



## Baking In Resilience in the Health Sector

*In this blog, Mandy Roberts from The National Lottery Community Fund (The Fund) looks at lessons from the latest independent in-depth review report by Ecorys/ATQ on the Zero HIV SIB.*

As we emerge from Covid restrictions, reflections are taking place on how well the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector weathered the storm and the lessons that can be learnt for future resilience. This report does that from the perspective of a Social Impact Bond (SIB) and draws interesting conclusions for future SIB investors, commissioners and VCSE delivery partners.

[The Zero HIV Social Impact Bond](#), led by [The Elton John AIDS Foundation](#), bucked the trend amongst health-related SIBs during the pandemic by continuing to perform strongly, maintaining outcomes at pre-pandemic levels, and avoiding any contract changes. Whilst other SIBs were forced to move to fee for service or grant payments, this one didn't. What made it more resilient?

### **'Baked in' resilience**

This SIB provides outcome payments for the detection of those living with HIV (via testing at A&E departments, GP surgeries and in the community) and for persuading others to return to treatment (carried out by hospital trusts and GP surgeries). During the lockdowns, GPs were no longer seeing patients and community outreach venues (bars, clubs etc) were shut, effectively ending this work. Whilst testing still took place at A&E departments, it was very strong performance in tracing and bringing people back into treatment that enabled this SIB to continue to be successful.

So the natural resilience of some parts of the project kept performance strong. However, some delivery partners were not able to achieve anything like their pre-pandemic targets, especially the VCSE partners who were carrying out community-based testing. The lack of outcome payments for these partners could have necessitated contract changes, but this SIB had an ace up its sleeve.

Although this SIB makes payments for outcomes, providers also received an initial lump sum payment which covers a defined number of outcomes; effectively a 'minimum order' for outcomes. This 'baked in' resilience effectively mitigated the financial risks to providers during the pandemic.

Considering advance payments is therefore a key lesson not only for SIBs but all outcomes-based contracts when assessing the risk from external events.

You can read the full report on our website [here](#).