

Covid Recovery

Impact Report

2022 to 2023

Sheffield City Council, Voluntary Sector Liaison Team

The Fund

During the Covid 19 pandemic, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) were at the heart of Sheffield's response; able to reach into communities, to help those in need. Sheffield City Council launched the £1.35 million-pound Covid Recovery Fund in January 2022, to provide support for the city's VCS, which faced significant challenges due to the reduced income and increase costs incurred, as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

To help shape the funding parameters, we carried out an expression of interest, gathering information from the VCS, to identify and understand the needs of the sector as well as the likely demand. We derived the three themes of the fund from the 91 responses received, these were:

- Increased costs
- Increased demand
- Reduced income

Unfortunately, the fund was heavily oversubscribed, with a total ask of £4.5 million. Therefore, the panel felt it was important to distribute the money as widely as possible across the sector, to as many organisations as possible that were able to articulate and evidence against these three themes.

We felt it was important to give applicants as much information as possible about the criteria for the fund and the application process, so we worked in collaboration with South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau (SYFAB) running two online workshops to support organisations with their applications. SYFAB were also available on an individual basis, to support organisations with any queries relating to their application.

Grant Recipients

We received 127 applications and were able to make 68 awards, with 8 organisations receiving the full amount for which they had applied. Below are the organisations who received a grant and the amount awarded.

Organisation	Award Amount
Amy's House	£15,000.00
Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit	£37,676.00
Asperger's Children and Carers Together	£13,701.10
Aspiring Communities Together Ltd	£20,300.00
Assist Sheffield	£16,920.00
B:Friend	£14,352.00
Burngreave Works	£5,284.00
Cathedral Archer Project	£18,081.00

City of Sanctuary Sheffield	£44,814.00
CRESST (Conflict Resolution in Sheffield Schools)	£12,236.00
Cruse Bereavement Support	£15,000.00
Darnall Well-Being	£23,632.00
Depaul UK	£15,000.00
Disability Sheffield Centre for Independent Living Ltd	£15,400.00
Diverse City Development Trust	£15,000.00
Element Society	£10,000.00
Endeavour Training	£15,000.00
Firvale Community Hub	£15,000.00
Flower Estate Family Action	£10,000.00
Foxhill Forum	£15,142.00
Globalmama Enterprises Ltd	£9,850.00
Green City Action	£12,748.00
Greentop Community Circus Centre	£11,514.00
Heeley City Farm	£10,475.00
Heeley Development Trust	£17,934.00
ISRAAC	£21,840.00
Manor and Castle Development Trust	£38,075.75
MESH Community Cohesion: Mediation Sheffield	£29,163.00
Mum's In Need	£13,600.00
NOMAD Sheffield	£29,023.00
Paces Sheffield	£22,097.00
Parson Cross Community Development Forum	£15,000.00
Project Buzz Ltd	£19,018.27
Roshni	£35,000.00
Roundabout	£7,447.00
SAVTE	£41,748.00
Share Psychotherapy	£27,762.00
Sharrow Community Forum	£26,897.00
Sheffield Chinese Community Centre	£10,000.00
Sheffield Citizens and Law Centre	£50,000.00
Sheffield Flourish	£10,130.00
Sheffield MIND	£14,973.00
Sheffield Quaker Meeting House	£30,000.00
Sheffield Women's Counselling & Therapy Service	£50,000.00
Shelter	£15,000.00
Shipshape	£26,800.00
SOAR Community: Burngreave Library	£17,067.40
South Yorkshire Chaplaincy and Listening Service	£12,832.20
South Yorkshire Community Foundation	£32,209.00
South Yorkshire Refugee Law and Justice	£24,215.00
St. Luke's Hospice	£29,050.00
St. Matthews House - The Art House	£13,376.00
St. Matthews PCC	£13,400.98
St. Vincent De Paul Furniture Store	£12,728.00

Stannington and District Library Group	£6,000.00
Stocksbridge Leisure Centre	£30,000.00
The Arbourthorne Centre and Forum Ltd	£6,762.00
The Burton Street Foundation Ltd	£15,000.00
The Foundry Sheffield	£10,000.00
The Montgomery Theatre & Art's Centre	£15,000.00
The Pakistan Muslim Centre (SHEFFIELD)	£12,000.00
The Snowdrop Project	£25,351.00
The Suit Works	£7,866.00
Tinsley Forum	£23,386.30
Transport 17	£14,400.00
Vida Sheffield	£35,000.00
YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association)	£28,223.00
Zest	£22,500.00

Application Analysis

127 applications were received, across all of which, the average score of an application was 46.4% out of a maximum possible 100.

The Range:

6 organisations scored above 75%
60 organisations scored between 50.1% to 75%
35 scored between 25.1% and 50%
20 scored between 1% and 24%

The zero scores:

6 organisations scored 0 due to missing the submission deadline, as a result these applications were not assessed. The deadline was Monday at noon, applications were accepted and assessed until 5pm. An exception was made for a couple of organisations that were struggling with IT issues. No late application that was accepted, was marked down.

Awards:

- The largest award made was £50,000.
- The lowest award made was £5,284.
- The average award across all 68 awarded organisations was £19,852.94.
- 9 applicants received the full grant award amount which they had requested; these grant recipients were all in the top 15 scorers. The award amounts for full award recipients varied from £50,000 to £10,475.
- No award was made to applications that scored less than 50%.

Performance

47% of applications scored between 50 and 75%.

2 applications or 1.5% scored 80 to 85.3.
14 applications or 11% scored 70 to 79 10.9.
27 applications or 21% scored 60 to 69.

27 applications or 21% scored 50 to 59.
20 applications or 16% scored 40 to 49.
11 applications or 8% scored 30 to 39.
7 applications or 5% scored 20 to 29.
10 applications or 8% scored 10 to 19.
5 applications or 4% scored 3.5 to 9.
6 applications or 4.5% scored 0.

Overall:

The area in which organisations scored the best, related to demonstrating a funding gap or an increased need. 81% scored a yes but then found it difficult to articulate this need and link it to the Covid 19 pandemic, with only a 54% average score. However, this was the area where organisations scored highest overall, in comparison to other scoring areas.

Learning from the Covid Recovery Fund: A Snapshot of Sheffield's Sector

Overview

The Covid Recovery Fund supported VCS organisations in Sheffield, to cover a financial shortfall and/or meet the additional demand placed on them during the pandemic. A total of 68 organisations received funding, helping them to adapt in response to the pandemic and the subsequent Cost of Living Crisis.

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What were the awards used for?

- 22% developed new income streams.
 - 51% used money for increased demand.
 - 24% restructured operations.
 - 46% covered applicants lost income.
 - 11% were at risk of closure.
 - 32% had staff at risk.
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- £1.35 million was awarded and grant values ranged from £50,000 (The maximum possible award), to £5,284.
 - Lost income sources were varied: corporate donations and existing grants were frozen, while trading stopped for community businesses.
 - 70% of awards were between £10,000 and £20,000.

Organisational Health 2023 to 2024

Grant recipients were asked about their current health (September 2023).

Organisations Funding Position 2023 to 2024:

- 45% said they were better.
- 22% said they were still worse overall.
- 33% said they were about the same.

- The response from recipients is consistent with recent research by Durham University, into the region's Voluntary and Community Sector. Click the link to follow.
- 32% of organisations were optimistic about their income increasing in the next two years.
- Over a quarter expect statutory funding into the sector to increase.

Cost of Living – Impact

Increased living costs have meant that organisations are more expensive to run, utilities, higher mortgage payments and redundancies were referenced).

Some organisations are being asked for help by more people, while others are seeing the circumstances, of the people and communities they serve, worsen.

Challenges faced by VCS organisations, as reported to us:

- 12 organisations stated that they faced potential closure.
- 15 organisations stated that they faced redundancies of staff.
- 15 organisations stated that they faced worsening reserves.
- 62 organisations stated that they faced increased operating costs.
- 23 organisations stated that they faced increased disadvantage.
- 15 organisations stated that they faced increased demand.

Looking forward:

Grant recipients were asked to tell us about their future concerns:

42% said that they were worried about long term funding.

37% said that they were worried about core cost funding.

23% said that they were worried about living conditions worrying.

15% said that they were worried about policy environment.

15% said that they were worried about redundancies.

12% said that they were worried about income diversification.

3% said that they were worried about being unable to pilot new work.

Durham University also identified a trend of organisations successfully increasing unrestricted reserves while not committing them to future planning. As organisations say long-term and core income is becoming harder to generate this may explain why. Perspectives on the policy environment (Legal Aid, Domestic Abuse, Poverty) are similarly unoptimistic. Two organisations are unsure if they will last beyond this financial year, and one is winding down at the time of writing.

Case studies:

The organisation that's winding down:

We weren't eligible for any emergency funding because of our faith status: we only got Covid Recovery Fund and Furlough. It helped balance the budget for the year and meant less redundancies – three people left last year.

All our income stopped. Our bookings were from small groups supporting vulnerable people so we couldn't increase costs. A lot folded, some went online, others found free space.

We're closing and all staff will be made redundant in October 23. We repositioned as an office let and event space but there isn't enough income to cover the quiet months.

The organisation that's about the same:

The Covid Recovery Fund was a vital bridge to more normal training conditions. It helped to meet increasing/inflated utility costs, paid for our core finance and duty manager costs and maintained full-service levels.

It allowed time to continue developing strategic and operational plans. We implemented energy saving measures, designed a more effective service timetable, invested in staff training and rebuilt our volunteer base.

The organisation that's doing better than before:

We were using reserves and potentially closing at the end of 2022. Covid Recovery Funding prevented this and provided breathing space to recover.

We reviewed our operations and structure to be more efficient and robust, and recruited new volunteers to replace those who left in the pandemic. We've secured a four-year council contract and our reserves are rebuilding.

Thank you very much, the Voluntary Sector Liaison Team

Contact us:

Voluntary Sector Liaison Team
Grants and Voluntary Sector
Public Health and Integrated Commissioning
Sheffield City Council

General Grants Enquiries:

Tel: 0114 273 4631

Email: grants@sheffield.gov.uk