

COVID-19 COMMUNITY ACTION FUND REPORT

Introduction

The Exeter COVID-19 Community Action Fund was set up at the outset of the COVID pandemic to help community groups and organisations as they stepped up to help those people most affected by the pandemic. The fund is supported by Exeter City Council and a generous £100,000 contribution from Exeter Chiefs Foundation.

The initial fund offered up to £3,000 to community organisations who were facing a loss of income. Business grant support became available in May at which point these £3,000 grants was stopped.

The Fund is still open to support groups and organisations with a one-off grant of up to £1,000 to support projects for community led activities that will:

- meet urgent needs within the community
- cover transport costs for getting vital supplies to people isolated at home
- help people to stay connected and informed
- help people maintain and support mental health and wellbeing.

This report provides some analysis of the impact evaluations completed by grant recipients of the COVID-19 Community Action Fund. It summarises key themes arising from the evaluations, to help draw conclusions on how effective the Fund has been in meeting community needs.

Applications

96 applications were received, of which 49 were for £1,000 or less. The remaining 47 were applications that requested between £1,000 and £3,000.

£1,000 Grant

- 49 applications received
- 44 awarded (89.8%)
- 5 declined (10.2%)

£3,000 Grant

- 47 applications received
- 28 awarded (59.57%)
- 19 declined (40.43%)

Overall

- 96 applications
- 72 awarded (75%) = £109,109.17 (£105,659.17 for Community Action Fund plus £3,450 outstanding Ward Grant applications meeting Community Action Fund criteria)
- 24 declined (25%)
- **Total Committed: £110,409.17**

77 organisations applied for Community Action Fund support, these are listed in Appendix 1. Some organisations delivered more than one project, and submitted separate applications for each project. This is why there were 96 applications rather than 77.

Analysis of Evaluations Completed

Key Achievements and Things That Went Well (Positive Points)

1. **Online activities were a good substitute for face to face equivalents:** Some applicants have stated that by putting on adapted activities online, this helped to continue engagement with communities. The general theme is that online activities were well-received by communities and there were few problems with this approach.
2. **The speed at which some services were ‘redesigned’ to be remote:** Some applicants stated that they redesigned their operations to be remote in a speedy manner. FORCE Cancer Charity were able to offer nearly a 1,000 1:1 appointments to cancer patients via phone or video calls over the pandemic period.
3. **Normal services continuing to operate (remotely) to ensure no interruption:** Key ‘service’ organisations were able to continue their usual services in an adapted way with staff and volunteers offering continuation from their home. Examples include Citizens Advice Exeter and Exeter Samaritans. It is clear that the services these organisations provide are essential to some beneficiaries and encouraging to hear that pandemic disruption was minimised.
4. **Rapid, responsive distribution/acquisition of essential resources:** Many projects were able to acquire resources they needed rapidly, like IT equipment for remote working. Other projects expressed that distribution of resources to beneficiaries happened very quickly; for example clothing, prescriptions and food. Exeter City Community Trust provided 53 hardship packages, delivered over 50 medical prescriptions and supported over 100 households with essential food supply over the lockdown period.
5. **Lifting the burden from vulnerable people and over-stretched carers:** Projects that focused on prescription delivery and grocery shopping indicated doing this for and on behalf of vulnerable people as a positive point. Many projects were established very quickly by residents to support their local neighbours and local community. Examples of this work include Friends of Heavitree Health Centre, Hill Barton Residents Association and Pinhoe Community Support.
6. **Broader outreach:** Projects have said that they reached new residents during the pandemic. Examples include Exeter Mosque & Cultural Centre who reached people from different faiths including refugees. Freemoovement reported that they were overwhelmed by community support in their work to distribute hardship packages and prescriptions.
7. **Donations and/or further funding for continuity of activities:** Some projects reported that their activities were so well-received that it led to donations and/or further funding to enable to continue to support their project. An example is Community Equality Disability Action (CEDA) in running online educational sessions.

8. **Reaching the 'ineligible':** Freemoovement mentioned that many of the people they reached with food from the community larders did not qualify for the Government food parcels for people 'shielding', also people who felt they did not meet criteria to use a foodbank.

9. **Cross-organisational collaboration/partnership:** Some projects explained they collaborated with others for their activities. Examples include Co-Lab's project working with another agency to find ways to get a laundry service in place, as part of their clothing distribution for people in temporary accommodation settings.

Things to Do Differently in Future / What Didn't Go Too Well (Constructive Points)

1. **"Nothing":** A fair amount of projects reported that they would not do anything differently, citing that their project was delivered as planned with no major challenges.

2. **Reaching/engaging more people, including non-members:** Some projects indicated that they would have liked to reach more people, including a broader range of beneficiaries. Exeter Mosque is one example, who have identified they would explore sponsored social media posts and networking to reach more people. One project reported that some registered for online sessions but didn't attend, and that they would hold follow-up phone calls in future. Another project reported they would implement more targeting to encourage better take up of services.

3. **Relevant Skills:** Projects which focused on adapting their services for remote operation mentioned that limited/variable IT skills of some people was a challenge. For food projects, some reported it was challenging to find people that are appropriately skilled and qualified for cooking meals to distribute to others.

4. **Better emergency planning procedures for remote working:** Some projects have indicated that they would consider having better emergency planning procedures that may help to prepare for future challenges.

5. **Surplus supplies:** A small number of food projects reported that they had surplus supplies. However, these were donated to the food bank.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the completed impact evaluations, it shows that projects funded by the Community Action Fund had extensively positive benefits. There are four notable themes when it comes to constructive points:

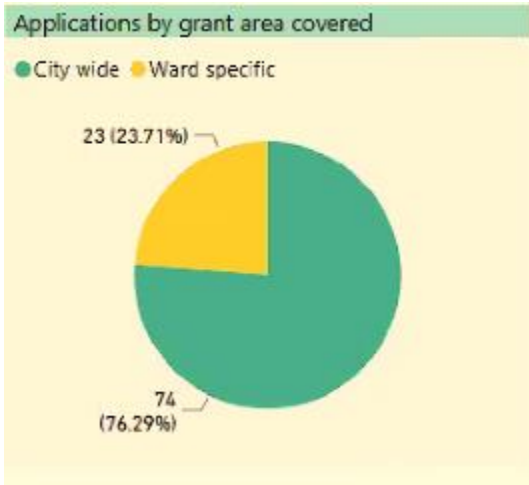
1. Reaching/engaging more people
2. Skills
3. Emergency planning
4. Social distancing

Appendix 1: List of Applicant Organisations

1. Age UK Exeter
2. Alphington Community Association
3. Alright Mate? CIC
4. Armed Forces Community Support Hub
5. Art Pack Project
6. Baby Bank Network Exeter
7. BCHA
8. Beacon Centre
9. bibic
10. bthechange CIC
11. CEDA
12. Citizens Advice
13. CLIC Sargent
14. CoLab Exeter
15. Connections Group
16. Cruse Bereavement Care - Devon
17. Devon Development Education
18. Devon Link Up
19. Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services
20. Double Elephant Print Workshop
21. Dreadnought South West
22. Elite Training South West Ltd
23. Estuary League of Friends
24. Exeter Chamber
25. Exeter City Community Trust
26. Exeter Community Centre Trust
27. Exeter Community Energy
28. Exeter Dispensary and Aid in Sickness Fund
29. Exeter Leukaemia Fund (ELF)
30. Exeter Mosque and Cultural Centre
31. Exeter Scrapstore
32. Exeter Sew Volunteers
33. Exeter St James Forum
34. FORCE Cancer Charity
35. Freemoovement UK CIC
36. Friends of Heavitree Health Centre
37. Friends of Ide Lane Surgery
38. Friends of St Thomas Health Centre
39. Headway Devon
40. Hikmat Devon CIC
41. Inclusive Exeter CIC
42. Hill Barton Vale Residents Association

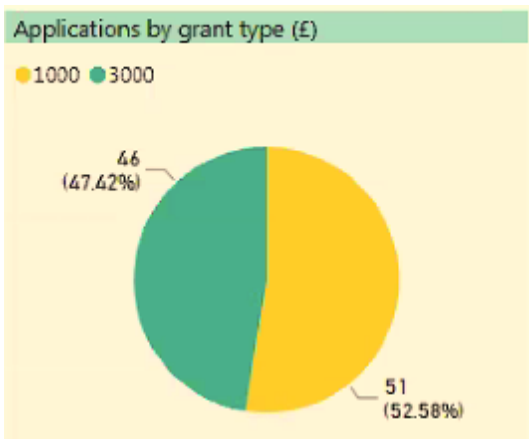
43. Home-Start Exeter, East and Mid Devon
44. Hospiscare
45. Inspire Thinking Ltd
46. Interwoven Productions CIC
47. It's All About You Wellbeing and Max Cohen Wellbeing Services
48. Jay's AIM - Helping Young Hearts
49. Julian House - Assertive Homeless Outreach Team
50. Living Options Devon
51. More Positive Me CIC
52. Music in Devon Initiative
53. Nutriri
54. PaddleBoat Theatre CIC
55. Park Life Heavitree
56. Pennsylvania Good Neighbour Group
57. Pete's Dragons
58. Phoenix Counselling services trading as Palace Gate Counselling Service
59. Pinhoe Community Centre- America Hall & Sunnylands Room
60. Pinhoe Community Support Group
61. Samaritans of Exeter, Mid and East Devon
62. Sanctuary Supported Living
63. SeeAbility
64. Sound Gallery CIC
65. St Sidwell's Centre
66. St Thomas Community Association
67. Stoke Hill Community Association
68. Stoke Hill Hot Food Project
69. Stop Abuse for Everyone (SAFE)
70. The Devon Carousel Project
71. The Pelican Project Exeter CIC
72. The Salvation Army
73. Topsham Community Association
74. Whipton Community Association
75. Whizz Kids Toys Community Interest Company
76. Wood for Good
77. YMCA Exeter Community Projects

Appendix 2



Grant area covered	Number of applications	Percentage
City wide	74	76.29%
Ward specific	23	23.71%

A total of 96 applications were received. The majority were for city-wide projects, while some were in respect of ward specific projects.



Grant type	Number of applications	Percentage
1000	51	52.58%
3000	46	47.42%

Of the 96 applications received, the majority were for £1,000 or less. Just under a half were for £3,000 or less.