

UK COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
GIVING FOR LOCAL GOOD

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our report on how UKCF and our national network of 46 community foundations have responded to the coronavirus crisis. Like many, we were taken by surprise at the speed of events.

Locally, our members are seeing the impact of the pandemic up close. They targeted their funding on the emergency response, supporting a wide range of charities from food banks, to those supporting the most isolated, the provision of PPE, to helping charities reorganise their services by going online. Through community foundations, thousands of people benefited from the charities they rely on being kept afloat. Since lockdown began our members have worked tirelessly to support the communities they serve. In doing so they have shown great determination and local insight and deserve recognition for the pivotal role they have played in ensuring emergency funding went to where it needed to go.

We must thank our donors, the National Emergencies Trust for choosing UKCF as its national distribution partner, the Department of Culture Media and Sport for donating £20m to the Big Night In appeal, Barclays for donating £1m to UKCF and the Worshipful Company of Weavers who supported three areas across the UK. We also need to thank the hundreds of donors who supported local appeals which have so far raised over £25million.



Rosemary Macdonald, CEO,
UK Community Foundations

This pandemic has seen families, corporate and charitable trusts all responding to the emergency. Many had not given to community foundations before.

Most of all, we must thank the local charities and community organisations who have been agile, purposeful and tremendously hard working throughout the crisis. In the difficult months that lie ahead their contribution will be vital.

THE BACKGROUND

Community foundations have a strong track record of responding to the different emergencies that have struck parts of the UK over the past 30 years. Whether it be natural disasters, disease or tragic accidents, over 50% of community foundations in the network have been called upon at some point to both raise and distribute emergency funding.

During times of crisis, when philanthropic feeling is at a high, community foundations have proved time and again that they can quickly mobilise funds, local knowledge and grant-making expertise to ensure that donations from a variety of sources make the biggest impact to the lives of the people that need support.

It's not just the collective experience of emergency grant-making that made the community foundation network able to respond so quickly and effectively. Years and years of place-based investing in communities has given the network invaluable local intelligence combined with a strong sense of what works at a local level.

Whilst no one was fully prepared for the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic, community foundations and the National Emergencies Trust were in the best position to ensure that money raised at a national and local level was able to quickly reach the organisations best placed to make the biggest difference.



Flooding in Lancashire (February 2020)
Photo courtesy of the Community
Foundation for Lancashire

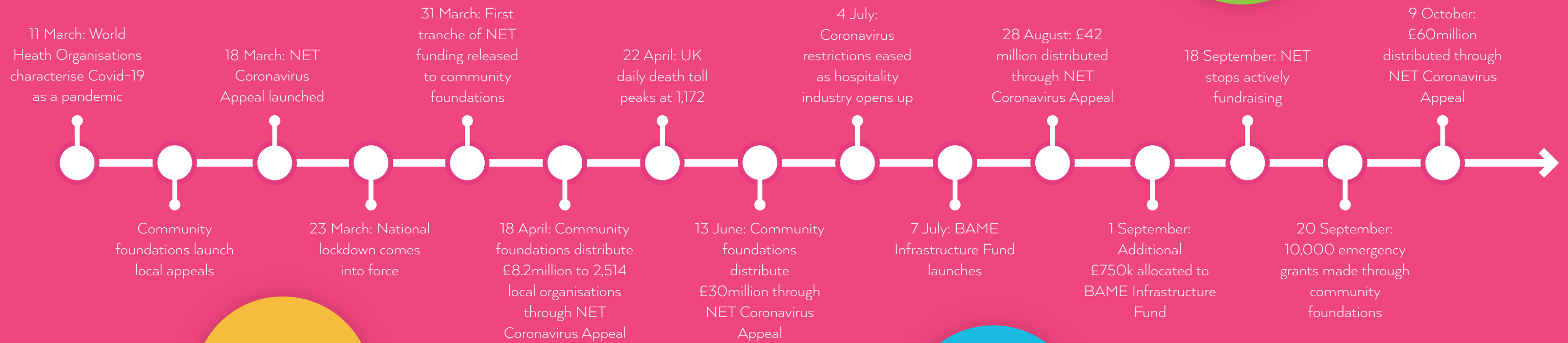
GRANT-MAKING IN LOCKDOWN

Addressing the immediate need

The pandemic threw many pre-existing issues into sharp focus. Food poverty, social isolation and digital exclusion and many other issues were compounded by lockdown and left millions of people in desperate need of support.

Whilst the NET was doing a phenomenal job of raising emergency funding community foundations were working tirelessly to ensure that the voluntary sector organisations that communities rely on were given the support they needed.

52
organisations supported through BAME Infrastructure Fund



£5,000
average grant size for NET Coronavirus Appeal

Over **£25million** raised through local community foundation appeals

Trust

Local charities and community organisations were forced to adapt their services overnight. In doing this they showed great agility and innovation to overhaul traditional service delivery models and adapt. It was vital that they received the backing of funders to deliver what was needed without onerous and restrictive reporting requirements.

In the first instance, every community foundation in the network wrote to their grantees telling them that existing grants could be repurposed to meet the immediate need. In other cases, community foundations proactively contacted organisations to let them know that emergency funding was available. Applications for funding were turned around in a matter of days.

The importance of trust was paramount. After years of working in partnership with the local voluntary sector, community foundations were able to allocate money to the organisations they knew would be able to deliver.

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Community Foundations have played such an important role during the recent crisis in distributing money from the National Emergencies Trust to local organisations
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Danny Kruger MP in *Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant* (September 2020)



Best Way Community Development is a refugee community organisation based in Motherwell. It received support from Foundation Scotland to purchase food and household items for delivery by volunteers to vulnerable and isolated refugee and BAME individuals and families.

Understanding local need

Community foundations exist to support the organisations and people that sustain local communities across the country. Whilst the pandemic presented unique and immediate challenges, other more long-standing problems did not go away.

Much has been spoken about the truly magnificent local effort to support those worst affected by the coronavirus. Foodbanks, food delivery services and efforts to support those in isolation have all been rightly celebrated but the voluntary sector serves a huge range of people with a plethora of long-term needs. These needs did not go away with pandemic but were often heightened. It was and is vital to strengthen the resilience of the whole local voluntary sector landscape.

By the onset of lockdown many community foundations had already launched their own appeals which drew in support from a range of local donors. In order to ensure the survival of the local voluntary sector many in the network used local appeals to fund more longer-term, strategic work.

This meant that community foundations were simultaneously funding emergency efforts through the NET Appeal and ensuring the resilience of the local voluntary sector at a time when it was never more needed.

The essence of a good response to an emergency is the ability to support front line, grassroots groups and organisations do what they do best: support local people in their time of need. I was particularly impressed with the pace, agility, scale and the strong community connections of the community foundation network across the entire country during an unprecedented emergency.

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Jehangir Malik, Director, The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership



4 Musical Connections in York empower people to lead happier, healthier lives through participating in music. It received support from the Two Ridings Community Foundation to take its service online.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

National to local

Partnership underpins the work of community foundations and UKCF. UKCF has a strong track record of brokering national grant-making programmes with partners like the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Barclays and the National Lottery Community Fund. We work with our network to deliver these programmes and the NET Coronavirus Appeal was an exemplification of this.

The Cumann Spóirt an Phobail sports club was supported through the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. The sports club, which is rooted in the local community, has adapted at great speed to help those with no other means of support.

Collaborating with other funders

The pandemic exacerbated the need for funders to collaborate and coordinate their efforts. The first lockdown saw unprecedented levels of cooperation amongst funders. Avoiding duplication, taking the burden off grantees and streamlining application processes were all practices that were expedited by the pandemic.

This level of cooperation is exemplified by the London Funders Response Fund. Over 60 funders in the capital signed up to be part of the fund which offered those applying a one-stop application portal for emergency funding. This was also the case in Gloucestershire, Surrey, Bedfordshire and other parts of the country.

Community foundations were the first funders on the ground. Due to their experience and local expertise community foundations were best placed to distribute emergency funding to small charities and community organisations. Other funders recognised this. Charitable foundations like CAF, The Tudor Trust and many more supported the NET Coronavirus Appeal knowing that the national reach of the network would ensure that those at the forefront of the community-led response to the pandemic would get the immediate support that was needed to keep them going.



A seat at the virtual table

Relief efforts across the country rely on bringing the strengths of key partners to the table. Multi-agency partnerships like Local Resilience Forums, Local Enterprise Partnerships and other local forums played important roles in relief and recovery efforts across the UK. Bringing together key partners from local authorities, emergency services, the NHS and others meant that a true diversity of expertise was present and informing how need was both determined and met.

The insight that community foundations were able to bring to these conversations with key players in the local response effort was informed by the experiences of those closest to what was happening on the ground, their grantees. This in turn allowed UKCF to harness these local insights and bring them to national forums like the Voluntary Sector Emergency Partnership meetings and National Emergencies Trust allocation meetings.

In lieu of any reliable quantitative national data on the effects of the pandemic these forums provided invaluable opportunities to share qualitative information that could paint a reliable picture of local need. Rather than just focusing on the immediate problems presented by the pandemic these convenings also provided the opportunity to begin addressing some of the long-term challenges facing communities and the wider voluntary sector.



Representatives from community foundations discuss the issues facing rural communities resulting from the pandemic with Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL, PLACE-BASED GIVING

Community foundations in the UK and across the world work on a local, place-based giving model. What does this mean? And why does it work in an emergency?

What's been clear throughout the crisis is that the pandemic has played out differently across towns, cities and villages across the country. The myriad of challenges caused by the pandemic have in no place been the same. This applies at a local level and at a hyper-local level. Funders that take a place-based approach are able to generate deeper insights more quickly in times of crisis as they are already an established part of the voluntary sector landscape with relationships embedded into the places they serve.

When the full extent of the pandemic became clear, community foundations were able to open up a dialogue with organisations they support, which in turn allowed them to adapt grant-making to ensure that the immediate need was being met.

In times of crisis, decisions need to be made quickly. The onus that the local, place-based model puts on the development of trusting relationships with grantees and community-led grant panels on trust-based decisions and collaborative working relationships bore fruit during lockdown. Community foundations were able to support the well-documented local innovations that have been happening in communities across the country. Whilst this may come naturally to community foundations, we are encouraged to see so many other funders committing to being more flexible and trusting with grantees during the pandemic.

The Swan and Helmet pub has been working with local churches and schools to provide food packages to families who have been identified as living in genuine hardship. It has received seven grants from the Northamptonshire Community Foundation.



LESSONS LEARNED

The pandemic has shone a spotlight on areas of our work that can be improved on. Whilst we can point to our many successes since March it is important that we talk about the key areas of learning that will inform our work moving forward.

Seeing the whole picture

The absence of consistent data has been an issue across the sector in addressing the impact of the pandemic. Whilst local responses were nuanced and informed, the lack of a standardised reporting system meant that at times it was difficult to aggregate and compare information on the network's response and impact. This has at times made it difficult to bring these insights to the table when it came to making allocation decisions on a national scale. This is an area of work that we were addressing before the pandemic by introducing an impact framework for the network that will ensure that the unique localised data that we hold can be used by our partners and others funders in future.

Supporting BAME Communities

The response to this pandemic has also highlighted a need for greater analysis of the way that funding is distributed to BAME organisations given that they have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. We can point to broad proportionality in terms of funding distribution but we know that this is not good enough given our aim to support and represent all in communities. As such we will be embedding the principles of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in our new organisational strategy and evaluating how our governance, leadership, philanthropy development and grant-making practices could potentially exclude those who fall under all protected characteristics.

The pandemic threw into sharp light many of the systemic and historic challenges facing BAME organisations and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) infrastructure that supports it (as outlined in ACEVO's Home Truths Report). We know it is incumbent on us to ensure that our funding is accessible to all communities. With the support of the National Emergencies Trust we launched the BAME Infrastructure Fund. To date £1million has been awarded with all the allocation decisions being made by an independent panel of experts with both lived and professional experience of the needs felt by BAME-led VCS organisations. This Fund is not just about improving access to community foundation funding – it will form part of a long-term commitment to strengthen BAME-led VCS infrastructure so it can adequately support the vital work of local organisations it supports.

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Being a member of the UKCF's BAME Infrastructure Fund Panel & reviewing applications from these essential local organisations, has really demonstrated the level & extent of support needed. It has also brought into sharp focus the impactful & vital work these organisations can offer and importantly connect groups to form strong networks.

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Dr Radha Modgil, GP and Campaigner, BAME Infrastructure Fund Panel Member

LOOKING AHEAD: WHAT COMES NEXT?

As we enter winter the prospect of a second national lockdown is looking more and more likely. Tiered lockdowns are in place in large parts of the UK. The next few months will be incredibly testing for everyone. The schism between central and local government is increasing. We need to ask ourselves the question: what role will community foundations play in what comes next?

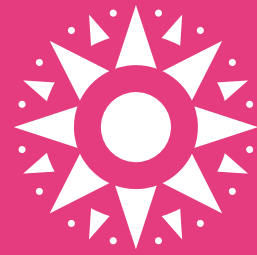
This pandemic has shown that we are only as strong as the most vulnerable in our communities. It has highlighted the importance of place, with local voluntary organisations bearing the burden of the providing support to communities through hospice care, food distribution, mental health support, legal advice and homeless shelters. Where local government, public services and larger national charities have been too resource strained or unable to act with sufficient speed, local communities have stepped up to care for their own. Community foundations are often the lifeline for these groups. We have a unique reach into areas of hidden need because of our strong historic relationships with our grantees.

Community foundations will continue to harness community resources but unfortunately in the coming months this alone will not be enough to shore up the voluntary sector, with many organisations seeing continually increasing need and a dwindling supply of funding for core costs. Your communities need more support urgently to survive this long-term health crisis and its devastating economic and social impacts.

In this context it is essential that we as community foundations broaden our reach into our communities to ensure that our philanthropy is inclusive and led by a diversity of needs. It is essential that we improve our data consistency and are thus able to tell our story more powerfully on a national level to draw in more funding and ensure transparent evaluation of the extent to which our grant-making uplifts those excluded in society.

West View Advice and Resource Centre offers support around welfare benefits, debt and disability. Support from County Durham Community Foundation allowed the team to buy phone headsets, provide face masks, put up screens and equip rooms with hand sanitiser.





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Thank you for reading

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