities, and/or (c) supplement public services e.g. social care support. Together, this can reduce demand on public services.

**The majority of grantholders reported that their activities had taken the place of, reduced need for, or supplemented the use of public services.** Those interviewed provided examples to illustrate this, demonstrating potential impact across a wide range of public services. It is also possible that some of the support delivered through the grants could have increased demand for public services in the short term, with more than half of grantholders delivering information, advice and signposting to other sources of support.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an assessment of the extent to which the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund contributed to improving the anticipated outcomes for the people and communities that grantholders supported. The assessment is based on analysis of survey data from grantholders, as well as some qualitative insights from interviews with CCSF grantholders, to understand the extent to which the evidence is in support of the people and communities hypotheses developed during the scoping stage.

### 3.2 People and communities hypotheses

The funding was expected to contribute to **positive outcomes** for those people and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. These positive outcomes were expected to contribute to wider benefits for society, including a **reduction in the demand for public services** amongst beneficiaries. The evaluation looked at the impact of the funding within the context of the six-month grant period, which means that outcomes for people and communities and the potential impact of these on the demand for public services were considered in the short-term.

**People and Communities Hypothesis 1:** Grantholders working with people and communities who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 were enabled to maintain / increase / adapt activities to identify, reach and deliver appropriate support / activities, which result in positive outcomes for individuals and communities (e.g. more social contact than they would otherwise have had during the crisis).

#### HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT

Degree of confidence



**Grantholders were successful in reaching people and communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19. They were found to have maintained, increased and / or adapted their activities to deliver appropriate support to different groups of beneficiaries and were confident that this had contributed to a range of positive outcomes for people and communities**



Supporting evidence includes:

- The most common beneficiary groups were people with mental health conditions, people and families facing financial hardship, people with longstanding illnesses or disabilities and children and young people
- Grantholders used a range of approaches to deliver activities and support to beneficiaries, with most offering multiple methods of engagement including phone, video call and face-to-face
- Most grantholders reported some of their beneficiaries had better mental health and wellbeing, felt less lonely and had increased social contact

### 3.3 Outcomes for people and communities

The first people and communities hypothesis is intrinsically linked to the grantholder hypotheses (discussed in detail in Chapter 4), as it sets out the expected consequences of grantholders maintaining / increasing / adapting their activity on the individuals they were able to support as a result of the funding. It can be broken down into three component parts:

1. Grantholders were able to **identify and reach** people and communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.
2. Grantholders **delivered appropriate support / activities** to the identified individuals / groups.

**3. The support/activity delivered resulted in positive outcomes for the relevant individuals.**

Assessment of the extent to which the evidence supports these three expectations is therefore based on analysis of the **profile** of beneficiaries supported by grantholders, the **types of support / activities** delivered to them, and the **outcomes** reported to have been achieved as a result. The remainder of this section looks at the evidence for each of these in turn.

Grantholders were found to have been successful in identifying and reaching people and communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

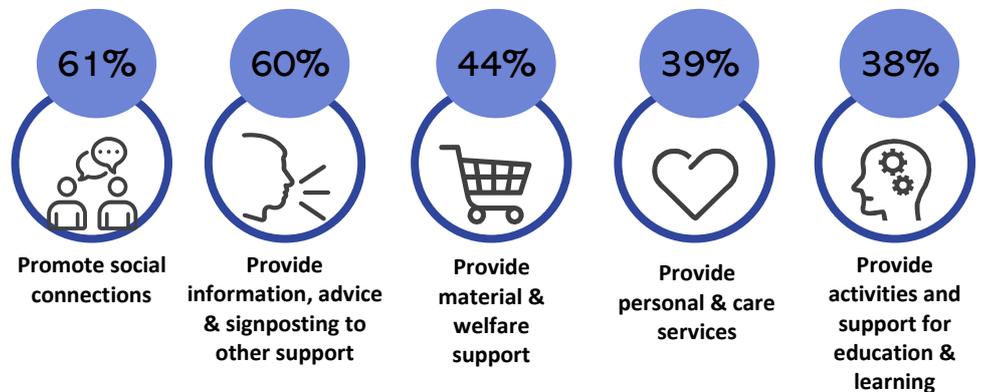
An estimated 4,500 grantholders (83%) **worked with some new beneficiaries**. As reported in Chapter 2, grantholders were found to have targeted those people and communities identified at the scoping stage of the evaluation as being **particularly at risk of the adverse effects of the pandemic**. This included, most commonly, people with mental health conditions, people and families facing financial hardship, people with longstanding illnesses or disabilities and children and young people.

Qualitative research with CCSF grantholders found that the shift to online / remote working meant that many no longer had a physical presence within local communities. They therefore used a range of other channels, including local newspapers and online methods, to raise awareness of the support amongst target beneficiaries. Most also had established links to partner organisations, including statutory services and other community organisations, who identified and referred people for support.

Grantholders were found to have delivered a wide range of support to meet the needs of different beneficiary groups.

**Of those grantholders who used their grant to adapt existing services, develop new services or respond to an increase in demand, an estimated 3,020 (61%) delivered activities or support aimed at promoting social connections.** This increases to almost three quarters for those targeting carers or those supporting people disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 (74%) or people with a long-standing illness or disability (71%) (see Annex B: Table 3.1).

**Grantholders used their grant to...**



*Base: grantholder survey respondents who used their grant to adapt existing services, develop new services or respond to an increase in demand (3,242)*

CCSF grantholders working with older people or those with a long-standing illness or disability said that many of their beneficiaries had been lonely and isolated prior to the pandemic and dependent on them for social contact. This was exacerbated during lockdown as many had to stay at home on their own. They used the CCSF funding to develop new ways to maintain contact with those who were isolated, such as telephone and video calls.

**The promotion of social connections was sometimes a secondary activity for grantholders in addition to their core support.** Those delivering material and welfare support or personal and care services often also provided a form of social connection for beneficiaries, particularly those who were shielding. Grantholders delivering these types of services and support would often build in provision for delivery staff or volunteers to check on beneficiaries' wellbeing.

**An estimated 2,980 grantholders (60%) delivered information, advice and signposting to other support<sup>31</sup>.** This increases to over 70% for those targeting LGBTQ+ people, asylum seekers and/or refugees and those at greater risk domestic abuse, such as women and children (see Annex B: Table 3.1).

**Most grantholders who provided signposting also directly delivered support.** For example, staff within food banks often collected information on beneficiaries' needs and circumstances and provided information on where they could go to access additional support. In some cases, grantholders went beyond the provision of information about sources of support to directly helping beneficiaries to access these, for example by making appointments on their behalf or providing translation services.

Qualitative research with CCSF grantholders found that signposting typically involved an initial needs assessment to determine what existing support they had in place and what else they might need. This was followed by advice and guidance on which services were available and how to access these. CCSF grantholders signposted to a broad range of services, with those providing support for housing, welfare benefits and health the most frequently referenced.

Looking at the other types of support delivered by grantholders:

- An estimated 1,950 grantholders (39%) delivered **personal and care services**. This increases to 59% for those providing support to people dealing with substance misuse or people at the end of life and their families.
- An estimated 2,160 grantholders (44%) delivered **material and welfare support**. This was higher amongst those grantholders supporting homeless people (74%), people and families facing financial hardship (62%), asylum seekers and / or refugees (56%) and older people (56%).
- An estimated 1,860 grantholders (38%) delivered **activities and support for education and learning**. This increases to 53% for those providing support to children and young people and 45% for those delivering support to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities<sup>32</sup>.

This analysis highlights the broad range and types of support delivered by grantholders to different groups of beneficiaries. It suggests that the type of activities and support delivered was appropriate to individual needs and circumstances.

The intensity and frequency of activities and support delivered to beneficiaries is presented at an aggregate level in Chapter 2. It shows that activities delivered using the funding were most commonly delivered as **one-to-one activities over a period of three months or more**.

The majority of grantholders offered support to beneficiaries via remote methods, with phone calls and video calls being the most frequently cited mode of delivery. However, more than half also offered face-to-face support despite lockdown restrictions.

Grantholders used a range of approaches to deliver activities and support to beneficiaries, with most offering **multiple methods of engagement** (see Annex B: Table 3.2). A lot of grantholders had to adapt their operating models in order to deliver activities and support remotely following the COVID-19 outbreak and some used their CCSF grant to do this (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). This included providing staff, volunteers, and in some cases beneficiaries, with equipment and training.

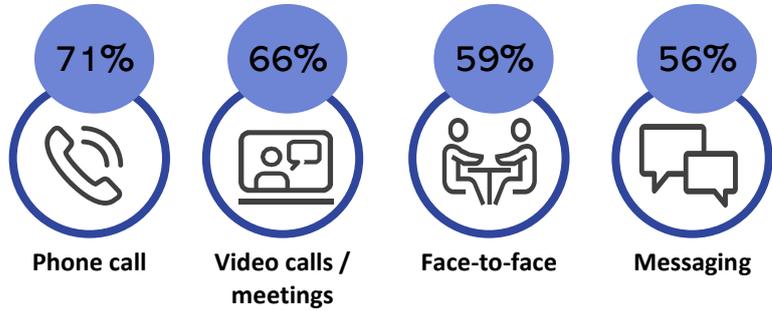
<sup>31</sup> This is an extrapolated figure based on those who used the funding to adapt existing services, develop new services, or respond to an increase in demand during the Coronavirus pandemic and have supported some new beneficiaries (3,242)

<sup>32</sup> As noted previously, we recognise there are issues with this term as it emphasises certain ethnic minorities and excludes others. However, it has been used here as that is the name of the field that captured this data in the Grantholder Survey.

However, despite this notable shift to online / digital methods, more than half of grantholders continued to offer face-to-face support.

- **Phone calls** were the most frequently cited mode of delivery across all beneficiary groups, offered by an estimated 3,520 grantholders (71%)<sup>33</sup>. This increases to over 80% for those delivering support to people at the end of life and their families, asylum seekers and / or refugees and people at greater risk of domestic abuse, including women and children.

**Grantholders offered support to beneficiaries via...**



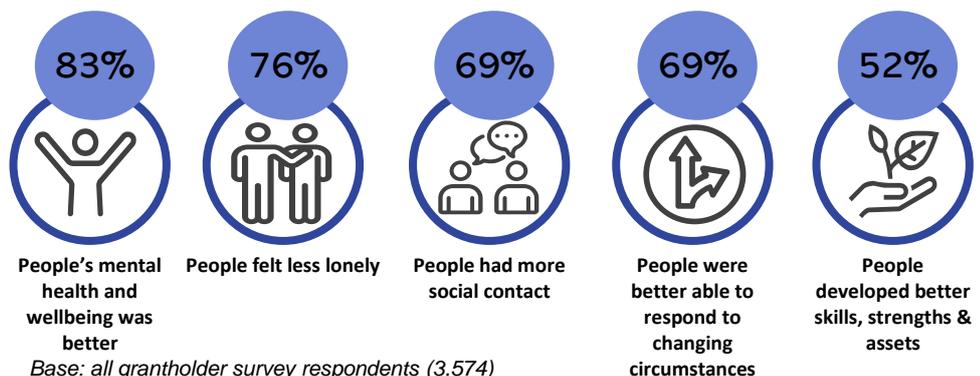
Base: grantholder survey respondents who used their grant to adapt existing services, develop new services or respond to an increase in demand (3,242)

- **Video calls / meetings** were used by an estimated 3,240 grantholders (66%). The types of activities typically delivered via video calls included counselling and bereavement support, exercise classes and education and learning.
- **Face-to-face** support continued to be offered by an estimated 2,890 grantholders (59%) despite the shift by many to online and remote methods. Some services could not be delivered remotely, such as transport to attend medical appointments or delivery of food. Face-to-face was also found to be important for homeless people, those dealing with substance misuse and asylum seekers and / or refugees – groups who were less able to access support online or whose support needs did not lend themselves to remote delivery.
- **Messaging** was the next most common mode of delivery used by an estimated 2,750 grantholders (56%), most commonly by those delivering support to asylum seekers and / or refugees and people at greater risk of domestic abuse, such as women and children. Around half of grantholders delivered support via **social media** (an estimated 2,520 or 51%) or through **written advice or materials**, including on websites (an estimated 2,590 or 52%).

Most grantholders reported they had contributed to the majority of their beneficiaries having more social contact, feeling less lonely and having better mental health and wellbeing.

Grantholders reported a **wide range of outcomes** for beneficiaries from the support they delivered through the funding. The most frequently cited were those relating to **better mental health, reduced loneliness and isolation**. The majority also thought the people they

**Grantholder reported outcomes for beneficiaries...**



Base: all grantholder survey respondents (3,574)

<sup>33</sup> Of those grantholders who used their grant to adapt existing services, develop new services or respond to an increase in demand (3,242)

supported were better able to respond to changing circumstances (see Annex B: Table 3.3).

Grantholders were asked to estimate what proportion of their beneficiaries had experienced each of the outcomes reported and the key findings were that:

- Of the estimated 3,780 grantholders (69%) who said the activities and support they delivered contributed to people having **more social contact**, an estimated 2,290 (60% of this subgroup) thought that **all or almost all** of their beneficiaries had experienced more social contact as a result of the support.
- Of the estimated 4,150 grantholders (76%) who said the activities and support they delivered contributed to **people feeling less lonely**, an estimated 2,110 (51%) thought that all or almost all of their beneficiaries **felt less lonely**.
- Of the estimated 4,520 grantholders (83%) who said the activities and support they delivered contributed to **better mental health and wellbeing**, around half (46% or an estimated 2,070) thought that **all or almost all** of their beneficiaries had achieved this as a result of the support they delivered.

As noted in Chapter 1, some caution needs to be taken in the interpretation of data on outcomes for beneficiaries given that is reported by grantholders. However, these findings were substantiated by beneficiaries of CCSF grantholders who participated in case study research, several of whom said they felt less lonely and had improved mental health as a result of the support received.

Almost all CCSF grantholders interviewed were confident that the support they delivered through their CCSF grant had contributed to positive outcomes for beneficiaries. Around a third of those interviewed had some form of mechanism for gathering feedback from beneficiaries on the benefits of the support delivered, such as surveys or informal feedback. For others, this was mainly based on their own perceptions and / or feedback from delivery staff and volunteers

The evidence suggests that the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund made a positive contribution to the first two components of the hypothesis that grantholders were able to reach people and communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and deliver appropriate support and activities. Survey research showed that:

- **A diverse range of people were supported by the grants provided by the funding**, with those groups identified during the scoping stage as most vulnerable to the adverse effects of a pandemic most likely to be reported as beneficiaries of the support and activity delivered.
- **Grantholders delivered a wide range of support to address the needs of different types of beneficiary groups**, which had often been tailored to ensure it could continue to be delivered during the pandemic.

Grantholders reported that this support had contributed to a wide range of positive outcomes for beneficiaries. However, as noted, this was **mainly based on perceptions** and has not been validated with those who received the support. Grantholders could have accessed **other sources of support** during the period of the grant, which could also have contributed to positive outcomes. For those outcomes which were **direct and immediate** (such as basic needs being met), there can be more confidence in grantholder perceptions of the contribution of their support. However, for those that are **less tangible** (such as being better able to respond to changing circumstances or having better skills, strengths and assets), the contribution of the funding is more speculative. As such, there is only partial evidence in support of the third element of this hypothesis.

### 3.4 Impact on the use of public services

**People and Communities Hypothesis 2:** Grantholders deliver activities to support beneficiaries that can (a) result in a range of positive outcomes for individuals that reduce the need for public services e.g. supporting children and young people, (b) strengthen the skills and assets of people and communities, and/or (c) supplement public services e.g. social care support. Together, this can reduce demand on public services.

#### HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT

Degree of confidence



**Grantholders reported that the activities they delivered contributed to positive outcomes for beneficiaries, which may have reduced demand for public services in the short or longer term.**

Supporting evidence includes:

- Around half of grantholders reported that their activities had helped reduce or prevent the need for public services and / or supplement the use of public services amongst their beneficiaries.
- Grantholders also reported increased resilience in beneficiaries, and that many had developed better skills, strengths and assets as a result of the support. This could be expected to contribute to a reduction in demand for public services in the longer term as they are better able to deal with challenges they face.

The second people and communities hypothesis relates to the contribution of the funding to **reducing the burden on public services during the pandemic**. This section assesses the evidence in support of this based on analysis of grantholder survey results.

Most grantholders thought the activities they delivered had reduced, prevented and / or supplemented the use of public services.

Grantholders were asked how they thought the activities delivered through their CCSF grant related to the use of public services amongst their beneficiaries. Around half reported that their activities had helped **reduce or prevent** the need for public services (52%) and/or **supplement** the use of public services (49%) amongst their beneficiaries (see Annex B: Table 3.4)<sup>34</sup>.

There were no notable differences on this measure by the types of activity delivered by grantholders. The only differences identified were by **grant type** (simple vs standard grants) and **organisational income**, which indicated that grantholders with larger grants and higher incomes were more likely to

**Which of the following statements best describe how the funded activities related to the use of public services (e.g. health, social care, or education services) by beneficiaries’?**

**26%** Activities **took the place** of public services that beneficiaries could not access or receive

**52%** Activities helped **reduce or prevent** the need for public services by beneficiaries

**49%** Activities **supplemented** the use of public services by beneficiaries

**31%** Activities were **not related** to use of public services by beneficiaries

<sup>34</sup> Grantholders were made aware as part of their Terms and Conditions that funding should not be used to cover what should be statutory provision and to substitute for where public services should be provided. Due to the emergency nature of the pandemic, some grantholders reported their activities may have taken the place of public services, this is likely to be due to the emergency nature of the pandemic.

report that the activities delivered through the grant had reduced, prevented and/or supplemented the use of public services. Grantholders who used their grant **exclusively to continue to operate** were less likely to report that the activities they delivered had an impact on the use of public services.

It is possible that some of the support delivered by grantholders contributed to an **increase in demand for public services** in the short term. As noted earlier in this chapter, more than half of grantholders provided information, advice and signposting to other sources of support. This often involved raising awareness amongst beneficiaries of the support available to them and facilitating access to this, which included public services. Whilst this does not directly support the hypothesis around reduction in demand for public services, it does mean that more individuals were able to access the support they needed.

CCSF grantholders interviewed provided a range of examples as to how they thought the support they delivered had impacted on the demand for public services. The most frequently cited example related to reduced demand for health services, which included GPs, psychological and counselling services and A&E, which was perceived to have reduced the burden on the NHS during the pandemic. Several grantholders had established partnerships with NHS trusts and GPs who were referring people for support. Other examples provided include a reduction in demand for:

- **Housing services** – as grantholders provided support to beneficiaries to access housing and in some cases provided temporary accommodation.
- **Jobcentre Plus** – through the provision of job search support and advice and guidance on access to welfare benefits.
- **Local authorities** – support for families was felt by some grantholders to have reduced pressure on a wide range of local authority services, including education and social services.
- **Social care** – the provision of support to older people was reported by some grantholders to have mitigated the need for some to be admitted to care homes and relieved pressure on care services.

# 4 Impact on Grantholders and Staff

## Key findings

**Grantholder Hypothesis 1:** Grantholders who have experienced losses in funding due to COVID-19 are able to (a) remain financially viable and for some (b) maintain activities, enabling them to continue to support their communities

Closely linked to this, **Staff Hypothesis 1** posited that: Grantholders who have had to (or would have had to in the absence of funding) reduce employee numbers as a result of COVID-19 are enabled to retain jobs, including furloughed staff, to remain financially viable/maintain activities, enabling them to continue to support their communities.

majority of grantholders to continue to deliver their existing activities and support for people and communities.

**Grantholder Hypothesis 2a:** Grantholders who experience an increase in demand for their activities (a) increase the breadth, availability and/or intensity of their services, and/or (b) support an increased number of people.

**Grantholder Hypothesis 2b:** Grantholders whose models of delivery are inconsistent with COVID-19 restrictions are supported to adapt and remove barriers to access them to reach (a) their existing service users and/or (b) new service users

**Staff Hypothesis 2:** Grantholders who experience an increase or change in demand for their activities as a result of COVID-19 are enabled to adapt their staff resource to meet this need by (a) increasing the number of hours of existing staff (b) redeploying/adapting staff activities (c) unfurloughing staff and/or (d) recruiting staff.

**The evidence demonstrates that the funding contributed to a reduction in temporary closures of some essential charities and social enterprises, which was one of the two primary objectives of the programme.**

Supporting evidence includes: (1) the funding contributed to ensuring around half of grantholders (47%, estimated total of 2,560 grantholders) had the financial resources to continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby reducing their risk of closure; and (2) the funding helped the

**The evidence shows that the funding supported almost all grantholders to respond to increased and/or changed demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby enabling them to provide support to individuals and communities that had been disproportionately affected (the second primary objectives of the programme).**

Supporting evidence includes: (1) the funding supported nine in ten grantholders (94%, estimated total of 4,940) to respond to increased and/or changed demand; and (2) more than three in five grantholders (62%, estimated total of 3,390) used their grant to adapt their staff resourcing in one or multiple ways.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the funding was instrumental for many grantholders to remain financially viable and/or continue delivery during the pandemic. It is unclear whether other factors also contributed to grantholders' survival but findings from the CCSF evaluation suggest grantholders likely used additional funding, for example from other grants, to further support their ability to continue operating.

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an assessment of the extent to which the funding contributed to improving the anticipated outcomes for grantholders and their staff. This includes individuals – who were directly employed by the grantholder as either full-time or part-time staff, including those furloughed due to the pandemic – who had been specifically retained, redeployed or recruited to deliver activities/support through the funding. The assessment is based on analysis of grantholder survey and draws on the qualitative research conducted for the CCSF evaluation to understand the extent to which the evidence is in support of the grantholder and staff hypotheses developed during the scoping stage.

### 4.2 Grantholder and staff hypotheses

Reflecting the two primary **objectives** of the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund (see Chapter 1), it was expected that grantholders would use the funding to:

- **Provide support to individuals and communities disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis, and/or**
- **Provide essential liquidity to avoid the temporary closure of their organisation.**

These objectives were translated into key hypotheses to be tested by the evaluation (see sections 4.3 and 4.4).

### 4.3 Impact on grantholders’ liquidity and ability to continue delivery

**Grantholder Hypothesis 1:** Grantholders who have experienced losses in funding due to COVID-19 are able to (a) remain financially viable and for some (b) maintain activities, enabling them to continue to support their communities

Closely linked to this, **Staff Hypothesis 1** posited that: Grantholders who have had to (or would have had to in the absence of funding) reduce employee numbers as a result of COVID-19 are enabled to retain jobs, including furloughed staff, to remain financially viable/maintain activities, enabling them to continue to support their communities.

#### HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT

Degree of confidence



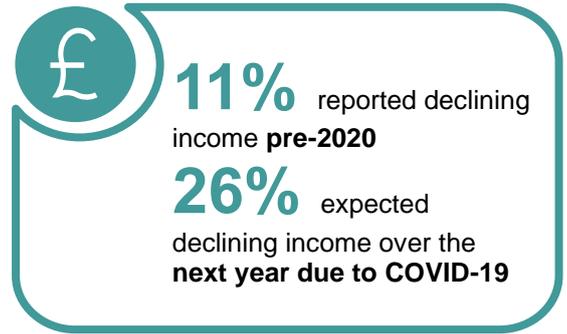
**The evidence demonstrates that the funding contributed to a reduction in temporary closures of some essential charities and social enterprises, which was one of the two primary objectives of the programme.**

Supporting evidence includes:

- The funding contributed to ensuring an estimated 2,560 grantholders had the financial resources to continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby reducing their risk of closure - suggesting almost half of all grantholders benefitted in this way.
- The funding helped the majority of grantholders to continue to deliver their existing activities and support for people and communities.

Most grantholders did not report being in financial hardship prior to 2020, but a substantial minority forecast an increase in financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When reflecting on their organisation's income **prior to 2020**, grantholders were most likely to report that their **income was either growing steadily (42%)** or had **remained broadly the same with occasional fluctuations (25%)** (see Annex B: Table 4.1). Looking to the **future**, a **substantial minority of grantholders felt pessimistic about the financial health of their organisation**, with more than one in four expecting to see their income decline steadily as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to around one in ten prior to 2020.



Findings from the CCSF qualitative research highlighted the impact COVID-19 had on normal income routes. For example, fundraising campaigns and events were not possible, expected grants were no longer available, and income from charity shops, community cafes, or hiring community centres stopped when they closed.

These findings are reflective of the situation faced by many organisations in the VCSE sector, that are experiencing financial uncertainty as a result of the protracted nature of the pandemic.

Nearly half of the grantholders used their grant to ensure their organisation had the financial resources to continue to operate and one in five stated they would have had to close or stop services altogether without the grant.

As detailed in Chapter 2, around half (47%) of grantholders reported using their funding to **continue to operate** (an estimated total of **2,560** grantholders), including about one in ten (6%) who used the grant exclusively for this purpose. Liquidity issues appeared to be particularly significant for nearly one in five (19%) grantholders who reported that they **would have had to close or stop services altogether without the funding**. This rose to one in three (33%) for the small sub-group of grantholders who used the fund exclusively to continue to operate (see Annex B: Table 4.2).

This, alongside qualitative evidence from the CCSF evaluation, **supports the hypothesis that the funding contributed to organisational survival for some organisations**.

Around a third of the CCSF grantholders interviewed said they may have needed to close without the funding. A clear theme was the value of being able to use funding to cover core costs, for example, staff salaries and office rent. Using the funding in this way helped CCSF grantholders who experienced financial losses because their typical fundraising routes had been significantly impacted. It is expected that National Lottery COVID-19 grantholders used funding similarly.

The majority of grantholders reported that the funding supported their ability to deliver their existing activities and would have otherwise delivered fewer services than usual.

In addition to helping grantholders with liquidity issues, the funding contributed to their ability to maintain activities and services. **Without the funding**, only a very small proportion of grantholders would have delivered a similar level of service as the prior six months. Most grantholders (**74%**) reported that they **would have delivered significantly or slightly fewer services**.

Without the funding, grantholders would have...



Base: all grantholder survey respondents (3,574)

Findings from the CCSF qualitative research showed a clear link between the use of the funding to ensure grantholders had the financial resources to continue to operate with their ability to continue providing support to people and communities. Paying for staff salaries and other core running costs was the route by which they were able to respond to the needs within their community, even if this was sometimes on a reduced scale to their usual delivery.

It is likely that most of these additional services (compared with what would have happened without the funding) were grantholders' being **enabled to continue delivering their existing activities and support**, which was the most frequently reported impact of the funding by two in three (**66%**) grantholders. This was even more notable for grantholders who exclusively used their grant to continue to operate (76%) compared with those who exclusively used it to respond to increased demand (55%) or to adapt delivery (45%) (see Annex B: Table 4.3).

The avoidance of (temporary) closures and grantholders' ability to continue delivering had important implications for staff. Using the funding to bring back or prevent staff from going on furlough appeared particularly important to ensure grantholders could continue their existing delivery.

Two in five (42%) grantholders **used the UK Government Furlough Scheme** and reported putting a median of four staff on furlough per organisation. Based on responses, grantholders put an estimated total of **21,300** employees on furlough (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations). Of those, nearly half (46%) used their grant to bring back or prevent staff from going on furlough – this represents one in five (20%) of all grantholders. An estimated total of **3,530** employees were brought back or prevented from being put on furlough using the funding, with a median of **two staff per organisation** (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).

**20%** used the funding to **bring back or prevent staff from furlough**

**2\*** staff brought back / prevented from furlough per grantholder on average (median)

**3,530\*** staff estimated to have been brought back or prevented from furlough in total

\* This excludes grants that were awarded as variations.

Compared with all grantholders, those who used the funding exclusively to continue to operate were more likely to have used the furlough scheme (56%) and were also more likely to use the funding to bring back or prevent staff from furlough (31%). Using the grant to adapt staff resourcing, especially bringing back or preventing staff from furlough, appeared to have an important impact on organisations' ability to continue to deliver existing activities and support – the majority of grantholders who used the grant to bring back staff from furlough (75%), increase staff hours (68%) or recruit staff (67%) reported that they were able to continue their existing delivery (see Annex B: Table 4.4).

The CCSF qualitative findings found that around a third of grantholders interviewed said they may have needed to furlough more staff without the CCSF grant. While grantholders were grateful of the option to furlough, this was avoided if at all possible, to minimise any impacts on their ability to deliver support and activities, as well as to avoid longer-term consequences on the health of the organisation. Among those who described that their organisation may have been at risk of closing without the CCSF grant, they noted that this avoided staff losing their jobs or becoming redundant during the pandemic.

**Use of the furlough scheme was greater among organisations with standard grants** (compared with smaller simple grants), those with a **higher annual income** (compared with smaller organisations), EDA grantholders and grantholders with contract variations (compared with remaining grantholders) (see Annex B: Table 4.6 and 4.7, and Figure 4.1). **Similar trends** were observed for **those who used the funding to bring back or prevent staff from furlough, recruit staff, increase staff hours and/or deliver training for staff and volunteers**. This is in line with expectations, as organisations with higher incomes tended to receive larger grants and were more likely to have larger numbers of staff, implying that they would make greater use of the furlough scheme and the staff-related benefits derived from the funding. The majority of EDA grantholders and grantholders with contract variations received standard grants while remaining grantholders mostly received simple grants.

**Most grantholders received other funding, which likely contributed to their ability to remain financially viable and/or continue delivery.**

The majority of grantholders (**79%**) were successful in applying for **additional grant funding during the pandemic** (see Annex B: Table 4.8). Based on the survey results alone, it is unclear how grantholders used the additional funding or how it may have related to their use of the funding. However, evidence from the CCSF qualitative research strongly suggests that **other funding sources (grants as well as reserves) also contributed to grantholders' ability to continue to operate (or could have)**. Given the emergency nature of the funding and circumstances for grantholders, it is unsurprising that they may have required additional funds. Despite this, the **evidence supports the funding as being instrumental and a significant contributor**.

Evidence from the CCSF qualitative research highlighted variation regarding the extent to which the CCSF funding was the sole factor affecting grantholders' ability to continue to operate. When asked how other funding related to the CCSF grant, responses varied from using the funding for separate purposes (usually complementary) to using the funding in similar ways to do more of the same activities. This included supporting grantholders to remain financially viable and continue to deliver their support and services. When asked what would have happened without the CCSF, most said they would have applied for other funding, put staff on furlough and/or delivered fewer services.

### 4.4 Impact of the fund on grantholders' ability to respond to changes in demand

**Grantholder Hypothesis 2a:** Grantholders who experience an increase in demand for their activities (a) increase the breadth, availability and/or intensity of their services, and/or (b) support an increased number of people.

**Grantholder Hypothesis 2b:** Grantholders whose models of delivery are inconsistent with COVID-19 restrictions are supported to adapt and remove barriers to access them to reach (a) their existing service users and/or (b) new service users.

To support grantholders' response to increases of change in demand for their activities as a result of COVID-19, **Staff Hypothesis 2** anticipated that: Grantholders who experience an increase or change in demand for their activities as a result of COVID-19 are enabled to adapt their staff resource to meet this need by (a) increasing the number of hours of existing staff (b) redeploying/adapting staff activities (c) un-furloughing staff and/or (d) recruiting staff.

#### HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT

Degree of confidence



The evidence shows that the funding supported almost all grantholders to respond to increased and/or changed demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby enabling them to provide support to individuals and communities that had been disproportionately affected (the second of the primary objectives of the programme).

Supporting evidence includes:

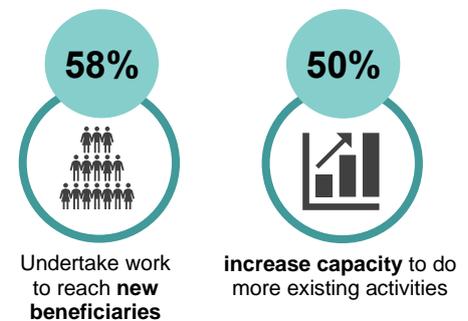


- The funding supported an estimated 4,940 grantholders to respond to increased and/or changed demand during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- More than three in five (62%) grantholders used their funding to adapt their staff resourcing in one or multiple ways, for example, by increased staff hours or recruiting staff.
- On average, grantholders increased staff hours by a median of 20 hours per week (totalling an estimated 73,450 additional hours per week) and recruited a median of one new staff member (totalling an estimated 2,550 new staff members). This excludes grants that were awarded as variations.

A substantial minority of grantholders used the funding to respond to an increase in demand for their activities and support and the funding supported more than half of the grantholders to undertake work to reach new beneficiaries.

Nearly half (48%) of grantholders reported using the funding to respond to an increase in demand (an estimated total of 2,590 grantholders). A similar proportion (50%) said the funding helped them increase their capacity to do more of what they were already doing. This rose to more than six in ten (64%) for the sub-group of grantholders who used their grant exclusively to respond to an increase in demand (which was notably higher than the other exclusive sub-groups; see Annex B: Table 4.3).

The funding supported grantholders to...



Base: all grantholder survey respondents (3,574)

In addition, nearly six in ten (**58%**) grantholders reported that the funding **enabled them to undertake work to reach new beneficiaries**.

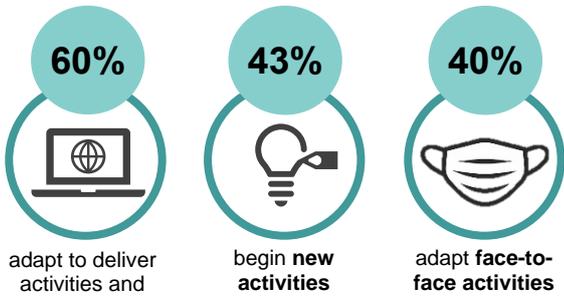
These findings appear logical and reflect the influx of support requests experienced by the VCSE sector as a result of the emergency context, which formed part of the rationale for distributing the funding.

The CCSF qualitative evidence offered several examples of ways grantholders adapted their support to reach new beneficiaries. For example, some grantholders had pivoted to delivering new activities such as dropping off food, medication and activity packs for people, which enabled them to reach many more beneficiaries than their typical activities and support.

The majority of grantholders reported using the funding to adapt their delivery models, which included adapting existing activities and/or introducing new activities.

More than four in five (**81%**) grantholders **used the funding to adapt their delivery models** (an estimated total of **4,440 grantholders**). Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that grantholders typical ways of working were often no longer possible. The most common adaptation that more than half (**60%**) of grantholders reported as being supported by the funding was **adapting activities and support to deliver them online**.

**The funding supported grantholders to...**



Base: all grantholder survey respondents (3,574)

In addition, around two in five grantholders used the funding to **begin delivering new activities (43%)** or adapted activities and support so that they could **continue to happen face-to-face (40%)**. As expected, these findings were even more pronounced for the sub-group of grantholders who used the funding exclusively to adapt activities, relative to the other exclusive sub-groups (see Annex B: Table 4.3). For example, half (49%) of this sub-group said they began new activities compared with 18% in the continue to operate sub-group and 24% in the increase in demand sub-group.

The CCSF qualitative evidence found that the most common adaptations related to switching remote ways of working. This included staff working from home and remote management of staff and/or volunteers as well as shifting to telephone or virtual support for beneficiaries. Among those adapting face-to-face support, grantholders used funding to purchase equipment to make premises COVID-secure and PPE for staff and volunteers.

This finding is again in line with expectations, as wider evidence from the VCSE sector has shown that many organisations found themselves in a position where the majority of their traditional delivery modes were no longer feasible in light of the emergency restrictions imposed.

Most grantholders used their funding to adapt their staff resourcing in one or multiple ways, for example, by increasing staff hours or recruiting staff. This was a key way in which grantholders used the funding to respond to increased and/or changed demand.

Three in five (**62%**) grantholders reported using their funding to **increase staff hours, bring back staff on furlough, and/or recruit staff**. Overall, grantholders used the funding to bring back from furlough, retain or recruit an estimated total of 6,080 staff members (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).



**62%** used the funding to adapt staff resourcing

**6,080\*** staff estimated to have been brought back from furlough, retained or recruited

\* This excludes grants that were awarded as variations.

\* This excludes grants that were awarded as variations.



**49%** used the funding to **increase staff hours**  
**20\*** additional hours per week/granholder on average (median)  
**73,450\*** additional hours estimated per week in total

\* This excludes grants that were awarded as variations.



**27%** used the funding to **recruit staff**  
**1\*** additional staff recruited per granholder on average (median)  
**2,550\*** staff estimated to have been recruited in total

\* This excludes grants that were awarded as variations.

Interviewed CCSF granholders described training on IT skills for remote working, using PPE and following safety guidance, and specific skills such as Mental Health First Aid to help staff and volunteers respond to increased or new needs within their communities.

Almost half (**49%**) of granholders **used their grant to increase their staff hours** and more than one in four (**27%**) used the funding to **recruit new staff**. On average, **granholders increased staff hours by a median of 20 hours per week** (totalling an estimated **73,450 additional staff hours per week**) and **recruited a median of one new staff member** (totalling an estimated **2,550 new staff members**). Please note that all the estimates referenced exclude grants that were awarded as variations.

Most granholders who used the funding to recruit new staff or increase staff hours reported that the grant had supported them to increase their capacity to do more of what they do already, reach new beneficiaries and/or adapt to deliver their activities and support online (see Annex B: Table 4.4). This suggests that additional capacity to do more, reach new people or pivot to online delivery partly came from increased staff resource.

Another way in which granholders used the funding was to **train staff and/or volunteers** – approximately two in five (**44%**) granholder used the funding in this way.

Taken in the round, the evidence shows that the **funding supported almost all granholders to respond to increased and/or changed demand** during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# 5 Impact on Volunteers

## Key findings

**Volunteer Hypothesis 1:** Grantholders who have experienced losses in funding due to COVID-19 are able to maintain their volume of volunteer hours to continue delivering activities and support to their communities.

**The evidence demonstrates that the funding contributed to the maintenance/increase of volunteer hours/capacity for a majority of grantholders, which in turn will have been one of the factors that enabled them to continue to deliver activities and support to their communities.**

Supporting evidence includes: (1) the funding supported the maintenance/increase of volunteer hours for an estimated 2,590 grantholders, which accounts for six in ten of the grantholders that were actively working with volunteers; and (2) grantholders that worked with volunteers increased their volunteer hours by a median of 16 hours per week, which amounted to an estimated 122,000 additional volunteer hours per week (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).

**Volunteer Hypothesis 2:** Grantholders who experience an increase or change in demand for their activities as a result of COVID-19 are enabled to adapt their volunteer resource to meet this need by (a) increasing the number of volunteer hours (b) redeploying/adapting volunteer activities and/or (c) recruit new or lapsed volunteers.

**The evidence shows that the funding contributed to ensuring over half of all grantholders were able to adapt volunteer resource to meet an increase or change in demand for services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic This in turn will have been one of the factors that enabled them to provide support to individuals and communities that had been disproportionately affected (one of the primary**

**objectives of the programme).**

Supporting evidence includes: (1) the funding contributed to ensuring an estimated 2,850 grantholders were able to adapt volunteer resource to meet an increase or change in demand, which was achieved in a variety of ways, including increasing volunteer hours (60%, an estimated total of 2,590 grantholders), recruiting new volunteers (39%, an estimated total of 1,650 grantholders) and adapting the activities that volunteers delivered; and (3) grantholders that worked with volunteers increased their volunteer hours by a median of 16 hours per week, which amounted to an estimated 122,000 additional volunteer hours per week (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).

**Volunteer Hypothesis 3:** Volunteers, who are coordinated by grantholders to support those most affected by the crisis in their communities, experience positive benefits. These benefits may include feeling motivated and useful, developing social relationships or connections within their communities, and having a sense of purpose, all of which may improve their wellbeing.

**The evidence demonstrates that nearly all volunteers that supported funded activities experienced a variety of positive benefits as a result of their volunteering experience.**

Supporting evidence includes: the most notable positive benefits reported as a sense of connection to their local community, improved mental health and wellbeing, reduced loneliness and social

isolation, and improved employability / skills development.

Whilst we can feel confident that the funding contributed to the positive benefits experienced by volunteers, we are unable to estimate the scale of this contribution. Volunteers may have worked across grantholder organisations, delivering both funded and non-funded activities and it is therefore possible that the positive benefits experienced were a result of one or multiple activities.

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an assessment of the extent to which the funding contributed to improving the anticipated outcomes for the volunteers giving unpaid help to grantholder organisations. This includes individuals who either: (1) give unpaid help through a group, club or organisation (formal volunteering); or (2) provide unpaid help as an individual to people who are not a relative (informal volunteers)<sup>35</sup>, and have been specifically redeployed or recruited to deliver activities/support as part of the funding<sup>36</sup>.

The assessment is based on analysis of the volunteer survey, grantholder survey, and GMS data to understand the extent to which evidence is supportive of the volunteer hypotheses developed during the scoping stage. The hypotheses related to the impacts on volunteers were expected to fall broadly into two main uses of the funding and understand the extent to which positive outcomes were derived as a result of the relevant volunteering exercises. These are summarised in sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 of the chapter.

Our analysis includes comparative results from the DCMS Community Life 2019/20 survey, which provides Official Statistics on issues that are key to encouraging social action and empowering communities, including volunteering, charitable giving, community engagement, wellbeing, and loneliness.

<sup>35</sup> Using international definitions of formal and informal volunteering.

<sup>36</sup> It was anticipated that insights from informal volunteering activity would be harder to establish because these volunteers may not have provided their contact details to the organisations or may not self-identify as a volunteer, for example, viewing the unpaid help they give as 'neighbourliness'. The scope of this aspect of the evaluation was therefore likely to be limited to an assessment of formal volunteering.

## 5.2 Volunteer retention

**Volunteer Hypothesis 1:** Grantholders who have experienced losses in funding due to COVID-19 are able to maintain their volume of volunteer hours to continue delivering activities and support to their communities.

### HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT

Degree of confidence



The evidence demonstrates that the funding contributed to the maintenance/increase of volunteer hours/capacity for a majority of grantholders, which in turn will have been one of the factors that enabled them to continue to deliver activities and support to their communities.

Supporting evidence includes:

- The funding supported the maintenance/increase of volunteer hours/capacity for an estimated 2,590 grantholders. This accounts for six in ten of the grantholders that were actively working with volunteers.
- Grantholders that worked with volunteers increased their volunteer hours by a median of 16 hours per week, which amounted to an estimated 122,000 additional volunteer hours per week (this excludes grants that were awarded as variations).

The funding enabled the majority of grantholders to increase volunteer hours at their organisation.

Six in ten (60%, an estimated total of 2,590) grantholders that worked with volunteers reported using the grant received to **increase volunteer hours** at their organisation, which amounted to a median of **16 additional hours per week / grantholder** (see Annex B, Table 5.1, this figure excludes grants that were awarded as variations). This suggests that the funding enabled the majority of grantholders to, at a minimum, maintain the volume of volunteer hours, and likely underestimates the prevalence of this output given the wording of the base question<sup>37</sup>.



**60%** used the CCSF grant to increase volunteer hours

**16\*** median additional hours made available per week/ grantholder

**122,000\*** additional volunteer hours estimated per week

\* This excludes grants that were awarded as variations.

Evidence from the qualitative research with CCSF grantholders suggested that it had enabled (both directly and indirectly) **at least some grantholders to, at a minimum, maintain volunteer hours**.

Examples of this included grantholders that reported they had **avoided having to temporarily or permanently reduce the support provided by volunteers** as they had used the grant to: provide training to enable their volunteers to deliver activities virtually; cover equipment costs to enable volunteers to continue to deliver activities and services face-to-face, for example, PPE or IT equipment; or increase staff hours or recruit a volunteer coordinator in order to manage existing volunteer resource; all of which would not have been possible in the absence of the grant.

<sup>37</sup> Grantholders were asked whether they had used the grant to increase volunteer hours at their organisation, as opposed to maintain their hours.

The qualitative research with CCSF grantees also found some examples of grantees who had increased (and therefore at a minimum maintained) volunteer hours at their organisation **but had not used the CCSF funding to do this**, and a small number of grantees who had experienced a **reduction in volunteer hours despite the funding**. Reductions in volunteer hours tended to be caused by some volunteers needing to withdraw from their role as they were required to shield or to find paid employment after a partner or loved one became redundant, or by grantees prioritising increases in staff as opposed to volunteer capacity. Given the similarities between the two funding programmes, it is likely that there at least some grantees experienced a reduction in volunteer hours during the period of the grant, or increased volunteer hours independent of the funding.

Taken in the round, the evidence demonstrates that the funding contributed to the **maintenance / increase of volunteer hours / capacity for the majority of grantees**, although for some grantees there were other factors that contributed to them being able to do this. There were also examples of where grantees were either unable to maintain their volunteer capacity or actively chose to reduce it.

### 5.3 Adapting volunteer resource

**Volunteer Hypothesis 2:** Grantees who experience an increase or change in demand for their activities as a result of COVID-19 are enabled to adapt their volunteer resource to meet this need by (a) increasing the number of volunteer hours (b) redeploying/adapting volunteer activities and/or (c) recruit new or lapsed volunteers.

#### HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT

Degree of confidence



The evidence shows that the funding contributed to ensuring over half of all grantees were able to adapt volunteer resource to meet an increase or change in demand for services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This in turn will have been one of the factors that enabled them to provide support to individuals and communities that had been disproportionately affected (one of the primary objectives of the programme).



Supporting evidence includes:

- Grants contributed to ensuring an estimated 2,850 grantees were able to adapt volunteer resource to meet an increase or change in demand
- This was achieved in a variety of ways, including increasing volunteer hours (60%, an estimated 2,590 grantees), recruiting new volunteers (39%, an estimated 1,650 grantees) and adapting the activities that volunteers delivered.

The majority of grantholders used the grant to increase their volunteer capacity in one of two ways, (1) increasing the volume of volunteer hours, and (2) recruiting new volunteers

As set out in the preceding section, **six in ten (60%, an estimated 2,590)** grantholders reported using the grant received to **increase volunteer hours** at their organisation (see Annex B, Table 5.2). Those that used the funding exclusively to respond to an increase in demand for their services were most likely to report having used the grant in this way – two in three (62%) reported having done so. A similar proportion (57%) of those that used the funding exclusively to adapt to deliver new or existing services said they had used the grant to increase volunteer hours at their organisation. This provides evidence that those who experienced an increase or change in demand for their services activated additional volunteer resource in order to meet that demand.



Data from the qualitative research conducted as a part of the CCSF evaluation suggests that grantholders relied on word of mouth and social media to recruit volunteers. Some reported more formal activity, such as leafletting and / or radio advertisements, some of which were funded by the grant. Fewer used more formal approaches, such as advertising for volunteers through their local council or schools/universities.

Capacity was also increased through the **recruitment of new volunteers**, where two in five (**39%**, an estimated **1,650 grantholders**) reported using the grant in this way. Moreover, those that used the grant to increase volunteer hours at their organisation were more likely to report having used the grant in this way – **half (54%)** said they had recruited new volunteers with the grant. However, two in five (45%) did not use the grant in this way. The findings therefore suggest that those grantholders who used the grant to increase volunteer hours at their organisation **did so in multiple ways** – both through the **recruitment of new volunteers**, but also by **increasing the hours of existing volunteers** at their organisation. This is in line with expectations, as it is reasonable to assume that grantholders used all avenues available to them to increase their capacity to respond to the pandemic related rise in needs of experienced by the people and communities they served.

Taken in **totality, an estimated 2,850 grantholders** used the grant to **increase their volunteer capacity**, either through the recruitment of additional volunteers, and/or by increasing volunteer hours at their organisation (from either new or existing volunteers).

**Volunteers reported undertaking new activities that helped respond to the pandemic-related circumstances, providing further supporting evidence that grantholders used their grant to adapt delivery to meet increased or changed demand**

Those that volunteered for a funded organisation most often reported undertaking the following tasks on behalf of the grantholder organisation during the pandemic: helping people access food and other essential items (33%); giving information, advice and / or counselling (also 33%); supporting people to access services (30%); ongoing mentoring and support for people (26%) and visiting or befriending people (also 26%) (see Annex B, Table 5.5).

While those who reported that they had volunteered prior to the outbreak of the pandemic undertook many of the same types of unpaid help, there were some **notable changes in activities undertaken**. Helping people access food and essential items increased (from 19% to 33%), while organising or helping to run an activity or event decreased (40% to 20%). This suggests that grantholders had **adapted** volunteer activity in order to meet new or changing demand.

## 5.4 Volunteer wellbeing

**Volunteer Hypothesis 3:** Volunteers, who are coordinated by grantholders to support those most affected by the crisis in their communities, experience positive benefits. These benefits may include feeling motivated and useful, developing social relationships or connections within their communities, and having a sense of purpose, all of which may improve their wellbeing.

### HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT

Degree of confidence



**The evidence demonstrates that nearly all volunteers that supported funded activities experienced a variety of positive benefits as a result of their volunteering experience.**

Supporting evidence includes:

- The most notable positive benefits reported as a sense of connection to their local community, improved mental health and wellbeing, reduced loneliness and social isolation, and improved employability / skills development.

Almost all (**99%**) of those who volunteered for an organisation that received funded reported **at least one positive benefit** to themselves as a result of their experience (see Annex B, Table 5.6). The main outcomes reported by volunteers can be categorised into four broad themes:

#### 1. Improved mental health and wellbeing

Two in five (43%) of volunteers reported **improved mental health and wellbeing** as a result of their experience. Two thirds (66%) reported that volunteering during the pandemic had **given them a sense of purpose and / or personal achievement** (65%), while just over a quarter (27%) said it helped to **reduce their sense of isolation**. The majority (85%) felt as if they were **making a difference**.

Such outcomes relate to existing evidence linking volunteering to improved well-being – particularly self-efficacy, social connectedness and sense of purpose<sup>38</sup>. Those that volunteered for a funded organisation reported **higher rates of life satisfaction**,



**85%** of volunteers said they felt as if they were making a difference

**66%** said volunteering during the pandemic had given them a sense of purpose

**43%** reported improved mental health and wellbeing from the experience

**27%** said it helped reduce their sense of isolation

<sup>38</sup> Understanding the impact of volunteering on volunteers, NCVO, March 2018

[https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy\\_and\\_research/Impactful-volunteering-understanding-the-impact-of-volunteering-on-volunteers.pdf](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/Impactful-volunteering-understanding-the-impact-of-volunteering-on-volunteers.pdf)

**happiness, and feeling as if the things they do are worthwhile** when compared against national statistics<sup>39</sup>, providing further evidence of the positive impact that volunteering during the pandemic had on the mental health and wellbeing of those who took part.

## 2. A greater sense of connection to their local community

Half (52%) said that offering unpaid help during the pandemic had given them a **stronger sense of connection to their local community**, enabling them to **meet new people** (43%) and **come into contact with people from different backgrounds or cultures** (49%).

Volunteers were also more likely to report a **strong sense of belonging to their local community** when compared to national statistics<sup>40</sup> (76% and 63% respectively), providing evidence in support of the hypothesis that volunteering during the pandemic enabled people to build community connections.

## 3. Reduced loneliness and social isolation

A quarter (27%) of volunteers said that their experience had **made them feel less isolated**. This is logical, given that for many volunteering provided them with the opportunity to meet new people and get outdoors (as evidenced above) at a time when the population was encouraged to stay indoors.

For the minority of volunteers who were shielding during the pandemic, and therefore delivering activities and support without having to physically go outside (for example, by telephone or video calls), this connection to the outside world was seen as particularly important. The qualitative research with CCSF grantholders found that relationships between volunteers and beneficiaries had become stronger, with **both groups achieving positive outcomes as a result**.

## 4. Skills development

For some volunteers the experience increased their **confidence** (24%) and gave them **new skills** (32%), for example, better listening, project management, or IT skills. Skills acquisition and improved confidence were outcomes most often reported by younger volunteers, typically those aged 16-24 or 25-34 (77% and 52%).

It is important to note that, whilst we can feel confident that the funding contributed to the positive benefits experienced by volunteers, we are unable to estimate the scale of this contribution. Volunteers may have worked across grantholder organisations, delivering both funded and non-funded activities and it is therefore possible that the positive benefits experienced were a result of one or multiple activities.

### A small minority of volunteers reported a negative outcome as a result of their experience

One in ten (11%) of those who had volunteered for an organisation that received funded reported a **negative outcome** as a result of their experience (see Annex B, Table 5.7). Looking at the nature of negative outcomes reported, 3% of volunteers said they felt at **higher risk of contracting COVID-19** or they were **out of pocket** (also 3%), while 2% said they **felt unappreciated** or that **too much of their time had been taken up** (also 2%).

<sup>39</sup> Data from the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, fielded 9 – 13 June 2021

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongre-atbritain/18june2021>

<sup>40</sup> Data from the Community Life Survey 2018/19, fielded April 2018 to March 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-2018-19>

### A majority of volunteers said they would volunteer again in the future

Nine in ten (92%) of those who had volunteered for an organisation that received funded said they were either certain to or very likely to **volunteer in the future** (see Annex B, Table 5.8). Positively, eight in ten (81%) of those new to volunteering said they **intended to volunteer again**.

Those who said they were unlikely to continue to volunteer tended to report that this was because they were **no longer able to dedicate enough time to it**. However, just seven volunteers reported this to be a factor, equating to less than 1% of survey respondents overall. CCSF grantholders that took part in the qualitative research noted that while some volunteers returned to work when their time on furlough came to an end, they managed to retain a number of the volunteers they had recruited during the pandemic.

# 6 Conclusions

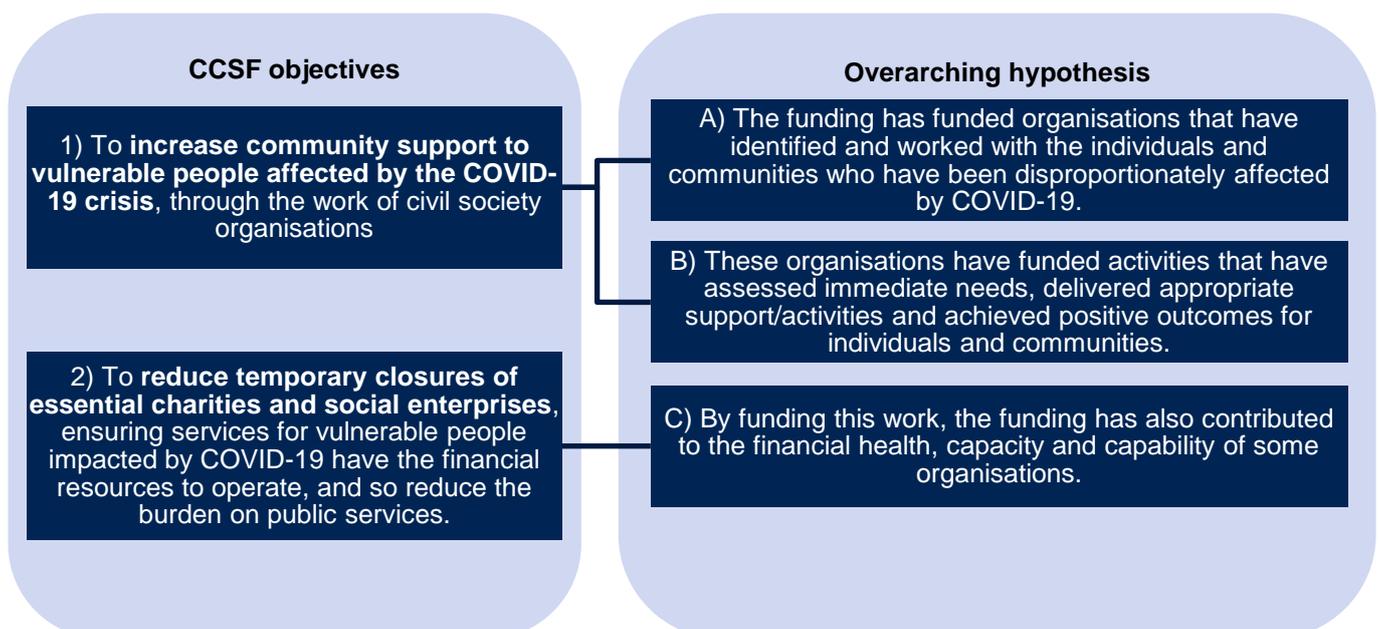
## 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters set out the findings from an **assessment of the impact the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund made to the people and communities that were supported, the organisations that were funded, the volunteers involved, and wider society**. In line with the ToC and associated hypotheses developed during the evaluation scoping stage, the assessment was broken down to focus on how the funding contributed to the anticipated outcomes across four groups: (1) beneficiaries; (2) grantholders and (3) their staff; and (4) volunteers. The hypotheses were developed to **reflect the short-term nature of the grant period**, and longer-term outcomes and impacts were outside the scope of this evaluation.

This concluding chapter brings together the evidence to review the overarching hypothesis and the two objectives of the funding.

## 6.2 Summary assessment of the overarching hypothesis and the funding's aims

The funding had two primary objectives and the overarching hypothesis was developed to reflect these aims. The overarching hypothesis can be broken down into three parts, which broadly align with the objectives as shown below. However, they are closely interlinked with one another.



The table on the next page summarises the evidence relating to each of the three parts of the overarching hypothesis.

<b>HYPOTHESIS ASSESSMENT</b>	
A) The National Lottery COVID-19 Fund has funded organisations that have identified and worked with the individuals and communities who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.	<p>The evidence detailed in Chapters 2 and 3 found that grantholders were successful in reaching people and communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19. This provides confidence that <b>The Fund successfully distributed grants to organisations who were able to engage the intended groups of people and communities.</b></p>
B) These organisations have funded activities that have assessed immediate needs, delivered appropriate support/activities and achieved positive outcomes for individuals and communities.	<p>As detailed in Chapter 3, there was good evidence that grantholders <b>delivered appropriate support to different groups of beneficiaries.</b> Most grantholders offered multiple methods of engagement, including by phone, video call and/or face-to-face.</p> <p>Grantholders acted as an intermediary by delivering the grant-funded support to improve outcomes for people and communities. Most grantholders reported multiple ways in which their beneficiaries were better off than they may have otherwise been without the grant-funded support. The most commonly reported outcomes for beneficiaries included <b>increased social contact, better mental health and wellbeing and feeling less lonely.</b></p> <p>However, the evidence on outcomes largely relies on grantholder and volunteer reported outcomes. For some short-term outcomes, such as basic needs being met, the contribution of the funding was clear. For others, the contribution of the funding was <b>more speculative in the absence of direct measurement.</b></p>
C) By funding this work, the funding has also contributed to the financial health, capacity and capability of some organisations.	<p>The funding was distributed directly to grantholders with immediate implications for staff and volunteers, which in turn enabled grantholders to deliver support to people and communities. As detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, this involved using the grants to <b>maintain, increase or adapt their activities.</b> This included using the funding to: bring back or prevent staff from furlough; recruit staff; increase staff hours; recruit volunteers; increase volunteer hours; and/or train staff/volunteers. The evidence suggested that the funding contributed to a <b>reduction in temporary closures of some essential charities and social enterprises.</b> As such, there was strong evidence that the funding contributed to the financial health, capacity and capability of organisations during the pandemic.</p>

It is important to situate the evidence supporting the overarching hypothesis within the wider system of factors that also likely influenced at least some outcomes observed. For example, findings from the Evaluation of the CCSF identified other funding sources also contributed to grantholders' ability to remain financially viable and/or continue delivery, and grantholders also acknowledged that there were other potential sources of support available to beneficiaries that could have contributed to positive outcomes. It is likely that the **funding was not alone in the complex configuration of factors that influenced outcomes.**

Bringing this back to the two objectives, the assessment demonstrated that **the funding achieved its first objective to increase community support to vulnerable people affected by the COVID-19 crisis,** through the work of civil society organisations. Most organisations reported they would have delivered fewer services without their grant.

The assessment also provided **promising evidence against the second objective to reduce temporary closures** of essential charities and social enterprises, though this was less notable for larger organisations. Overall, the evidence supported the hypothesis that the funding helped ensure organisations had financial resources to operate and continue to provide their support. However, the **evidence was less clear regarding the impact on public services**. In some cases, supporting beneficiaries may have reduced demand for public services in the short or longer term. At the same time, grantholders provided advice, guidance and signposting, including to public services, which could potentially have increased demand for public services in the short term. Whilst this does not directly support the hypothesis around reduction in demand for public services, it does mean that more individuals were able to access the support they needed.

These findings are in line with those of the similar and larger-scale CCSF Evaluation, which adopted contribution analysis and drew on both quantitative and qualitative primary research.

### 6.3 Lessons learned from the evaluation approach

Given the novel circumstances, there were a number of key lessons learned in relation to designing and delivering an impact evaluation of a large-scale emergency funding programme. These are outlined below to support the evidence base for evaluating similar programmes in the future.

- Given the emergency nature of the funding and its large scale, the evaluation necessitated a rapid and intensive scoping and set-up stage. This involved the development of the ToC, logic model, and hypotheses (including assumptions), which was primarily designed for the purpose of the CCSF evaluation, with some minor additions made to ensure it could also act as the basis for the National Lottery COVID-19 Fund. Reflecting on the triangulated evidence, **the ToC and associated hypotheses remain an accurate representation of the funding** and its contribution to key outcomes for people and communities (beneficiaries), grantholders and their staff, and volunteers. This confirms that the **scoping stage successfully set out a suitable design** and future evaluations of similar programmes may wish to follow a similar approach.
- A significant success of the evaluation was the **large-scale data collection**. Despite conducting research during a challenging time, often with time-constrained grantholders, the surveys reached the majority of grantholders and a large number of volunteers. Such high response rates suggest that the **early communication and requirement as part of the terms and conditions of the grant to take part worked well**. Funders of future programmes should consider whether this would be suitable as a means to boost engagement in evaluation activity.
- The survey asked grantholders to estimate numeric data, for example the total number of beneficiaries supported or additional number of volunteer hours enabled by the funding. The data was internally validated but future funders and evaluators should consider ways to gather externally validated data. For example, there may be **opportunities to introduce proportionate monitoring of the reach of grantholders that help minimise self-reporting bias**.

### 6.4 Concluding remarks

**In summary, the findings of the evaluation demonstrate that the funding successfully reached organisations who engaged and supported people and communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and that the funding contributed to the financial health, capacity and capability of grantholders. Furthermore, it helped develop an evidence base for evaluating emergency funding programmes.**

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