

**Mayor's Small Grants Fund (Coronavirus Emergency Support) 2020-21 Review**

**Case Studies of Successful Projects**

**Case Study 1:**

**CV19-20-001 Watford & District Mencap**

Watford Mencap is an independent charity for people with learning disabilities and their families and carers. Their main activities include residential and supported housing, community support, children's services, free advice and information and adult learning & leisure activities. They support around 800 local people with learning disabilities plus their families and carers each year.

They applied for funding to create activity boxes for 4 x residential assisted living/care facilities in Watford and 4 activities boxes to be used to deliver to families facing crisis where either a child/children and/or a parent has a learning disability.

**Quote from Jane Pattinson, CEO**

Thank you so much for our Mayors Fund Covid 19 grant.

Having locked down our residential care homes and supported living projects a week earlier than most people, the residents that we support were very quickly searching for things to do to fill their days. People were unable to attend their usual day centre, voluntary jobs or to visit family and friends. Days were very long and for some people so much time without their usual structure or routine caused real anxiety and distress.

We applied to the Mayors Fund to ask for £2,950 to supply activity boxes full of resources to help people fill their time. Within days our grant was approved, I think we were the first applicants and it certainly was the first emergency grant that we received. The funds were paid in to our bank account quickly which then enabled us to deliver art and craft materials, pamper products and tablet computers to each project which in turn helped staff to plan activities, giving residents things to look forward to. During the first weeks we filled the activity boxes from our head office, then we moved on to enable residents and staff in our homes to plan, shop online and have resources delivered directly to their home, this all enriched people's learning.

Our Hillside residential home created a pub garden with afternoon skittles and karaoke, hanging baskets were planted and no dig vegetable patches were created. Many, many cakes have been baked, cards have been made and needlework sessions started with a donated sewing machine. The results of people's hard work have then been shared with family and friends online, also enabling people to develop their IT skills. Group activities have also strengthened friendships and communication within the homes.

We really appreciated our grant from the Mayors Fund, it made having to stay at home a much happier, calmer and productive experience for the people with learning disabilities that we support.

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#### Case Study 2:

##### **CV19 – 20 – 003 Small Acts of Kindness**

Small Acts of Kindness is an award winning, high impact, charitable organisation working in partnership with over 90 other organisations from the voluntary, corporate and statutory sectors and over 200 community volunteers. Their aim is that every older person feels warm in their home and connected to their community.

They do this by sourcing and distributing practical gifts that reduce the negative impact that feeling lonely and isolated can have on older people's physical and mental wellbeing. They have a special interest in helping older people who are cold in their homes.

Small Acts of Kindness were awarded £3000 to provide an additional 120 Warm in Winter Gift Bags to be delivered to elderly, vulnerable residents in Watford.

##### **Quote from Lynne Misner – CEO**

It is always a sobering thought that one in five older people spend their day alone during normal circumstances. The reality, during this period, is that every older person living on their own will be spending every day alone. The negative impact of loneliness on physical and mental wellbeing is huge and is often equated to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

This project enabled us to make additional Small Acts of Kindness Warm in Winter gift bags and our Purple Pages information packs available for distribution, as required, to older people throughout Watford. These are local residents who are self-isolating/shielding during the Covid-19 pandemic and who have been identified as part of the Council's co-ordinated approach to identifying and contacting vulnerable people in the borough.

We know from the feedback that we receive that recipients of our gift bags feel warmer, feel less lonely and isolated, have an increased feeling of wellbeing and are better connected to their community. The feedback that we have received from recipients during the Covid-19 epidemic is filled with people telling us how appreciative they are to know that someone cares about them and how much that means to them.

"Happy and not forgotten"

"Thankful as it was so kind but so needed "

"Made me feel very happy to know that there are so many people who care"

"Good, such a lovely surprise to receive in the current 'lock down' it really cheered me up to know people care, although they can't see us about at present "

"It made myself and my husband feel good that somebody cares. It was very much appreciated."

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We are hugely grateful for this funding. It enabled us to make an immediate response to helping some of the most vulnerable local older people during lockdown and self-isolation. Every phone call and feedback card that we receive gives an insight into the difference that we have been able to make. We would not have been able to do this without this support.

What was particularly refreshing was how straightforward the application process was and how quickly we received not only a decision but the actual funding. We extend a huge thank you to everyone who helped make this funding possible.

#### **Case Study 3:**

##### **CV19-20-005 Watford Workshop**

Watford Workshop exist to tackle the issues of unemployment, social isolation, lack of education and lack of life skills that disproportionately affect people with disabilities by providing paid employment in their workshop in the fields of hand packing and light assembly for commercial customers, as well as training opportunities in functional education and independent living skills taught by professional tutors.

This makes them very much a unique project, not only in Watford, but all of Hertfordshire. They step in when nobody else will give people with disabilities a chance to work, be productive and reach their potential, and have been doing so since 1964. They describe themselves as being NO ORDINARY WORKPLACE. Their community consists of people with learning, mental, physical and sensory disabilities.

##### **Quote from Ronnie Jacob – Finance Trustee**

Watford Workshop went into lockdown on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 sending all staff and service users home. At that time, before “furlough” entered into our vocabulary, we took the decision that even though it was a risk to our reserves and the future of the Workshop, that we would pay all our people full pay for two months to take some worry out of an already incredibly stressful situation and to keep them safe in the hope that we would have a resolution in the meantime.

We immediately looked at ways that we could remotely support everyone and this initially took the form of regular phone calls to check in on everyone's health and wellbeing, have a friendly chat and also identify if they required any additional support such as with shopping for groceries or collecting prescriptions. During these conversations, we were also able to establish if they were taking care of themselves and taking the correct precautions. We also made sure that they had the technology to remain in touch with the outside world and to organise replacements if they had any issues. At the start of the pandemic we were remotely supporting 43 service users. The vast majority of our business customers had ceased their operations during this time, however, we did have two who asked if we would be able to remain open to work on products that were deemed “essential” for supplying the food chain. We decided that if we were to have a skeleton staff to manage this by implementing social distancing and infection control through hygiene measures and the use of PPE, we would be able to do it. This would help us to hopefully keep the Workshop going and in turn, help those customers to

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do the same. We only invited back those who did not need to use public transport and who were happy to do so for their mental wellbeing. This worked successfully, and even though the income generated by the essential commercial work was minimal and it did not cover our expenditure on staff costs and overheads, we were at least still open to some service users who massively benefited from having their workplace open to them. Watford Borough Council's grant contributed to making this possible.

The impact of Watford Borough Council's grant has been significant. It has helped maintain stability at a time when the charity's expenditure has been exceeding its income by a considerable amount, allowing us to remain open, support our service users both remotely and on the premises, and thereby alleviate many of the issues that Covid-19 and lockdown have caused for them. Most service users live in the local area, and it is fantastic that we received the grant to support these local residents.

We continue to remain in touch with those still on furlough and are in the process of providing PPE packs thanks to the funding we have received. The case study below will also help to highlight further the impact the funding has providing:

This service user suffers from debilitating anxiety and this was taken to even greater levels during lockdown. The remote support we provided enabled us to try and alleviate their fears and give them the reassurances that was needed. As time went on, thanks to this remote support, we recognised that they were struggling but were too fearful to return to work to help with their wellbeing. We looked at strategies that we could put in place to ease the fear and anxiety and enable them to get some semblance of normality back. The solution was to provide them with their own "workshop" using an external training cabin which would enable them to park immediately outside "the workshop", work with their friend away from everyone else, have no need to enter the main building or for anyone else to enter their space. This solution proved very successful as they felt confident enough to return to work, had the opportunity to see and work with their friend in a safe space and increased their wellbeing, reduced their anxiety and improved their happiness enormously.

We were pleased to have been presented with a straightforward application form from Watford Borough Council which allowed us to explain our dilemma at the time of application and why we needed your help in detail; and were delighted with such a quick response to the application and the subsequent payment of the grant. Thank you.

#### **Case Study 4:**

##### **CV19-20-009 New Hope**

New Hope exists to serve individuals who are homeless or vulnerably-housed through the provision of accommodation and opportunities to transform lives. They house up to 66 people every night and support almost 600 individuals every year through their 17 services, including nine accommodations and eight support services.

Comprised of a comprehensive range of support and accommodation services, New Hope is proud to be able to offer support at every stage of the journey from homelessness to independent living; from

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initial rough sleeping, to mental/physical health, to addiction, to recovery and finally onto supported accommodation and back-to-work training/mentoring.

The organisation requested funding to provide meals to individuals rough sleeping or experiencing homelessness. Meals will be provided 3 times a day, 7 days a week during the Coronavirus crisis.

#### **Quote from Joe Meehan – Fundraising & Communications Officer**

Upon the advent of Covid-19, social distancing and lockdown, we knew that the way we offered support to those experiencing homelessness in Watford would have to change. Previously the Rough Sleeping Prevention Service existed as a drop-in centre throughout the week providing a cooked breakfast, a packed lunch, showers, laundry facilities and one-to-one meetings for support and guidance. In response to the social distancing regulations, the rapid emergency accommodation of those rough sleeping and for the safety of service users, volunteers and staff, the service developed in to one of remote support, preparing meals, packs of essentials and support programs for delivery to those in temporary housing.

Over 70 individuals were housed between New Hope, One YMCA, Watford Borough Council and Travelodge Properties under the Government's 'Everyone In' scheme when the crisis began, all of whom have received direct support with meals, groceries, items to combat boredom and intensive support in adapting to life away from the street as well as with making arrangements to move into safe and longer-term accommodation once lockdown came to an end. Each day members of the Rough Sleeping Prevention Service cooked meals and prepared boxes of supplies with the help of volunteers from the local community ready for delivery by the Street Outreach Service throughout the day. We are pleased to say that throughout this period of uncertainty, everyone who came to us was given access to food and support and many of those who resided in the emergency housing options have been supported in making connections to longer term accommodation.

This comprehensive program of support would not have been possible without funding from generous trusts, foundations and community groups as, like many other charities up and down the UK, the financial impact of having to close multiple income streams such as our pair of charity shops while offering extended service opening hours and facilities has been challenging. The grant from the Mayor's Small Grants Fund has allowed us to focus our existing resources on ensuring we can deliver the highest level of service while operating for an additional day per week and several hours longer than usual. Although the lifting of lockdown does not mean a return to business as usual for New Hope in the support of those experiencing homelessness, we are incredibly grateful that The Mayor's Small Grants Fund chose to support our work through the most challenging part of the pandemic so far.

We would very much recommend reaching out to the team at the Mayor's Small Grants Fund for any charity in need of financial support in these uncertain times. The application process is a straightforward and manageable-length form and the team are quick to respond to any email communications. Upon making their decision, the team made the funds available to us quickly which, during a crisis, made the project begin on schedule. Once again, we'd like to say thank you for this funding and making the transition of our drop-in service a smooth process.

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#### Case Study 5:

##### **CV19-20-030 Watford Hindu Group**

Watford Hindu Group (WHG) was formed in 1973 to cater for the cultural, social and religious needs of the Hindu community in the Watford area. Catering for about 300 families, they actively encourage involvement and participation of all communities, which encourages intercultural awareness and understanding, thus promoting community cohesion.

They are run by a dedicated team of volunteers who organise and participate in a wide range of social and cultural events throughout the year. Over the years they have recognised how the community has come to regard them as a hub for information on a wide variety of subjects including health, sport, education and integration in to the broader community. They therefore initiated a drive to cater for those needs by devising, organising and delivering various projects which aim to address the community concerns and requirements.

##### **Quote from Raj Pandya – Committee Secretary**

During the Covid-19 pandemic we have been contacted by many members of our community who had reached a crisis point and requested our help. Although those shielding received generous care packages, some of the items were not really usable due to the specific diet of traditional vegetarian Indian food (many are also diabetic).

We started by shopping, cooking at our homes and delivering to those who we knew were in need. However, this became unsustainable as the 'three items per household' was implemented by supermarkets. At this point we decided to apply for the Mayor's emergency fund so that we could purchase and deliver hot food provided by Namaste Restaurant.

Having been awarded just under £3000 we renegotiated costing with Namaste who had by then teamed up with 'Go Dharmic' and were able to offer food free of charge. We started delivering these but it was also apparent that what people really needed was traditional Indian vegetables and cooking ingredients that are not available in supermarkets and could only be bought from Indian shops. We therefore adapted to the needs of the vulnerable community members by sourcing and delivering these items too.

This has made a massive difference to the local people who have been housebound, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health issues. They have had the option of having cooked food and/or appropriate cooking ingredients delivered to their doorstep, such that their specific dietary needs are catered for. We have also been able to identify members of the community that were not previously under our radar but are vulnerable and in need of support during the pandemic and in the future. We have also opened up a line of communication between these people and ourselves so that any further needs can be identified or just for someone to chat to when feeling lonely or sad.

The Mayor's funding has enabled WHG to carry out a valuable service to members of the community that have been most in need. Initially we were catering for about 20 families in Watford but due to the Mayor's funding we were able to reach out to 70 families.

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In Hinduism there is great emphasis on 'seva', selfless service to benefit the community. We have been able to do this with the help of the Mayor's funding, the dedication of WHG's volunteers (none of whom have received or expect to receive volunteer expenses) and the grace of God. This has been one of the most satisfying services WHG has been involved in.

The process of applying to the Mayor's fund was very straight forward and simple. Kim Bloomfield was, and always has been, very helpful and delightful to work with. She has dealt with all questions swiftly and any delays were due to my delay in responding to her requests for information.