


Grants Determination Sub-Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
23 June 2021	
Report of: Sharon Godman, Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance	Classification: Unrestricted
Local Community Fund (LCF) Performance Report - October 2020 – March 2021	

Lead Member	Cllr Ronald, Lead Member for Resources and the Voluntary Sector
Originating Officer(s)	Robert Mee, Programme Analysis & Review Officer Emily Fieran-Reed, Senior Strategy & Policy Manager
Wards affected	All
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	
Reason for Key Decision	N/a
Community Plan Theme	All

Executive Summary

The Mayor in Cabinet agreed on 31st July 2019 to a programme of funding for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations from 1st October 2019. A total of 50 projects were awarded funding totalling £9.31m up to 31 March 2023 to deliver activity across five themes - Inclusion Health and Wellbeing, Digital Inclusion and Awareness, Information Advice and Guidance, Employment and Skills, Community Safety

The performance report covers the period October 2020 to March 2021 and reports on the five themes of the Local Community Fund and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building funding. The Project Summary (Appendix 1) gives an update by project.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the performance of the Local Community Fund programme as set out in 3.2 to 3.7 and Appendix 1 for Oct 20 – Mar 21
2. Note the updates on the funded organisations in Council premises and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building funding as set out in 3.8 to 3.9.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Regular performance updates ensure that the LCF themes and individual projects are on track to achieve the targeted outcomes.
- 1.2 Any issues that raise concerns can be addressed and appropriate remedial actions agreed. Where necessary, this could include the reduction, withdrawal or reallocation of funds to ensure that the overall Programme is making the most effective use of resources and maximising the potential achievement of agreed aims and objectives

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Information relating to various aspects of project and monitoring activity is contained within the report to provide Grants Determination Sub Committee with an overall understanding of how projects and organisations have performed against the key elements of their Funding Agreements.
- 2.2 Grants Determination Sub Committee could request further information or alter the recommendations

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Background

The Mayor in Cabinet agreed on 31st July 2019 to a programme of funding for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations from 1st October 2019. A total of 50 projects were awarded funding totalling £9.31m up to 31 March 2023 to deliver activity across five themes - Inclusion Health and Wellbeing, Digital Inclusion and Awareness, Information Advice and Guidance, Employment and Skills, Community Safety

3.2 Overview of Oct 20 – Mar 21

The 6-month period in this update included the national lockdown from January to March. Although projects have had experience throughout the last year of moving to online delivery there has been an impact on several projects.

The RAG rating and the criteria for this was agreed at GDSC 9 Sept 2020 but the impact of the pandemic has meant that this 3-stage rating doesn't capture the nuance of the issues facing the LCF projects. All projects, including beneficiaries and organisation staff, are impacted to some degree by the pandemic and the mitigation measures put in place. Some projects are hit harder than others, those who work with schools and those with intergenerational projects bring younger and older people together for example. Some projects can focus on other elements of their delivery but for some these types of issues have a significant impact on performance.

In order to capture these specific issues, we have introduced a 'Covid/Amber' rating where there is significant covid impact affecting performance.

Covid/Amber

- Theme 5 Scheme A: Kazzum Arts – Build
- Theme 5 Scheme A: Osmani Trust – Schools and Community Resilience Programme
- Theme 5 Scheme B: Four Corners – Into Focus Photography project
- Theme 5 Scheme B: Leaders in Community – Project Connect

Amber

- Theme 1 Scheme A: St Hilda's East Community Centre – Girls Driven Project
- Theme 1 Scheme C: REAL DPO – Taking Control of Your Life
- Theme 1 Scheme E: St Hilda's East Community Centre - Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project
- Theme 4 Scheme A: REAL DPO – Then and Now

All of the Amber projects are being supported by Officers and projects are expected to be back on track with issues resolved in order to move to Green in future updates.

3.3 Theme 1 Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing

Theme 1 incorporates 5 schemes supporting children and families, older people, and people with disabilities. There are 28 projects, focusing on improving the health and wellbeing of residents and the quality of the care services they receive.

- 3.3.1 During October 2020 to March 2021 activities were delivered largely online. Projects have continued to engage with service users and build stronger networks of information sharing and peer-support between users and those not accessing services. Some of the projects were able to deliver a level of in-person within Covid-19 guidelines. There have been mixed reactions to how online services have worked. Planned work by projects in schools continued to be hampered by Covid-19 restrictions. Canaan Project is one of the few partner organisations that George Green's School has invited back into the building to offer space to provide enrichment sessions after the Easter holiday.
- 3.3.2 Providers collaborated with community and statutory agencies to ensure the best outcomes for residents. Look Ahead (DV project) supported families to register for schools, nurseries and liaised with the Education Specialist

Advisor for school uniform grants/food bank and the Easter Holiday Scheme. It liaised with Kids Outs, ELBA programme and schools to support children with laptops.

- 3.3.3 Newark Youth – Girls project attended a Virgin Media apprenticeship webinar about employment in the media and technology field. The girls also took part in employment workshop hosted by the Canary Wharf Group and they gained insight into all the different roles within Canary Wharf Group. They also received support in creating a good CV and what employers look for. This gave them confidence to write their own CV and understand how employers select people.
- 3.3.4 Organisations have found ingenious ways to co-design and adapt their services. The Yard Theatre set up a new walking project in Spring for residents and workers to reconnect and rediscover Tower Hamlets. Local people will be matched up to go on walking trips pairs from Bow, across the A12 and ending up at The Yard. The project hopes to form relationships with other local organisations during recruitment and form a piece of research to help better understand the geographical barriers people face within Tower Hamlets.
- 3.3.5 St Hilda's Girls Driven Project will carry out consultations with residents and parents to find out their opinions on what they would like to see in youth services for their local area. This will be in the forms of surveys and face to face consultations.
- 3.3.6 Organisations have commemorated key calendar events. Half Moon Youth Theatre worked on 'Happened in 1990' project as part of its 30th birthday celebrations which had been due to take place in 2020; devising performances exploring notable events that happened in 1990. Parents noted their young people had grown in confidence over the term, appearing more engaged and that they have enjoyed still being given the opportunity to connect with other young people outside of their schools.
- 3.3.7 London Tigers most participants have reported positive feedback on improvements in both their health and wellbeing. The main highlight was the online International Women's day walking competition which was open for anyone to join in. This competition involved participants having to complete a minimum of 10,000 steps. Members uploaded their daily walking steps covering a minimum of 6000 steps daily and a maximum of 20,000 steps; star achievers names were highlighted to inspire and motivate others in the group.
- 3.3.8 Shadwell Basin Outdoor Activities produced a link to a fitness video during lockdown, that has been used to help young people keep active and motivated through this really difficult time:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BdA6N_5fU

3.3.9 Case Studies / Feedback from Services Users

Scheme 1A – Children, Young People and Families

E and 15 of her peers completed the ASDAN Leadership Award. She was able to work in her group where they learned about themselves and developed an understanding of the type of leader they could be. E was able to contribute to her groups presentation and encouraged others to do the same.

Scheme 1B – Older People

Mr LC was referred to the befriending service. Mr LC lives with his elderly mother who has dementia, and due to a rapid decline in his mother's health, he needed more support than ever. This had ultimately affected Mr LC a great deal, as he was unable to leave the house unless absolutely unnecessary. Mr LC has since reported that the phone befriending is going well and looks forward to having a warm friendly chat with AH, the befriender each week.

Scheme 1C – Access, information, and self-management

The focus is for older residents to be better informed and equipped to manage health conditions and some of the feedback received include: "During the lockdown, it gave some structure to my day and the companionship of like-minded people, the led meditations were very calming and enjoyable"

"It gave structure to my day during the periods of lockdown. It was good to be able to engage with people and helped me keep my anxiety in check".

Scheme 1D - Healthy living and healthy choices

The focus is for a) Residents to be better informed to make healthier choices, b) Increase engagement in physical activity.

A is 20-year-old who has sight loss with limited peripheral vision and can only distinguish objects within 3 metres. On top of his sight loss, Amir has very complex medical needs and developmental delay. A has been shielding with his mother and unable to go outside unless it was for an hospital appointment. A was struggling to stay positive and that she was also struggling to keep him active at home. RSBC provided 1:1 support through this period, but internet access & technology has been a massive barrier as the only device available to access the internet was mum's phone low bandwidth.

The intervention from RSBC and The Brighten a Million Christmases campaign provided A with a tablet and a data bundle which has enabled has A to engage in HAWB sessions every Saturday since January 2021. A has participated in 7 sessions so far and has achieved AQA's in the process such as Fitness (Unit 1&2), Introduction to movement with support, Teamwork in sport and Movement and actions through dance. Mum has expressed how grateful she is for receiving the Tablet and Data package and has also told us how much A has enjoyed the workout sessions "He really loved it and he wants to come to all of the workout sessions. It's great that he has something to do now."

Scheme 1E – Improved inclusion, health and well-being outcomes for disabled people and people experiencing mental health issues

Woman's Trust service users were referred by NHS talking therapies; others by Hestia, Victim Support and self-referral, showing the need for specialist DA therapy. Service users have reported positively on the KPIs, experiencing minor-significant improvements under each one and some of the feedback received include:

"It has been positive to talk and understand and get support to handle our circumstances more effectively"

"I felt supported and I was able to share my worries and hear the views of others".

3.4 Theme 2 Digital Inclusion and Awareness

3.4.1 Scheme A: ICT Skills and Digital Careers

The projects under this theme and scheme have had different experiences of working with older people and digital access. Though some projects have been able to reach and connect with older people by supporting them with access to laptops/tablets and broadband connection; to set up digital connection and coaching people on how to use the devices has been time intensive for projects. Digital exclusion is a major barrier to benefits, works and access to services such as NHS website or NHS apps. Most older people who have been shielding live on their own so setting up laptops/tablets/smart phones and broadband connection for this group has not been easy. It was easier for older people who were living with their families who can help them to the devices to that they are able to access services or connect with other people. Projects have found that older people report other needs or may have other concerns such as housing and repair needs or experiencing difficulties in accessing their GP. During the last 6 months (Oct 2020- Mar 2021) some older people have benefitted from other services that have been provided through the Covid emergency support such as referrals to food banks, befriending and social activities.

3.4.2 Scheme B: Online Safety

The projects under this scheme have continued to provide remote/online activities for children, young people and their guardians. Projects have supported families to navigate online learning and how to implement safety measures for those who use online tutors. The projects report that parents' have increased in their awareness of their children's on-line activity and are more confident in recognising the signs of grooming and how to deal with it and they report increased confidence that their children are safe on-line. The projects under this theme have delivered Kahoot quizzes about online safety and other relevant topics and shared resources and links to combat the increase in loneliness and mental health related issues in the community. In addition, the Projects under this theme have delivered welfare checks to ensure that families and young people's needs are met including their mental wellbeing and have supported families during the Christmas/Winter period where toys and foods packs were distributed to families.

The Covid situation has had a negative impact on families. The children learning at home during lockdown has had a toll on families from low-income households as they had to spend more money on food, fuel and internet data to support their children (schools and college re-opened from 8th March 2021).

During this period from Oct 2020-March 2021 we were still in lockdown, so centres remained closed while services were provided through online, telephone and social media platforms.

3.5 Theme 3 Advice and Information

The Advice Tower Hamlets partnership has been working very hard through October 2020 to March 2021. This has been due to the unprecedented situation of Covid-19. The partners have suspended face to face services and transitioned to telephone and online support following government guidelines and this continues although some agencies are now reverting to some face to face advice. In the last 6 months the Advice partnership has seen a change in case matters affecting individuals, such as facing employment issues resulting in sudden losses of income, thus resulting in a surge of Universal Credit claims, need of food bank support and other financial support and this continues into 2021. The Advice partnership works collaboratively with local food banks to ensure clients have access to the necessities. Working with the foodbanks, they took referrals of their clients where they advised them about options available to them. The advice agencies engaged the services of several law firms who provided specialist support and advice to clients with housing, immigration, employment and family problems.

During this period from Oct 2020-March 2021 we were still in lockdown so centres remained closed while services were provided through online, telephone and social media platforms.

The TH Advice Training and Capacity Building Project has supported 118 people/support workers on basic 'advice' issues in order to address the gap/need that volunteer advisors were filling. Topics covered include Money management, challenging benefit decision and Income maximisation.

The project offers NVQ workshops in Advice and Guidance. 15 candidates are currently registered for NVQs (12 for Level 3 and 3 for Level 4) and one completed L3 during Oct-Dec 2020.

3.6 Theme 4 Employment and Skills

3.6.1 Scheme 4A: Developing and embedding good practice in the workplace for people with disabilities, learning difficulties and physical and mental health barriers to work

There is only one project under this scheme. The project has carried out co-production sessions with disabled members to ensure effective guides are being created so that good practices can be adequately embedded in the workplace for people with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and physical and mental health barriers to work. The project has also carried out one to one advice sessions with employers assessing their current situation,

resources and capacity and agreed on goals that this project will help employers work towards.

Due to the nature of this work, it has proved challenging to meet the desired targets as almost all organisations have been closed. However, they are hopeful that more and more targets and outcomes will be met as lockdown eases further and further in the coming months.

3.6.2 Scheme 4B: Reducing barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups

Despite lockdown, vacancies being scarce and rising unemployment, projects have continued to work closely with their beneficiaries and project partners. One project has had to form new partnerships and alliances and extend their offer of supplementary courses for further development of women. The project together with other organisations held and celebrated International Women's Day in March 2021.

Another project has had to be innovative and station themselves at Job Centre Plus to directly engage and get young people signed up to their employment programme.

Another project took advantage of the rising opportunities in the construction field and encouraged their beneficiaries to pursue courses and job opportunities in that field.

"Without this organisation I would be at home thinking about doing things rather than actually doing it".

3.6.3 Scheme 4C: Support focused on increasing access to art and cultural industries

The Covid-19 pandemic had a great toll on the arts and cultural industries, with most buildings closed to the public. However, most beneficiaries and participants have successfully managed to continue with their engagement, training and workshops online with little difficulty. This meant that projects were able to retain their participants and used social media platforms to increase take-up. With lockdown easing in the coming months, projects are optimistic in achieving their lifetime targets and outcomes and plan to increase the level of activities to stay on top of annual targets as they anticipate a dramatic rise in arts and cultural activities.

3.7 Theme 5 Community Safety

Theme 5 incorporates 3 schemes funding 6 projects.

Organisations continued to transform working practices and service delivery models, either by socially distancing, or digitalising their work and developing new practices. Covid safety measures have increased operating costs and there has been a surge in demand for services. Since lockdown reintroduced on the 6 January, projects working in schools and with older people have had significant challenges relating to with lockdown restrictions. Details of these impacts, alongside individual project achievements, are held in Appendix 1

3.7.1 Scheme A – Reduction in the exploitation of children, young people and other vulnerable groups

Projects funded under this scheme continue to respond to safeguarding Young People at risk of violence and exploitation.

Case study Streets of Growth:

S was referred by social services. She was not attending school and going missing from home. We put a plan together with mum and school to engage S in the young leader's programme and once a week coaching session.

Issues uncovered through intervention work and relationship building:

- Exploited, being in company with older men and women
- Drug and alcohol misuse caused careless behaviour
- S in dangerous situations with friends
- Trouble with the police
- Family relationships break down
- S not following boundaries and restrictions at home

These extensive issues were uncovered by consistent relationship building with both S and mum. Over time, trust developed that has allowed us to get to the root causes of S behaviour. In dealing with these, we have conducted multiple workshops with S around appropriate relationships, drug, and alcohol abuse, dealing with emotions and a particular focus was rebuilding relationship at home with parents and siblings. S huge struggle is to follow boundaries which causes a lot of arguments at home and would then reflect her negative behaviour outside.

During the COVID-19 lockdown S was very depressed and was not coping well due to her own loneliness

The plan put in place during that time to keep S safe was as follows:

- Consistent contact via phone
- Supporting S mental well-being by going for walks in the park twice a week

After 4 weeks of doing well during the lockdown, one evening S relapsed by going out drinking with friends where she was highly intoxicated which then led to having a panic attack and assaulting a police officer.

We put two weeks intense coaching to support S to recognise the severity of her actions- reflecting to our previous coaching outcome around S strong values she has against alcohol. With support S was able to recognise that she was bored and needed structure and routine in her life. Which we then supported her to explore her options.

Progression:

- Currently is studying at OMG training to complete her Numeracy and Literacy
- Working part time at Boots
- Playing an active role in the young leader's programme – including the development of the new creative hub.

3.7.2 Scheme B - Improving the perception of young people in the community

This scheme supports relationships in the community by breaking down barriers that bring about positive relationships between people of different generations. These projects support a thriving, cohesive and well-integrated community.

Leaders in the Community replaced face to face meetings between older residents and young people with continuing to improve digital access to older people, by the younger people providing equipment, training and support to

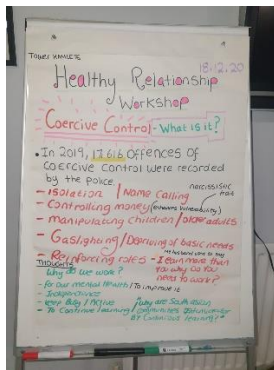
elders to use them. During period over 30 electronic tablets were provided to local elderly Tower Hamlets residents, predominantly from the Poplar area. Older recipients of the e-tablets also received an information pack that contained a “how-to use your device” documents that were created by younger members of the steering group and phone support.

3.7.3 Scheme C - Services for people affected by domestic violence or other unsafe circumstances

One project is supported under scheme C. This case study from Hestia Housing demonstrates the impact of their work with women in the refuge on emotional and coercive control.

Statistics Before the session took place

- 4 women stated they have some understanding of Emotional Abuse
- 8 women stated that they have not heard of Emotional Abuse
- 2 women stated that they were unsure



Comments: 'Most of the emotional abuse we face is from In Laws. The In Laws think that are eager to control daughter in laws from the beginning. The new bride must cook and clean. If she does not the family, will call her names and disgrace her by taunting her and hitting her. This is justified in the community. If she was a good girl, she would know her duty is to take care of the family and not talk back'

Statistics towards end of session

14 participants stated that they have an understanding of emotional abuse and would be able to recognise abusive behaviours.

3.8 Premises update

There are several organisations in receipt of Local Community Fund in Council buildings. The list below are those organisations that have an LCF funding agreement with the Council and does not include project partners.

- Age UK East London
- DeafPlus
- Limehouse Project
- Mudchute Association
- Osmani Centre
- REAL
- Stifford Centre
- Wapping Bangladesh Association
- Working Well Trust

The Asset Management team is working with the organisations to ensure appropriate property agreements are in place. Premises issues that require an update are below:

Age UK East London – discussions continue between the organisation and the Council to finalise the lease for the Russia Lane premises.

REAL – discussions continue between the organisation and the Council to put in place a 12-month licence for the use of space at Jack Dash House.

3.9 Infrastructure & Capacity Building

Although the current Infrastructure & Capacity Building funding was awarded through a separate process the management and reporting arrangements are the same as the Local Community Fund and performance reporting is included as part of this report. The Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services (THCVS) are the lead organisation in a partnership that contains the Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) and Tower Hamlets Community Transport (THCT). THCVS Infrastructure Partnership brings together the main Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) infrastructure support agencies in Tower Hamlets to increase the range and number of VCS organisations that are well-run, resilient and sustainable; and to strengthen the VCS as a key Public Sector Strategic Delivery Partner in Tower Hamlets. £260,000 was awarded per year for a 3-year programme – October 2019 to September 2022

3.9.1 THCVS - 66 different groups attended a couple of online meet the funders events that focused on general and online funding opportunities. THCVS received 11 positive responses out of over 30 groups feedback has been such a challenge. However, it has provided a case example with Island Advice that describes the new digital support service THCVS has been providing and the impact this contributes to.

In addition, in the quarter, THCVS achieved 2 significant partnership funding bids. It supported Osmani Trust to successfully lead on a partnership with Spotlight/Poplar Harca and Streets of Growth to bid the GLA violence reduction unit. They have secured a grant of £750,000 over 2 years. THCVS supported St Margaret's House to lead on a partnership bid to the Thriving Communities funding programme and secure £50,000 for this project.

61 VCS organisations supported on various topics including Vaccine (20), Funding (17), Digital (12), Governance (4), Networking and Partnership (4), Start Up (2), Premises (1), Project development (1)

3.9.2 VCTH – continues to exceed KPI targets for the quarter and towards its annual targets. The following is the percentage of VCS organisation staff reporting a positive outcome from training/peer learning workshops:
18 out of 23 participants (78%) completed the evaluation survey
100% of respondents rated the session as useful, with 22% rating is as excellent/ extremely useful and 72% as good/very useful
94% of respondents committed to making a change or taking an action as a result of the training (104% of target)
100% of respondents reported either an increase in knowledge or committed to making changes in their organisation

3.9.3 THCVS has an underspend of about £12,000 for 2020/21. The proposal is to use this underspend to extend the digital development officer role from 2 days a week to 5 days a week so that they can continue to support groups with

adapting to delivering their services online. A key element of this role will be to support groups with using the 'free' access to an online monitoring tool that we were able to secure through National Lottery and London Community Response grants in the last six months.

THCT is looking at options for partnership/merger to ensure there is a sustainable service.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 A strategic assessment was undertaken of the proposed Local Community Fund (LCF) programme with the Equality Analysis comprising part of the report recommending funding as agreed at the 31 July 2019 Cabinet. This included looking at the change from Mainstream Grants (MSG) to the Local Community Fund and whether the recommended projects were able to deliver against identified need.

4.2 The analysis identified some potentially negative impacts relating to age, race and disability and these were addressed by initiating activity outside the LCF programme including:

New themes developed for the Small Grants Programme

- Access and Participation
- Community Support Services for Older People

Commissioned Services contracts to address key areas:

- Young People's Mental Health
- Early Years
- Young People's Disability Sports
- Young Carers

4.3 The programme continues to deliver against the themes developed to address the identified need.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.

5.2 There are no other specific statutory implications relevant to consideration of this report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report. If report implications were to lead to re-alignment of funding then it would need to be within the agreed grant budget of £9.31M

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The Council is required to ensure it obtains Best Value in the administering of the various grants referred to in this report. A significant part of demonstrating Best Value is ensuring that the recipient organisations perform in accordance with the original applications and conform to the terms of the grant agreement. However, the impact of the Covid pandemic has meant that this may not have been possible in some cases. Central Government advice suggests though that it may represent better value to the Council to ensure that partner organisations remain in existence post pandemic rather than levy penalties under the relevant agreement terms. This has allowed the Council scope to make the alternative arrangements it has done relating to the pandemic.

7.2 It continues to be in the Council's interest to ensure that written agreements are in place for the use of all the Council's buildings by VCS organisations as referred to in this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Project Summary

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A