

Fylde Borough Council Grant Scheme Evaluation

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1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Context	1
2.0	Executive Summary	2
2.1	Impact in the community.....	2
2.2	Working with others	3
2.3	Awards and Process	3
2.4	Future work.....	4
3.0	Methodology and Data Collection.....	5
4.0	Detailed Findings	6
4.1	Impact In the Community	7
4.1.1	Case studies of successful awards	12
	Case Study One: Wesley's Larder.....	13
	Case Study Two: Just Good Friends.....	16
	Case Study Three: The Volunteer Centre.....	19
	Case Study Four: Fylde Coast Women's Aid.....	22
	Case Study Five: UDevelop.....	24
	Case Study Six: Harmony & Health Singers	27
4.2	Working with others	32
4.2.1	Partnerships	32
4.2.2	Volunteer Capital	33
4.3	Awards and Process	35
4.3.1	Bidding Rounds and Panel	35
4.3.2	Awards Made	36
4.3.3	Overall Experiences.....	38
4.3.4	Speed, simplicity and flexibility	38
4.3.5	Applications.....	39
4.3.6	Communications	40
4.4	Future Work	41
5.0	Conclusion	42
6.0	Summary of Recommendations	43
7.0	Next Steps.....	44
8.0	Appendices	44
8.1	Link to survey	44

1.0 Introduction

Fylde Borough Council commissioned Trueman Change to evaluate a grant scheme that was set up to support vulnerable residents in the community during the Covid-19 pandemic. This grant scheme was run in partnership with:

- Fylde Borough Council (Fylde Council)
- Wyre Borough Council (Wyre Council)
- Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Council of Voluntary Services (CVS)
- NHS Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS CCG)

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the delivery of the grant scheme, examining whether it met its aims and objectives.

1.1 Context

In response to the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic, Fylde Council set up a Community Hub supported by volunteer groups to provide essentials and assistance to those on the shielding list and other vulnerable residents.

Through setting up this Hub, relationships strengthened between Fylde Council, Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde CVS, Wyre Council and NHS Fylde and Wyre CCG, leading to the creation of a strong partnership. This partnership group identified a specific need in the community and set up a grant scheme where local VCFS (Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise) organisations could bid for funds to support vulnerable local residents. Fylde Council agreed to release up to £60,000 in funding grants, which was matched by Wyre Council. Later in the bidding rounds, both the Fylde and Wyre CCG together with the Blackpool CCG also contributed funds.

VCFS organisations were invited to bid for funds from a minimum of £300 up to a maximum of £5,000 for projects that:

- met the immediate need of residents who were struggling to afford food and essentials due to Covid-19
- provided advice and information to residents affected by Covid-19 to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits, debt advice or employment support
- provided emotional and mental health support
- helped address social isolation

- demonstrated how significant numbers of residents most affected by Covid-19 would benefit from the funds, and which geographical areas and issues were being addressed

The grant scheme was run over four bidding rounds, where applications from VCFS organisations were evaluated by a panel of representatives from Fylde and Wyre Councils, Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde CVS and NHS Blackpool CCG.

This report evaluates the delivery of the scheme in more detail.

2.0 Executive Summary

Our evaluation identifies four key themes as follows:



Impact in the community



Working with others



Awards and Process



Future work

Following these themes, here are our key findings:

2.1 Impact in the community



- We confirm that the grant scheme met its own aims, successfully delivering support to vulnerable residents in the Fylde and Wyre and wider areas in a timely way through the channel of local Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFS) organisations
- Groups who received money from the grant scheme reported that the scheme was pivotal in keeping recipient VCFS groups running during the pandemic

- The grant funding made a timely, direct impact in the community through supply of provisions, equipment and support to those who needed it most. It allowed these groups to move people in the community away from hunger, isolation and fear towards social belonging, connection and optimism for the future
- The funding also made a timely, direct impact on the VCFS groups themselves, allowing them to begin to generate 'volunteer capital'. Groups were able to set up new infrastructure and equipment, build the strength of their volunteer teams and, in some cases, evolve the reach and scope of their service delivery in the pandemic period, enabling them to become more sustainable in the longer term

2.2 Working with others



- Fylde and Wyre Councils, Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde CVS and NHS Blackpool CCG worked effectively in partnership with each other to deliver the grant scheme's aims
- Effective partnership working allowed the scheme to deliver its aims successfully, injecting funds at speed into high-need parts of the local community
- The VCFS network has grown in strength as a result of the grant scheme funding, as groups have started to make new connections with each other. Councils and partners can benefit in the long term from the strength of this network

2.3 Awards and Process



- Fylde and Wyre Councils and NHS Blackpool CCG collectively spent £176,723.08 on 58 awards in the local area during the course of the scheme
- Fylde Council spent £49,069.24 on 25 grant awards across 4 bidding rounds
- The grant scheme was delivered with a quick 'on-the-ground' process that was simple, clear, and fit for purpose

- Groups awarded funding were very positive about their experiences with the scheme and felt that it has been a fundamental catalyst in the delivery of support in the community during times of highest need in the Covid-19 pandemic

2.4 Future work



- VCFS groups report that the Covid-19 recovery period is just beginning – there is more to do
- Groups and grant scheme panel members have identified a timely opportunity to help groups develop sustainability for the longer term of the pandemic recovery
- Future grant scheme funding should be given, where possible, in a further grant scheme bidding round
- This further bidding round should focus on helping VCFS groups to support themselves in the longer term, drawing on their resources and networks, and further developing volunteer capital
- The grant scheme panel should be adapted to include representation from social prescribing teams and GP surgeries for their on-the-ground local knowledge and connections
- Beyond a further round of grant scheme funding, the Community Project Fund at Fylde Council will be able to provide some continued support to VCFS groups in the longer term and the support of this from the CVS in promoting this will be helpful

3.0 Methodology and Data Collection

Trueman Change collected a range of data as evidence to evaluate the grant scheme. We gathered these data from a range of sources:

- ✓ Existing data sources such as output reports, grant bids, organisational reporting
- ✓ Online survey to all grant bidders
- ✓ Interviews and discussions with the five grant recipients used as case studies, plus an extra case study
- ✓ Interviews with key stakeholders such as Tracy Hopkins at CVS, Mark Broadhurst at Wyre Council and Fylde Council Community Hub Team reps Tracy Manning, Edyta Paxton and Joanne Collins, and input from Pete Smith at NHS CCG

Additionally, we ran a group meeting with Tracy Manning, Edyta Paxton and Joanne Collins (all from Fylde BC) to consider the future of the grant scheme, and how VCFS organisations can be supported in the Fylde and wider area in the Covid-19 recovery phase. We included views on this from Tracy Hopkins at the CVS and Pete Smith from the CCG.

We were originally commissioned to provide five case studies of organisations who were awarded funds to assess the impact of the funding in the community. Our evaluation includes an extra case study, as one of the nominated groups had not yet spent the funds awarded.

4.0 Detailed Findings

We present detailed findings in four thematic areas as follows:





4.1 Impact In the Community

Our evaluation found that groups used their grant scheme awards to tackle social issues at grass roots level. As a direct result of the scheme, vulnerable residents in Fylde, Wyre and wider areas received support in many forms, including:

- tangible things like food, essential provisions, technology, equipment (such as utensils, trolleys), doorstep parcels, toiletries, bedding and furniture
- intangible things like social and emotional support, remote phone calls, technological support, provision of remote activities, befriending and virtual networks
- covering costs such as costs of premises, hire costs for equipment and volunteer mileage

In using their funding in these ways, groups were responding directly to a range of urgent needs in the community as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our findings reflected that the funding has been a catalyst in addressing some of the deep social problems felt in the Covid-19 pandemic. Groups said:

“Many of our LGBTQ+ group members are victims of digital poverty and struggled to engage with peers through the lockdowns due to a lack of technology awareness and physical digital tools”

“The grant enabled us to purchase additional digital equipment i.e. tablets and mobile Wi-Fi units for those unable to afford their own”

“We run soup kitchens and drop-ins for the homeless and socially isolated. The scheme has been a boost as demand for food and toiletries etc. has increased significantly in the last 18 months”

Groups report that the provision of goods and support through the funding they received has led to positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of the residents they supported during the pandemic. Our research showed that the funding directly helped to address some of the short-term issues brought about by Covid-19, helping to respond to local needs, mobilise assets, purchase equipment and cover core costs. In our survey people said:

“The scheme has enabled money to get to those in need quickly and efficiently”

“It provided help just when we needed it most”

“The funding brought us through a difficult period with more stability”

“[The funding] made a massive, massive difference to people’s lives”

Without the funding, groups felt they wouldn’t have been able to deliver essentials, equipment and support to the same volume or timeframes, or in some cases at all. People said:

“The funding has been instrumental in us remaining operational throughout the pandemic”

“Those who were already struggling with life have found it even harder since Covid. The funding has enabled us to provide a service to them when nobody else would or could help”

“People’s lives have improved. Smartening up their appearance, starting to use exercise to improve their mental wellbeing, being able to have the support there each week and have the support there to their next desired pathway”

“We would have tried our best without the money but more people would have been isolated”

Comments also reflected that the funding offered support to groups who may otherwise have remained unsupported during the Covid-19 pandemic. People said for example:

“We would not have been able to provide equipment and corresponding support to individuals living in this area as we had no alternative funding available”

“Many of our people would have been isolated, alone, desperate and with low self-esteem and no company”

“We would have struggled immensely to provide essentials to those most at need”

We found that most groups felt it was unlikely that they would have received similar funding from elsewhere. The scheme set out initial aims to “avoid duplication with other forms of support”. We found that this aim was largely met.

13. How likely is it that you could have been able to obtain this funding from anywhere else at the time you applied?



Many of the groups we received comments from felt they have been able to use their funding to help residents look to the future and create hope, “picking people up” after the peak of the pandemic. People often spoke of how use of the funding brought about optimism and positive messaging, against a backdrop of pessimism and negative messaging in the pandemic. When speaking with people about the impact of the funding people often used powerful language such as “miracle” and “godsend”, showing the profound impact of the scheme in communities. Our case study research also showed that people referred a number of times to the scheme as having “saved lives”.

When given the opportunity to give open comments about the scheme, groups chose mainly to express thanks, saying:

“We are extremely grateful for the grant which has made a significant impact in the area and has contributed to the continued success and extension of the project”

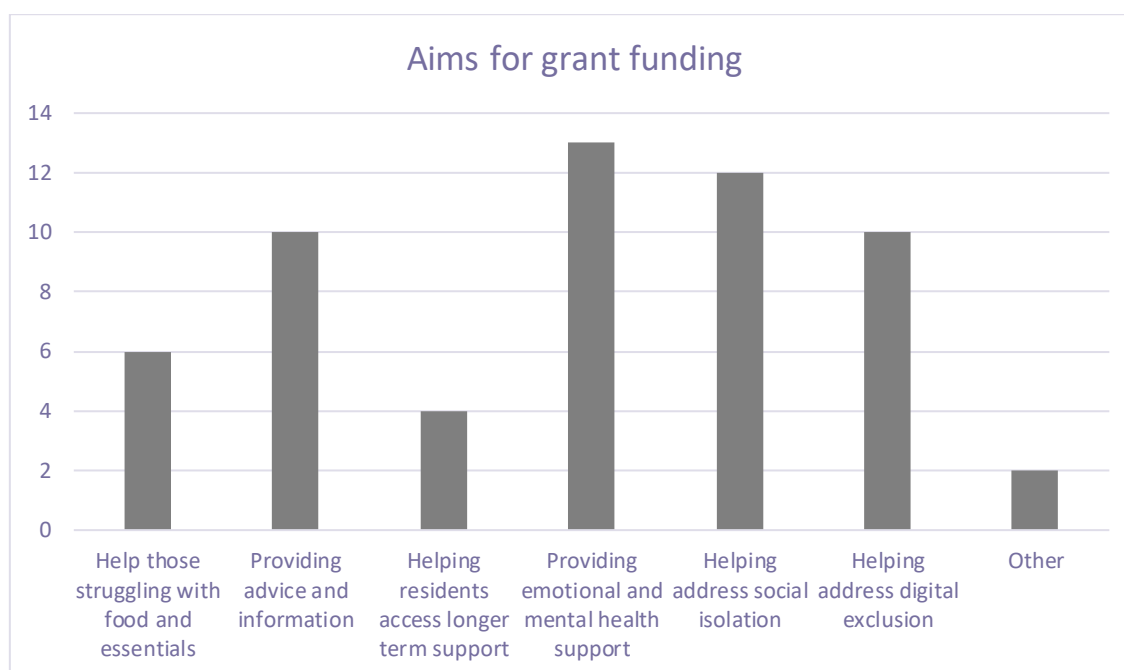
“Thank you for your generosity and support to people in dire need”

“It came at exactly the right time for us. Not only did it give us a much-needed boost at Christmas after a very bleak few months but it’s given us vision and encouragement for the future. Spurred us on to continue to greater things”

“Just to say a huge thank you for enabling us to continue our work in an enriched capacity during a time of such chaos and turmoil”

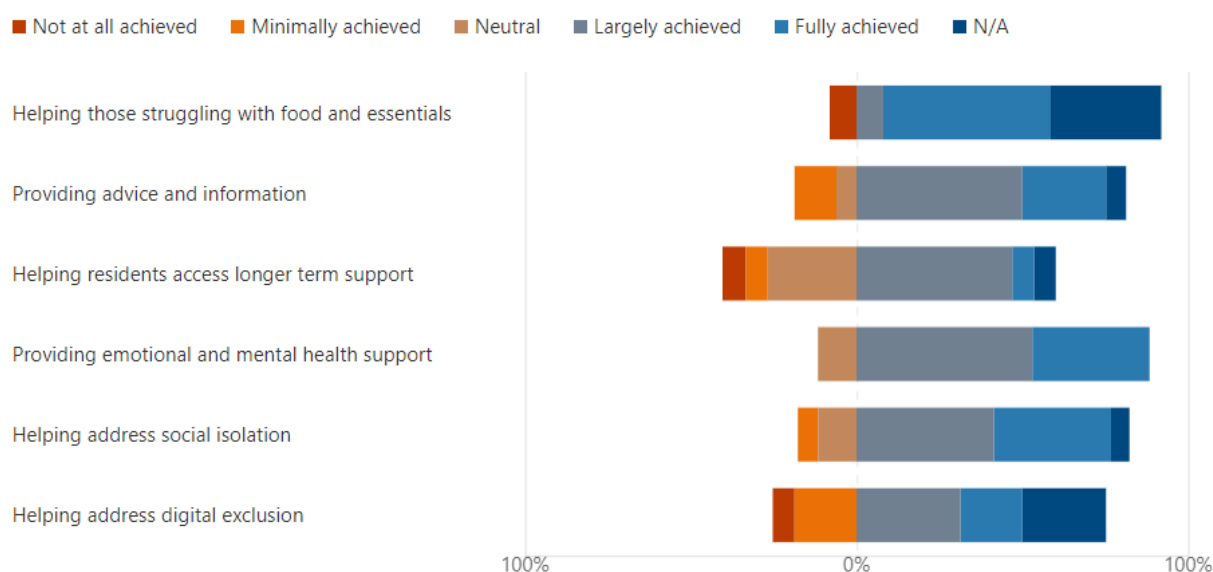
We found that groups applied for grant scheme funding with a broad range of aims as follows:

10. What did your organisation aim to achieve with the funding from the grant scheme?



The top two aims quoted in our survey results were providing emotional and mental health support and helping address social isolation. Our survey showed that fewer groups noted longer term aims. Our survey showed that most groups feel that they either largely or fully achieved their aims with the funding:

12. Thinking about your organisation's aims for the funding, to what extent do you feel you have been able to achieve these (as applicable)?



Groups felt most able to achieve aims in areas of emotional or mental health support, whereas aims to provide access to longer term support for residents remained least fully achieved. This fits with our findings about how more work can be done to support groups to achieve longer term aims.

Whilst most groups were able to deliver their aims, some groups we spoke to reported that they had difficulties delivering support with digital technology. When asked why this was, groups noted problems with basic Wi-Fi provision, privacy and security issues around people living in shared accommodation and, particularly in older age groups, skills in using the equipment. **We recommend** that any future grants for digital technology are made with guidance in place to help groups deliver their aims. **We also recommend** that groups applying for funding for similar aims, such as addressing digital exclusion aims, should be signposted to each other for peer support during the post-award process.

Given that some groups reported that some aims were not fully achieved, and that case studies showed some groups weren't able to spend funds exactly as planned, **we recommend** that it would be helpful to introduce checkpoints with groups after funds are granted. At these check points, Fylde Council and partners can follow up on how and when funds are spent,

with a light-touch approach. This would help to address any difficulties encountered using signposting or partnerships with other organisations in the VCFS network.

4.1.1 Case studies of successful awards

To examine the impact of the grant scheme funding further, we conducted case studies with six VCFS organisations who were successfully awarded funding as follows:

- Wesley's Larder (Fylde)
- Just Good Friends (Fylde)
- The Volunteer Centre (Fylde)
- Fylde Coast Women's Aid (Fylde, Wyre and Blackpool)
- UDevelop (Wyre)
- Harmony & Health Singers (Wyre)

These case studies demonstrate in detail how the funding has been used to create an impact in local communities. We have examined six case studies because one of our five original case studies had not yet spent the funds awarded.

Case Study One: Wesley's Larder

Wesley's Larder & Cafe



GROUP PURPOSE

- Providing low cost, wholesome, free meals for families and individuals reducing hunger, isolation and food waste, with focus on families



AREA

Fylde



FUNDS AWARDED

£5,000 in bid round three
£1,129 in bid round four



FUNDING GOALS

- Give access to food and hot meals
- Reduce emotional and financial pressure on people
- Remove dilemma to "heat or eat"



RESULTS

- Increased volume of food delivered, more families supported, less families hungry
- Ability to get food from new sources and freeze foods
- Kitchens and deliveries made Covid-safe through PPE and Covid measures
- Essential costs covered

TruemanChange.

Wesley's Larder came to know about the grant scheme funding through word of mouth from another VCFS group. They used their funding to:

- provide PPE and sanitiser to make their services and premises Covid-safe
- make and deliver 70+ Christmas dinners for vulnerable families
- cover running costs of heating and cleaning
- be able to freeze foods to reduce wastage and provide meals to more families
- give support to schools and develop links to the New Roots programme to support asylum seekers with language classes, food, and accommodation

The funding allowed Wesley's Larder to deliver food parcels in more volume to the community as follows:

- 30 meals a week to the Lower Lane estate area
- 30 food bags a week to the Kirkham area
- 15 households a week supported in the Freckleton area
- 90 parcels delivered a week in the Church Road / St Annes area

When talking about the impact the funding has had, Wesley's Larder said "the funding took away worry about income streams for a while. It was a huge relief to have the church open and people coming in for help."

The group reported that the funding allowed them to generate volunteer capital in the following ways:

- creating credibility to get more funding elsewhere like from the Rotary Club
- giving church confidence in doing new things
- joining up with partners at the Well Church (who also received funding). The two churches combined resources to create extra impact with the funds given to both organisations, sharing delivery of support to communities. Wesley's Larder did the cooking of meal parcels and Well Church looked after distribution
- volunteers became comfortable to return to their roles gaining confidence from seeing other volunteers at the Well Church
- it led to new opportunities, for example using different sources to obtain food, offering a broader range of foods to residents, refurbishing kitchens at some locations and developing the offer of a new community café
- running a larder from two more churches, expanding geographically to the Freckleton and Kirkham areas, where they have been able to support more new families



Wesley's Larder used their funding to keep their services open welcoming people who needed food and making deliveries with help of partners

The funding allowed them to show their credibility and win further funding from the Rotary Club and other partners



They used funding to cover essential costs and produce flyers to raise awareness

Wesley's Larder freckleton
Freckleton Methodist Church
Kirkham Road, Freckleton, PR4 1HS

**Open on Wednesdays
2.15 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.**

A food store where the groceries are free!

Open to everyone no appointment or referrals needed.

Bring your own bag.

Come and see what we have collected from Tesco, Lidl, FareShare

Run by volunteers we are here to help you.

All Covid protocols observed

The funding allowed Wesley's Larder to expand the range of food offered and range of food sourced from new partners



TruemanChange.

Case Study Two: Just Good Friends

Just Good Friends



GROUP PURPOSE

- Restorative approach to loneliness and isolation
- Improving feelings of self-worth by making people feel valued
- Helping people create new supportive friendship groups



FUNDING GOALS

- Keeping people connected because “people need people”
- IT support and equipment to reduce digital exclusion, especially in older people



AREA

Fylde



FUNDS AWARDED

£5,000 in bid round two



RESULTS

- Retaining membership of 250+ group members, many at high-risk of social isolation
- Increasing mental health and wellbeing of group members, retaining a sense of belonging and social togetherness

TruemanChange.

This group has 250+ members and they used the funding to support their membership, many of whom were at high risk of social isolation and mental health issues. They used the funds to build capacity in their group and keep it running, helping them to:

- provide remote support, keeping people in touch with each other and staying connected to the group base
- provide online exercises to those who were less physically active or shielding
- do walks with people at risk of loneliness in their garden or yard or, later, simply walking around their home
- provide online creative crafts and quizzes to keep people socially connected
- deliver essentials like food and prescription medicines
- explain Government Covid-19 guidelines, particularly relating to shielding, and offer advice
- provide doorstep deliveries including newsletters and small gifts to increase sense of belonging
- monitor people's wellbeing doing 'well checks', working on a traffic light system for highest concerns

The group initially aimed to use the funding for IT support advice and guidance to over 100 of their most vulnerable and isolated members to become more confident in the use of laptops, tablets/iPads and Smartphones, but this aim wasn't fully met.

However, through building capacity in other ways listed above, Just Good Friends said they used the funding to:

"bring joy to people's lives"

"we couldn't have done what we've been doing without financial help"

"open people's worlds up"

"people say it saved their lives"

"not leave people behind"

"the difference in people is absolutely staggering"

Just Good Friends said the funding helped the group to develop in the longer term, creating 'volunteer capital' in the following ways:

- retaining group membership
- creating stronger partnerships with social prescribing team and GP surgeries
- enabling the group to continue from a positive place post-lockdown



Just Good Friends provided remote support to those who were socially isolated, improving their mental health, increasing happiness and wellbeing

The funding helped to providing a network to combat loneliness



The funding was used to keep the group running, combatting loneliness in vulnerable people



Group users said of how the group helped them during lockdown...

"You've done so much to help me since I met you and joined Just Good Friends"

"You have no idea what a relief that is that I will get help with my computer, when you are on your own with no one to help"

TruemanChange.

The impact of this group can also be seen in a video from the BBC with the following link: https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=1347899125595698&_rdr

Case Study Three: The Volunteer Centre

The Volunteer Centre



GROUP PURPOSE

- Providing support and inspiration for volunteers, organisations and groups to develop volunteering in the community



AREA

Fylde



FUNDS AWARDED

£1,800 in bidding round 4



FUNDING GOALS

- Providing support and educational skills to families of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers



RESULTS

- 5 laptops, equipment and technical support issued to Syrian refugee and asylum-seeking families
- Families' English language learning and wider education was able to continue during lockdown
- Improving families' prospects and wellbeing, and reducing social isolation keeping people connected to relatives and friends

TruemanChange.

This group used their grant funding to provide five laptops and equipment on a two-year loan to five families of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in the St Anne's area of Fylde. These families previously only had phones which were proving difficult to use for remote learning. Families also received technology support, and equipment such as laptop bags, mouse and software. The families used the laptops with the aim of continuing their English language learning and wider education during the Covid-19 lockdowns. The group was also able to translate educational content into Arabic. Families attended virtual learning sessions and group sessions on Zoom to enable their learning, particularly in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The equipment and technology provided "improved the lives of the whole family", including some families with young and teenage children. The laptops helped with:

- ESOL learning
- wider activities and family learning, including accessing online content with stories, pictures, and audiobooks where the whole family learned together
- maintaining relationships with their family and friends, reducing social isolation
- enhancing the prospects of the families supported
- improving the wellbeing of these families

Some families were able to gain qualifications and certifications, with many of the adults able to take theory and practical driving tests, increasing the social reach and opportunities of the families supported. The group said that, in itself, this "takes down barriers and creates equality". They said "the impact of the funding was tenfold" and families said "it allowed us to continue our learning".

The equipment and technology provided by the funding has helped these five families initially, but after the two-year loan period will also be reused by other families. The group said that, in this way, the funding has "left a legacy". They said "to be able to access this has been just phenomenal. It has changed people's lives. A thank you to the funders is not enough".

The group said that the funding has helped to grow volunteer capital by allowing the group to make stronger links with the local College, paving the way for future digital training options.



5 families of Syrian refugees were given support through technology, equipment and virtual learning using the funding

Learners were awarded achievements and qualifications through the funding given from the grant scheme



The families who were supported have been able to navigate lockdown with much more confidence and with improved skills

The funding has improved the life chances of children in the families who were supported, developing new skills and confidence

The families have all been so grateful for this support which has helped them to continue learning English throughout. In addition, it has allowed them to stay in touch with family, friends, and schools. In fact, it has also become a lifeline to most of them by allowing them to stay in touch with support staff who have kept them up to date with any new guidelines and information from the Government. They have also been able to contact GP and Job Centre's, as well as being able to book online for Covid Injections when required.



TruemanChange.

Case Study Four: Fylde Coast Women's Aid

Fylde Coast Women's Aid



GROUP PURPOSE

- Offering free advice and support to individuals who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse, stalking and child sexual exploitation



AREA

Fylde, Wyre and Blackpool



FUNDS AWARDED

£5,000 in bidding round four



FUNDING GOALS

- Deliver innovative project The Recovery Pathway
- Support for women at medium and standard risk of domestic abuse
- Create a tailored pathway for each woman



RESULTS

- Loss of funding from elsewhere to deliver this earlier in the pandemic
- Funds not spent when received, but funds to be spent in September 2021

TruemanChange.

This group applied for a grant to run a project called The Recovery Pathway which delivers a package of support for women at medium and standard risk of domestic abuse.

The aim of the funding was to fund an Outreach Worker to map a unique tailored Recovery Pathway for a group of between 60 - 65 women, to include emotional, psychological and practical support e.g. safety planning, identifying coping mechanisms, parenting and improving financial capability.

**“A NEEDS LED
APPROACH”**
PREVENTION WORK
RECOVERY PATHWAY
ASSESSING RISK
PEER SUPPORT SESSIONS
GROUP THERAPY

At application stage, the group thought that the funding would allow essential work to continue during the pandemic and cover the full project costs until 31st March 2021. However, Fylde Coast Women’s Aid suffered a loss of funding from elsewhere and were not able to recruit an Outreach Worker with grant scheme funding alone. They have instead applied for (and won) further funding of £15,000 from the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office and are using the combined the funds to pay for a three-day-a-week Outreach Worker post for 12 months, with the same purpose, from September 2021.



The support that will be given through the funding will help women, especially older women, victims of financial abuse, those lacking in confidence and those without technology skills to increase their safety and optimism through:

- Peer support
- Drop-in sessions
- Talks from external agencies

Case Study Five: UDevelop

UDevelop



GROUP PURPOSE

- Mental health and wellbeing preventative service to help people gain new skills and confidence



AREA

Wyre



FUNDS AWARDED

£2,500 in bidding round one



FUNDING GOALS

- Delivering a remote online health and wellbeing course to improve personal development and wellbeing



RESULTS

- Increased confidence and personal development of learners
- Increased mental health and wellbeing
- Improved access to further opportunities
- Allowing people to “start a new life” despite Covid-19 pressures

TruemanChange.

This group used their funding to deliver a 4-week remote mentoring programme working with individuals in isolation to improve personal development. It particularly targeted unemployed, economically inactive, vulnerable groups, delivering a digital 'starter programme' to 26+ people during the pandemic in several cohorts. The funding especially helped younger people between the ages of 19 - 21. Many of the learners on the programme faced issues with mental health, family / relationship problems, potential homelessness, and alcohol / drug use, amongst other things.

All learners received weekly support through phone calls, Zoom, Microsoft teams or WhatsApp, working with learners to set goals and work on tasks.

The funding has allowed the group to build skills and confidence of local people. People who attended the programme said they could "start a new life" by improving:

- Confidence to work and take part in things
- Health and fitness levels
- Personal routines and image
- Access to volunteering opportunities
- Access to jobs and apprenticeships
- Severity of mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and self-harm

As well as increasing skill sets and personal development opportunities for these individuals, UDevelop were able to contribute to wider socio-economic aims such as reducing unemployment, reducing anti-social behaviour, and reducing reoffending.

Through the funding, UDevelop were able to support partnerships and create 'volunteer capital' by:

- making referrals to the Lancashire programme Building Better Opportunities
- building up their network with the YMCA, Job Centre, work coaches, NHS social prescribers, support workers and other partners
- expanding to new geographical areas, delivering this programme in the Wyre area
- obtaining more funding

19:26

YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE COURSE!!

- How do you feel? Do you think you will be able to sustain your changes? I feel *more confident* - *less* *stressing* in the course - *and* I will be able to *continue* with the changes made
- What do you want to do next? I want to *continue* the *exercise* and *healthy* *living* - *to* *continue* *building* my *confidence* & *work* *balance* in *playing* *jobs*
- How can we help support you?
- Tell us about what you thought about the course. I think this course is *amazing* & *not* *stressed* *sample* *the* *people* *positive* *support* *and* *help* *with* *their* *course* - *to* *be* *there* *in* *when* *needed* - *to* *be* *there* *in* *when* *needed* - *to* *be* *there* *in* *when* *needed*

Mental health support	Activities
<p>How to help yourself mentally in the course</p> <p>1. Identify your own mental health needs</p> <p>2. Identify your own mental health needs</p> <p>3. Identify your own mental health needs</p>	<p>Activities</p> <p>1. Identify your own mental health needs</p> <p>2. Identify your own mental health needs</p> <p>3. Identify your own mental health needs</p>

26

Case Study Six: Harmony & Health Singers

Harmony & Health Singers



GROUP PURPOSE

- Bringing together people in the community through music and togetherness



AREA

Wyre



FUNDS AWARDED

£5,000 in bidding round three



FUNDING GOALS

- Supporting 250 group members with virtual contact, doorstep support and building membership database



RESULTS

- Delivery of doorstep support
- Keeping members in touch with one another
- Virtual / online support network
- Increasing wellbeing and mental health of members and wider public

TruemanChange.

This group used their funding to support 250 members remotely during the pandemic, preventing social isolation and increasing mental health and wellbeing of members. They created positive messaging in the wider community, bringing music and song to people virtually, and later in the local market square and 'on location' in outdoor sessions. The group said "we were able to give hope and encourage people to look forward with more optimism" during the pandemic. Many members of Harmony and Health Singers have experienced issues such as bereavement, loneliness, financial problems, disabilities, poor physical and mental health and violence, amongst other things.

The funding has allowed the group to:

- set up remote group music sessions and connecting members, giving them a support network and something to look forward to
- create a professional YouTube video of a Christmas message and songs, plus screen hire
- make doorstep visits for wellbeing checks, signposting to food banks and other services
- deliver Christmas gift bags (including calendar, newsletter, DVD and support items) for 200 members, delivered by hand by volunteers to those living alone and most vulnerable
- pay for printing & purchase of personalised Christmas cards, plus postage or delivery to keep members connected, encouraging communication amongst the most isolated members

The group also initially aimed to purchase four Breezie tablets to go out on loan to the most vulnerable isolated members. The group didn't achieve this aim as many members reported they wouldn't be able to use the equipment or didn't have a stable WiFi connection.

The funding given has supported group members in the following ways:

- Helping to continue group activity through virtual support
- Allowing people to remain connected, fostering mental health, wellbeing and integration
- Giving a sense of belonging to people, some of whom are vulnerable, during a time of great difficulty

The funding helped the group to build longer term sustainability and volunteer capital by building communications and networks, restoring lost connections between members, raising money for other charities, building a database of members that can be used for the future, building reputation and profile ("showing people what we do").

The group said that the funding "[gave] us a stable platform to get going again after lockdown".



The group could continue activity remotely during lockdown, maintaining networks for their members and reducing social isolation

Doorstep visits were made at Christmas to support members at risk of isolation with gift bags along with wellbeing checks

A newsletter was delivered to members to keep them connected and increase belonging



HARMONY & HEALTH NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 1 - WINTER 2021

TruemanChange.



Harmony & Health Singers were able to maintain their sense of connection and increase their wellbeing through their funding. "The money has allowed us to keep the light shining"

TruemanChange.

Whilst looking at our case studies, we found that some groups found it a little difficult to recall details about their initial application and exact funding aims, as they had multiple funding sources in some cases and were working under extreme short term financial pressures. All groups were able to express very clearly that the funding built extra capacity into their organisations, sometimes exactly as planned, or sometimes in different or additional ways than planned.

From our case studies, we found clear evidence that the funding was vital to these groups at the time it was delivered. Groups reported that the funding was fundamental in helping to ease financial pressures, and it allowed them to focus resources on delivering support in the community instead of searching for funding.

Importantly, groups reflected to us that the Covid-19 recovery period is only just beginning, and groups are now just starting to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Groups reported an essential need for continued funding to support their activity and to help them build longer term sustainability. **We recommend** that further funding is given to support local groups in the emerging Covid-19 recovery phase. A later section in this report, Future Work, looks at how we recommend this is done.



4.2 Working with others

One theme that we identified in our research was Working with Others. This includes:

- how Fylde Council worked in partnership with others to deliver the scheme
- how the funds given through the grant scheme helped to develop volunteer capital in the longer term in the VCFS network

4.2.1 Partnerships

Everyone we spoke to from the grant scheme panel reflected that partnership working between grant scheme partners was positive and effective. Panel members felt that decisions were made quickly and freely, with a high degree of flexibility.

The panel found their partnership working to be “an opportunity to work together across the wider [area]”. Here are some of the characteristics of the partnership working as described by the panel:

“sharing and joining up of information”

“respecting expertise”

“using creative, innovative approaches”

“able to focus on making a difference“

“refreshing”

The panel felt that, in partnership, they were able to join up the objectives and funding from Council partners with the networks and connections at the CVS, and with the health perspective given by the respective CCG’s in later bidding rounds.

The small panel team said that they were able to make effective decisions quickly and highlighted the importance of simplicity during delivery of the scheme. **We recommend** that any future panel is small, unbureaucratic, and maintains the same collaborative approach as the previous panel.

Several panel members commented in interview that the scheme has actually brought to life partnerships with new organisations that hadn’t been partnered with before, enriching the

relationships and networks between Fylde and Wyre Councils, CVS, CCGs and VCFS groups in the community. Pete Smith, panel member from Fylde and Wyre CCG added:

“Having a multi-agency panel was great [...] as it felt that we were able to consider bids from a variety of angles with a variety of expertise and knowledge supporting that. The process and criteria were clear, which was reflected in the bids received being so closely matched to what we were looking for”

In interviews, only one issue was mentioned about how partnerships amongst the grant scheme partners could be improved. This was about data sharing between organisations. Given the speed at which the environment was changing in the Covid-19 pandemic, panel members reflected that there were sometimes question marks around how information should best be shared at speed between partner organisations. **We recommend** that agreements are made about information sharing practices for any future work between partners.

This positive view about effective partnerships is also reflected in the feedback from VCFS groups, where groups highlighted the flexible nature of the scheme, the simplicity of the process and the speed of delivery of funds. They also commented positively on communications during the grant scheme process, for example:

“[we had] excellent communication with CVS, [they were] very approachable”

“The grant application is really fit for purpose. Also the communication has been spot on”

Groups said that the funding from the grant scheme allowed them to strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones with other VCFS groups. We saw examples of this to some extent in all of our case studies, for example with Wesley’s Larder, who were able to strengthen a partnership with the Well Church, expanding their operations geographically to the Freckleton and Kirkham areas.

4.2.2 Volunteer Capital

Our evaluation shows that funding from the grant scheme has allowed groups to begin to build ‘volunteer capital’. This is where, as well as the short-term delivery of support and provisions, the funding has brought benefits to the groups themselves in the longer term. Examples we found of volunteer capital generated has included:

- reducing financial worry and helping financial planning
- retaining group memberships
- investing in the future through new equipment and technology
- training and developing volunteer teams
- extending the reach of what they could deliver in the community
- expanding operations and diversifying services
- building up group reputation and profile in the community
- developing infrastructure in many forms, from assets to data storage

Groups said:

“[This funding] helped us to stay operational as we worked remotely during lockdown”

“This funding has reshaped our mission, vision and strategic aims”

“This funding enabled us to extend the reach of the project and reinforced our awareness of the need for the equipment and training”

“[The funding] enabled us to extend the project and gain the confidence of our Trustees in its impact”

“It has taught us that we can create flexible resources that can be used across multiple projects by ourselves and our partners”

“Our future is confirmed as we can ensure safe recording of information which we share”

“The strengths of volunteers coming together led to new things”

“Without a shadow of a doubt the funding has helped us to retain our membership”

Some groups also said in interview (for example UDevelop) that winning this funding from the grant scheme has given them the confidence and “track record” to go on to win other funding from other sources. For some groups this funding has had an exponential impact. Groups said:

“[Our] profile in the community has been enhanced and other funding received now because of [our] achievements”

“[The funding] gave credibility for funding from other groups such as the Rotary”

Importantly, groups also mentioned some ways in which the funding has helped volunteers themselves. Through delivering support in the community, volunteers were able to reduce their own social isolation, boosting their own mental health and confidence in getting back to a 'new normal' in the Covid pandemic. One survey comment highlighted this:

“[This funding] gave confidence to the volunteers and a real sense of being valued“

The volunteer capital that is beginning to emerge in these groups can be built upon in the longer term, and more groups can be helped in this similar way.

We recommend that consideration is given to a further funding round to help support local groups to further develop their longer-term sustainability and allowing other groups the opportunity to do the same. We report more on this in our later section Future Work.



4.3 Awards and Process

4.3.1 Bidding Rounds and Panel

VCFS organisations submitted applications to the grant scheme in four bidding rounds. These applications were evaluated in partnership by a panel of representatives as follows:

Panel Member Name	Job Role
Tracy Hopkins	Vice Chair, Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde CVS
Mark Broadhurst	Head of Service, Wyre Borough Council
Tracy Manning*	Director of Resources, Fylde Borough Council
Pete Smith	Commissioning Manager, NHS Blackpool / NHS Fylde and Wyre CCG

**In consultation with Edyta Paxton and Joanne Collins from the Fylde Community Hub*

The dates of the panel meetings for each bidding round were:

19/10/2020, 20/11/2020, 10/12/2020 and 08/02/2021

4.3.2 Awards Made

From data held at Fylde Council and within the CVS, we calculated that across all four bidding rounds, £176,723.08 of funding was awarded in 58 awards by Fylde and Wyre Councils together with the CCG's. Some groups were awarded funding in more than one bidding round.

The breakdown is as follows:

Bid Round	Fylde Award	Wyre Award	Blackpool Award	Total Awarded	No. Awards
1	£15,186.00	£16,861.00		£32,047.00	10
2	£13,300.00	£7,952.22		£21,252.22	11
3	£5,000.00	£14,000.00		£19,000.00	5
4	£15,583.24	£30,089.06	£58,751.56	£104,423.86	32
Total All Rounds	£49,069.24	£68,902.28	£58,751.56	£176,723.08	58

Records show that Fylde Council spent a total of £49,069.24 on 25 of these awards. The below table shows the breakdown of funding awarded and the number of awards made by Fylde Council in each bidding round:

Bid Round	Fylde Awards	No. Fylde Awards
1	£15,186.00	6
2	£13,300.00	6
3	£5,000.00	1
4	£15,583.24	12
Total All Rounds	£49,069.24	25

We found that some data held about the bidding rounds (in particular bidding round four was stored with different partners rather than centrally and the outcomes of bids could have been more clearly labelled. We found that information on applications that were not granted could have been written more clearly. For the future, **we recommend** that any further bidding rounds are documented in a way that stores information on all bidding rounds and all application outcomes centrally and clearly.

Funding was awarded by Fylde and Wyre Councils and the respective CCGs to the following groups in each bidding round (groups awarded funds by Fylde Council are highlighted in blue):

List of groups awarded funds in each grant scheme bidding round

Bid Round	1	2	3	4
Groups Awarded	Fleetwood Town FC	Cancer Help (Preston) Ltd	Harmony Health & Singers	1st Fleetwood Scout Group
	Garstang Volunteer Force	Faith in the Community - The Pantry	LovemyBeach project	Age UK Lancashire
	Headway B,F&W	Grange Park Task Force	Men's Shed Fleetwood CIO	Aiming Higher for Disabled
	Hope Church Lytham	Home Start BF & W	Preesall & Knott End Help Group	Blackpool & the Fylde Street Angels
	Park View 4U	Just Good Friends	Wesley's Larder & Café	Bpl Community Homeless Project
	Salvation Army Fleetwood	Light Church		Caritas Care - Vincent House
	St Peter's	Poulton Methodist Church		Counselling in the Community
	Streetwise Lancashire	Stalmine-with-Staynall Res Ass		Faith in the Community The Pantry
	Udevelop	UR Potential		Fleetwood Town CT
	Westview Community Ass	Volunteer Centre BF&W		Friends of Highfield Park
		Well Baptist Church		Fylde Coast Womens Aid
				Fylde Repair Café CIC
				Groundworks
				Heartbeat
				Ihope
				Kensington Trust
				N-Vision
				Renaissance UK
				Revoelution
				Sam's Place NW Ltd
				Skool of Street
				Social Enterprise Solutions (UK) CIC
				Streetwise Lancashire
				The Boathouse Youth
				The Swallows Head & Neck Cancer
				The Washington Group
				TKD Lytham
				UR Potential CIC
				Wesley's Larder & Café
				West View (Fwood Together)
				Windmill Youth Dev Group
				Wyre District Scouts
No. Groups Awarded	10	11	5	32

4.3.3 Overall Experiences

We found from our survey that groups who were awarded funds were extremely positive about the grant scheme, giving on average 4.89 stars out of 5 stars to reflect their experiences of the process.



One survey respondent said:

“This has been one of the most user-friendly scheme[s] we have engaged with”

All groups who were awarded funds said they would apply again if the opportunity arose and / or they would recommend others to apply.

When asked to discuss improvements for the grant scheme, groups who were awarded funds largely said they wouldn’t improve anything at all. Only one respondent made a suggestion which was:

“Providing a list of other organisations delivering similar services so that best practice can be shared”

4.3.4 Speed, simplicity and flexibility

People noted in our survey and case studies that the scheme process was simple and speedy with clear communication. Grant scheme panel members felt that the virtual format of the panel was effective in delivering the grant scheme’s aims. **We recommend** that any future bidding rounds should be run in a similar virtual format to the previous rounds

The panel reflected in interviews the success of the scheme having an ‘open-door’ approach which helped attract applicants from a broad range of VCFS organisations. **We recommend** that a focus is retained for any future bidding rounds on delivering a simple open-door process with flexible and quick availability of funding.

Here’s a summary of what groups found to be efficient about the scheme:

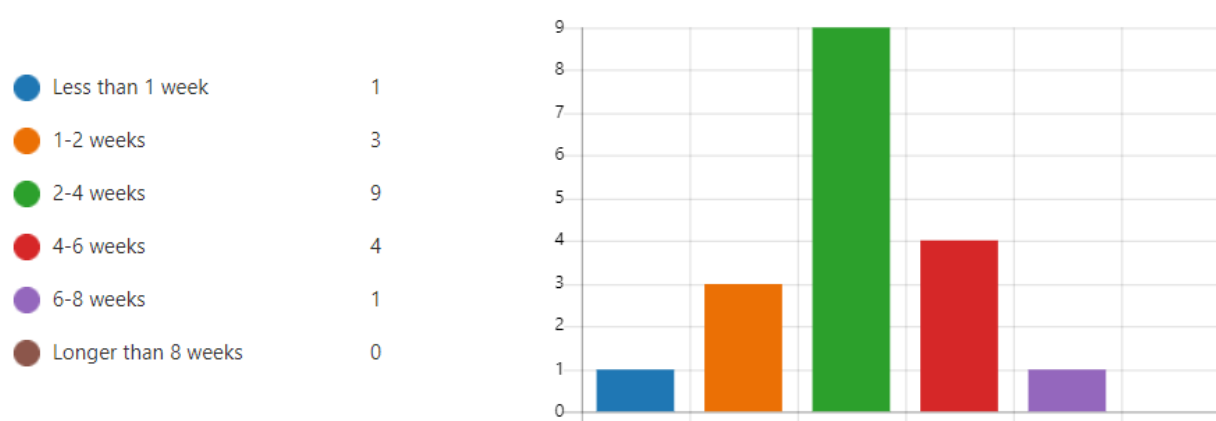
“The application process was pretty simple, which meant that there were not hours of management time needed to complete this and impact the amount received”

“We have achieved what we set out to do but there has been a degree of flexibility to adapt it to what was a rapidly changing situation”

“[We] feel supported by those around us at Fylde and Wyre councils. The email support and calls were excellent. Staff we spoke with were keen to help and compassionate.

We found that the speed of the funding process was of special importance to groups and most groups noted that they received funds within four weeks. This reflects the ‘on the ground’ readiness of the grant scheme, meeting its initial aims to deliver support at times of highest need.

15. How long did it take you to receive your grant after applying?



4.3.5 Applications

We found that VCFS organisations were drawn to this funding in particular for a variety of reasons. Some examples were as follows:

“The fact that as a church we were able to apply for the grant”

“The fact the funding would be used to directly fund emergency provision for our clients and during Covid we had seen a huge need”

“Focus on responding to the impact of the Covid pandemic on the local community”

Panel members reflected that, during the application process, some applications didn’t effectively express what groups wanted to achieve with the funding. People commented on this in our survey too. People said:

“We were lucky in having the ability to apply and the confidence to ask questions and get help where needed.”

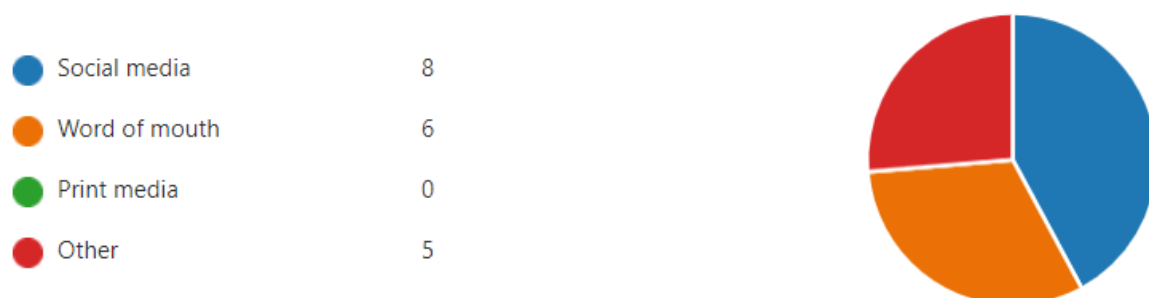
“Knowledge of how to put needs into words helps & not everyone can do this”

We found that more support may be needed for applicants during application stage to ensure that there is more of a level playing field in the bidding process. **We recommend** that applicant groups or those enquiring about applications are offered support through the process if they need it.

4.3.6 Communications

Our research shows that most groups awarded funds said they had heard about the grant scheme funding through social media or network / word of mouth. Some groups reflected somewhat of a reliance on ‘who you know’ in getting to know about this funding opportunity.

7. How did your organisation hear about the grant scheme?



Some people reflected that more can be done to spread the word about the grant funding if it were to run again. One comment said:

“I don't think a lot of groups were aware of the grants being offered although we did personally try to spread the word”

We recommend that any future options to deliver funding to VCFS groups should take into account how groups can be made aware of the funding available outside of networks and word of mouth.

In the course of our research, some comments were also received from a small number of VCFS groups who were not awarded funds. These groups said that they would have liked more communication about the reasons why they were not awarded funding. **We recommend** that applicant groups who were not awarded funding are contacted to help to resolve this, for previous and future bidding rounds. This links to our recommendation about providing support to applicant groups during the application process.

4.4 Future Work

The success of the grant scheme in providing short-term, emergency support is clear. We found that focus is now shifting towards Covid-19 recovery and the longer-term sustainability of VCFS groups. Groups reported that their recovery is only just beginning and they still face extreme funding pressures. This view was also shared by grant scheme panel members, who reflected that further funding could help groups to build capacity in the longer term, further developing their volunteer capital.

Given these combined views, our evaluation suggests that a further injection of funds would help groups to develop and thrive in the longer term. **We recommend** that consideration is given to one more future grant scheme round to support local groups with this. There is a remaining sum of around £11,000 held at CVS as “credit” from previous bidding rounds which could be used to part-fund this further bidding round for Fylde. Based on funds awarded in previous bidding rounds, it may be expected that this further bidding round could require funding upwards of £15,000, which can include the £11,000 credit held at CVS. Exact figures are to be agreed.

Beyond this, the grant scheme panel group raised a possibility of promoting the use of the Community Projects Fund to make this support for VCFS groups possible in the longer term. **We recommend** that Fylde Council consider working more closely with the CVS to promote the Fylde Community Projects Fund.

Our research shows that the future bidding round and ongoing work should focus on improving the longer-term capacity and vitality of the local VCFS sector. This is an investment for the future, as Fylde Council and partners can benefit from the strength built into the VCFS network in future collaborative working.

There should be a focus in this period of funding on encouraging groups to draw on their resources and networks, building up their abilities around strategy, business planning and seeking funding from other sources. There should also be a focus on developing other types of volunteer capital such as infrastructure, equipment, and training. Groups should be encouraged to connect strongly to Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde CVS for longer term support and guidance in these areas.

Grant scheme panel members reflected that, in any future bidding round, some changes in the panel would be beneficial given that the Covid-19 situation has evolved. The panel identified a need for representation from the social prescribing team for their on the ground local knowledge and connections for any future bidding round. The panel felt that the social

prescribing team could also help to raise awareness of the funding and identify groups presenting highest need for funding.

It is proposed that a new panel would include:

- Edyta Paxton¹ (as Fylde lead, with advisory input from Tracy Manning)
- Tracy Hopkins, CVS (as CVS lead)
- Mark Broadhurst (as Wyre lead, if Wyre Council were to also continue funding)
- Health representatives from social prescribing team and GP surgeries (the Fylde team propose involvement from 'go-to' people such as Ruth Mason and Anna Butler-Reed)

Tracy Hopkins, Vice Chair at CVS also noted that she is linked to a team of several social prescribing link workers who could input with advice to the new panel.

We recommend that a new panel is formed to deliver an additional bidding round of the grant scheme, with representation from social prescribing team and GP surgeries, supported with advice from 'go-to' people with deep local knowledge in the VCFS network. We recommend that Wyre Council also consider its future involvement with a final bidding round.

5.0 Conclusion

We have found in our independent evaluation that the grant scheme was successful in delivering its aims of providing support in the local community in response to the Covid-19 pandemic through grants given to VCFS groups.

We found evidence of excellent partnership working, combining resources and expertise to deliver a timely, efficient response that has had a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents in local communities.

We also found emerging evidence of volunteer capital generated from the funding, where groups have begun to improve resilience in the groups themselves, starting to build longer term strength in the VCFS network.

We also found that there is more to do, and that VCFS groups and grant scheme panel members see a need for further funding to build on this volunteer capital. This further funding can be invested to help groups develop sustainability and vitality in the longer term Covid recovery period. In turn, local Councils and partners will benefit from their relationships with this stronger VCFS network.

¹ Edyta Paxton is being invited to join the panel at the request of Tracy Manning, Director of Resources

6.0 Summary of Recommendations

We recommend that:

- An additional grant scheme bidding round is delivered, focusing on supporting local groups to further develop their longer-term sustainability and volunteer capital
- That input is sought from the social prescribing team and GP surgeries
- The new panel is supported with advice from 'go-to' people with deep local knowledge in the VCFS network.
- Wyre Council considers if it wishes to join a final bidding round
- Fylde Council works more closely with the CVS to promote Fylde Council's Community Projects Fund as a means of providing longer term support to the VCFS groups

We recommend that the proposed future bidding round of the grant scheme should:

- be small, unbureaucratic, and maintain the same collaborative approach as the previous panel
- retain a focus on delivering a simple open-door process with flexible and quick availability of funding
- be run in a similar virtual format to the previous rounds
- be documented in a way that stores information on all bidding rounds and all application outcomes centrally and clearly

We recommend that simple action plans are drawn up to:

- create support for applicant groups through the applications process if they need it
- develop communications in the applications process, aiming to make groups aware of the funding outside of networks and word of mouth
- make contact with applicant groups who were not awarded funding to discuss decision making
- put guidance in place for future grants focusing on digital technology, to help groups deliver their aims
- introduce checkpoints built in after awards are granted to ensure delivery of funding aims and to help with problem solving
- create a peer support network in the post-award process for groups applying for funding with address similar aims, in particular for aims around digital exclusion

- agree and communicate information sharing practices, to ensure partners can act at pace

7.0 Next Steps

From our recommendations, we consider that the following things need to be done next:

- Agree funding and a timeline for the additional bidding round process
- Agree new panel membership
- Draw up a simple communications plan to reduce reliance on word of mouth when making groups aware of funding availability
- Set up a simple infrastructure for clearer data recording on applications and awards
- Develop a small, unbureaucratic post-award process to help groups with troubleshooting and issues around digital delivery
- Agree information sharing practices between grant scheme partners

Trueman Change would be happy to support the implementation of these steps in future.

8.0 Appendices

8.1 Link to survey

<https://forms.office.com/r/sXxJVwvnNj>

Additional information on evaluation data available on request