

Grants Determination Sub-Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
Wednesday 6 July 2022	
Report of: Sharon Godman, Director Strategy, Improvement & Transformation	Classification: Unrestricted
Local Community Fund (LCF) Performance Report - October 2021 – March 2022	

Lead Member	Cllr Saied Ahmed, Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cost of Living
Originating Officer(s)	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy & Communities Mark Waterman, Senior VCS Development Officer
Wards affected	All
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	30 th May 2022
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. At Grants Determination Sub Committee on 9th March 2022 it was agreed that the above Local Community Fund (LCF) projects would be extended until September 2023 to ensure that council-funded VCS services are in operation whilst the council develops new funding options for the VCS to commence from October 2023.

The performance report covers the period October 2021 to March 2022 and reports on the five themes of the LCF and the Infrastructure & Capacity Building funding. The Project Summary (Appendix 2) gives an update by each project.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the performance of the Local Community Fund (LCF) programme as set out in 3.2 to 3.7 and Appendix 2 for October 2021 – March 2022
2. Note the suspension of LCF project payment to Age UK East London's Caxton Hall and Friend at Home projects due to premises issues as set out in paragraph 3.2 (e) and (f)
3. Note the permanent suspension of St Hilda's East Community Centre's Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project as set out in paragraph 3.2 (e) and (g)
4. 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.
5. Note the programme for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) trustee training and matching with local VCS organisations, that is being delivered via the Infrastructure and Capacity Building programme, as set out in 3.9 (d).

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Grants Determination Sub Committee Terms of Reference sets out the need to provide performance report to the Committee.
- 1.2 Regular performance updates ensure that the LCF themes and individual projects are on track to achieve the targeted outcomes. Any issues that arise 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 (GDSC) with an overall understanding of how projects and organisations have performed against the key elements of their Funding Agreements.
- 2.2 GDSC 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. This programme is called the Local Community Fund (LCF) with 50 projects 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.

At GDSC meeting on 9th March 2022 it was agreed that the above LCF projects would be extended until September 2023 to ensure that council-funded VCS services are in operation whilst the council develops new funding options for the VCS to commence in October 2023. The cost of this extension amounts to £1,329,616.

3.2 Overview of October 2021 – March 2022

(a) The 6-month period in this update witnessed LCF projects encountering a number of challenges:

- impact on the rise in the cost of living leading to increased demand on VCS services such as advice work
- project partners not being fully ready to meet commitments to LCF project providers due to the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic – e.g. arts organisations working with projects that are supporting employment opportunities in the culture industry were not always able to offer proposed opportunities, such as placements for beneficiaries, due to Covid-19 restrictions
- high levels of staff and volunteer sickness absence for LCF providers in January-March 2022 due to high rates of COVID-19
- some projects facing a high backlog of demand from certain beneficiary groups who were unable to access LCF project services when they were being predominantly delivered on-line during lockdown, due to absence of information technology (IT) skills or not owning required IT equipment– e.g. elderly people.

(b) LCF providers have demonstrated significant resilience in responding to the above demands and enabling their projects to be continued to be delivered successfully. None of the LCF providers closed their services during this timeframe - although one project has suspended its services permanently following an organisation review of its services: please see 3.2 (g). Examples of the providers' successful response include:

- moves to hybrid models of service delivery, with a mixture of services delivered on-line and on a physical basis, with the move away from lockdown. Organisations have been able to develop and enhance the on-line service provision that was initially adopted during lockdown. They have imaginatively used their social media platforms to engage with their beneficiaries. LCF providers have also been able to deliver more service activity on a physical basis for beneficiaries who prefer this option, including for groups who are generally less skilled in IT or less likely to have required IT equipment – elderly people, physically disabled people, people with sensory impairments, the unemployed. LCF project services have also been delivered via the telephone – e.g. advice services for elders
 - LCF providers' responses have been assisted by their success in securing external funding to help them respond to the above demands – e.g. a LCF provider secured funding to purchase 20 laptops to be used by female digitally excluded beneficiaries. VCS organisations are assisted in their efforts to obtain external funding – e.g. from charitable trusts – if they are receiving funding from their local council.
- (c) Council officers with responsibility for performance managing LCF projects have been responsive and supportive to providers whilst they have faced the above challenges. They have continued with monitoring visits to projects – both on a virtual and physical basis – and examined project quarterly monitoring returns. Officers have permitted project providers to deliver services on a flexible basis where required, whilst always ensuring that projects are successfully progressing to deliver agreed project outcomes.
- (d) LCF projects are assigned a Red, Amber or Green rating (RAG rating) when reporting to the GDSC on project performance - please see Appendix 1 for more details.
- (e) Of the 50 LCF projects 47 have been classed as Green whilst 3 are classified as Red due to:
- issues relating to tenancy in a council-owned building for a provider of two LCF project (please see Paragraph 3.2 (f) below)
 - one LCF provider has permanently suspended one of its three LCF projects (please see Paragraph 3.2 (g) below).

RED-rated Projects

Theme 1 Scheme B: Age UK East London – Caxton Hall

Theme 1 Scheme B: Age UK East London – Friend at Home

Theme 1 Scheme E: St Hilda's East Community Centre - Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project

The Infrastructure & Capacity Building project, which is managed on a similar basis to LCF and supports local VCS organisations is classified as Green

(f) Age UK East London

- (i)** Age UK East London's two LCF projects – Caxton Hall and Friend at Home - are now classified as RED status. This is not because of performance issues – both projects are on track to deliver agreed outcomes – but due to a tenancy issue between Age UK East London and the Council.
- (ii)** Age UK East London occupies the ground and second floors of a Council-owned building at 82 Russia Lane in Bethnal Green. There is no satisfactory premises agreement in place between Age UK East London and the Council for the organisation's occupancy of this premises. The grant agreements with Age UK East London for the delivery of the above two LCF projects states that the Council may withhold a grant payment, or withdraw it, if Age UK East London occupies or uses Council owned premises and there is no satisfactory premises agreement in place. This is a standard condition of Council grant funding..
- (iii)** The Council begun negotiating a lease with Age UK East London to regularise its occupation of 82 Russia Lane before LCF funding commenced in October 2019. Progress towards agreeing a lease was reported to the Sub-Committee in order to seek a temporary waiver of the funding condition and continue payment of LCF quarterly instalments, on the basis that some, albeit limited, progress, was being made towards completing a lease. Following the Sub-Committee's decision to delegate to the Divisional Director (Strategy, Improvement and Transformation) authority to waive this funding condition in consultation with the Corporate Director, Place, funding to Age UK continued until January 2022.
- (iv)** Officers consider that recent discussions with Age UK to agree lease terms have not progressed satisfactorily and, accordingly, the LCF funding has been suspended since January 2022.
- (v)** There have been further discussions between Council officers and Age UK East London which will hopefully result in a positive outcome that will enable the Council to resume LCF payments. However, in the light of the continued suspension of LCF funding, officers are now reporting the situation to the Sub-Committee.

(g) St Hilda's East Community Centre - Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project

- (i)** The Council funds St Hilda's East Community Centre ("St Hilda's) to deliver three LCF projects:
- Older People's "Feeling Good!" Wellbeing project
 - St Hilda's Girl Driven Project
 - St. Hilda's Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project.
- (ii)** On 20th January 2022 St Hilda's e-mailed the Council to inform it that it was suspending the Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project. This project had supported

young people with learning and physical disabilities across Tower Hamlets, offering a range of educational and recreational opportunities and free wheelchair accessible minibus transport.

- (iii) St Hilda's decision to suspend the project had been prompted by the departure from its organisation of the lead officer for the above project, who was moving on to a new role. She had led the Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project LCF project since its inception in October 2019 and on previous similar work within St Hilda's in the 16 years preceding the commencement of this LCF project.
- (iv) St Hilda's used the departure of the above officer as an opportunity to review its services in the wider context of the COVID-19 pandemic, organisational restructure and bereavements for members of staff. It decided to consider whether it was the best placed organisation to deliver the Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project and agreed to permanently suspend its services for this project.
- (v) St Hilda's has ensured that the project beneficiaries, who had reached the point to move on from the project's services, were satisfactorily transitioned to other appropriate services to receive required support. The beneficiaries have reached an age where they had to move on to a 25 plus age group, which is more appropriate for their needs. St Hilda's has worked with the beneficiaries and their parents to support them to make this transition.
- (vi) The Council has not made any LCF project payments to St Hilda's for the Surjamuki Disabled Youth Project for any activity post-December 2021.

3.3 Theme 1 Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing

(a) Theme Overview

Theme 1 incorporates five schemes supporting children and families, older people, and people with disabilities. There are 27 current projects, focusing on improving the health and wellbeing of residents and the quality of the care services they receive.

(b) Scheme A Children, Young People and Families (Eight projects)

Projects in this Theme are focused on developing the confidence and life opportunities of young people, enabling them to fulfil their potential and access opportunities and services. During the reporting period projects have made good progress in responding to COVID-19 pandemic offering a mixture of digital and physically based services to engage beneficiaries. The relaxation of lockdown projects has assisted projects to:

- engage their beneficiaries in a range of networking, social, cultural artistic and physical activities to develop their confidence and improve their physical and mental health. Between January-March 2022 196 young people participated in Half Moon Young People's Theatre's Professional Theatre and Inclusive Participatory Drama for Young

People project, thus helping them to develop their communication and life skills.

- allow beneficiaries' to develop their job-finding and life-skills. Beneficiaries of Newark Youth London's Girls in Action project participated in job application skills workshops in January-March 2022, learning how to produce CVs and cover letters, in addition to learning interview techniques.
- link socially excluded young people to training, employment and performance opportunities in the arts sector. The Yard Theatre's Excellence at Night-time initiative, part of its Tower Hamlets Teens' project, delivered four masterclasses through professional artists in January-March 2022 for its group of 15-19 year olds, covering nightlife, directing, set design and how to build a multidisciplinary arts career.
- develop relationships within families, enabling parents to understand their children better and improving understanding between parents and their children. Osmani Trust's Family Mentoring Project - Early Help supported 19 families through early help, to address emerging problems within the families at an early stage, between October 2021-March 2022 and improved the parenting skills of 13 parents.
- assist young women to develop their confidence, resilience and life skills. The Canaan Project was able to increase the confidence in one or more dimensions of girls and young women aged 11-19 on the Isle of Dogs through them taking part in project activities such as cooking, craft, sports, inspirational workshops at its weekly lunch and after school club.

(c) Scheme B – Older People (Seven projects)

The seven projects in this Theme are concerned with improving the health and wellbeing of older residents and the quality of the care services they receive.. Notable areas of progress have included:

- befriending projects have helped to reduce loneliness, isolation and anxiety for housebound older people or those with very limited mobility, improving their psychological well-being. In this period much service delivery has been carried out through telephone befriending, with some in-person visits in community settings ensuring that clients' welfare and health issues were being met/addressed. Fifty isolated older adults have been visited and called by a befriender advocate on a weekly basis during the period of COVID- 19 restrictions by Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbour's Older Peoples' Befriending Project.
- delivery of a range of health promotion, user led and social activities to improve beneficiaries' physical and mental health and widen their social networks. 85 elderly people from the Vietnamese and Chinese communities in the borough were able to participate in physically based

and on-line social activities, including table tennis, Tai Chi Exercise, Indoor games, ballroom dancing, computer and cooking classes.

- provision of local support groups and one to one support on-line and remotely to LGBT people over 50 through East London Out Project's Tower Hamlets LGBT Support project. Fifty seven disabled LGBT people or LGBT people experiencing mental health concerns who participated in project facilitated social support groups to support their needs reported better life satisfaction and better quality of life three months after start of service .
- Seventy one older people participating in St Hilda's East Community Centre's Older People's 'Feeling Good!' Wellbeing Project have reported to be feeling less socially isolated after participating in a project lunch club with a range of activities, including yoga and dancercise.

(d) Scheme C – Access, Information and Self-Management (Two projects)

(i) The focus of projects in this Theme is enabling older and physically disabled residents to be better informed and equipped to manage health and social care conditions. Projects have continued to support clients who are isolated/excluded – with their needs heightened because of the pandemic – due to a number of reasons:

- physically, due to lack of accessible infrastructure
- linguistically, due to insufficient developed English language skills
- sensory impairments
- lacking accessible information and experiencing digital exclusion.

(ii) Many clients have complex needs and some would be classified as hard to reach. The provision in this Theme has been delivered during the reporting period through online, remote and face to face/one-to-one sessions. Successful examples of project interventions have included:

- nineteen people benefitted between October 2021-March 2022 from on-line mindfulness-based pain management sessions and courses delivered by the Globe Community Project's Take Back Your Life project. The same project delivered an interpreted face to face mindfulness course for Bangladeshi men.
- Real DPO's Taking Control of Your Life project developed action plans and delivered support relating to these plans to 24 physically disabled people, including home visits and follow-up support to beneficiaries who have differing levels of engagement with services.

(e) Scheme D – Healthy Living and Healthy Choices (Six projects)

(i) Projects under this theme are concerned with:

- making residents better informed to enable them to make healthier choices
- increasing engagement in physical activity.

(ii) Projects have delivered a range of activities during the reporting period to promote exercise, healthy eating and improve social and life skills. This has included:

- London Tigers' Exercise for Health (BAME Women, Children and Young People) project delivering workshops focusing on knee and back pain issues and exercises to strengthen the health of affected beneficiaries. These workshops received very positive feedback from participants.
- Newark Youth London's Healthy Active Together project supporting 277 children young people and adults in January-March 2022 to participate in a range of physical activities to improve their health such as:
 - football coaching, including girls-only sessions
 - Saturday Mother and Daughter fitness sessions and Father and Son Badminton session
 - Women's Walking Group
 - Over 50s yoga
 - Disability football sessions
- Stifford Centre Limited's Healthy Lifestyle Partnership Programme supporting 218 people in January-March 2022 to take part in a range of healthy activity sessions, including:
 - sit fit classes, aerobics
 - yoga
 - healthy walks
 - water sports, such as, sailing, canoeing, kayaking
 - climbing
 - helping people to experience the therapeutic benefits of interacting with nature and the outdoors. .

(iii) Projects under this scheme have also delivered health promotion sessions, such as sexual health workshops, and workshops focusing on pain management and promoting healthier lifestyles. The Bangladesh Youth Movement 's Live Healthy Enjoy Life (Female Health & Development Project) supported 32 Bangladeshi women to access a range of health programmes between January-March 2022.

(iv) Projects have supported interactions between residents and improved their physical and mental health. Mudchute Association's Playing out at Mudchute project brought 400 residents together for two community events at

Christmas 2021 and continues to deliver play activities for children at Mudchute Farm to promote exercise, healthy eating, social and life skills.

(f) Scheme E – Improved Inclusion, Health and Well-being Outcomes for Disabled People and People Experiencing Mental Health Issues (Four projects)

(i) Projects in this theme are focused on improving health outcomes for disabled people and ensuring that people experiencing mental health issues are better supported. Projects have responded to the pandemic to deliver a range of successful interventions, including:

- deafPlus' Improving Health and Wellbeing for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Tower Hamlets project has improved the health and well-being of 15 deaf and hard of hearing people between October 2021-March 2022. It has held a range of events to support beneficiaries, including:
 - fitness sessions
 - healthy eating courses and stand-alone cooking course with Yumma Food
 - theatre and acting workshop
 - drawing workshop.

The project has widened the reach of its deaf awareness training to include health settings. Outcome feedback has demonstrated participants have felt less isolated, which had a positive impact on their mental health, learnt new knowledge and skills and were able to build friendships.

- ICM Foundation continues to deliver a beneficiary-led newspaper for young people with learning difficulties, working towards extremely tight deadlines, despite the continued disruption of COVID-19 upon the project. Feedback on the newspapers has been extremely positive and complimentary.
- the Woman's Trust's Therapeutic Support Groups for Women Affected by Domestic Abuse project has delivered on-line provision for which all of its participants reported positive outcomes. Project is introducing evening groups to meet the needs of women unable to attend project sessions during the day and to catch up on progress of project outcomes where progress has been limited because of COVID-19 restrictions.
- Working Well Trust's Upskill project continues to exceed its engagement targets and has seen an increasing number of referral agencies using its services. It exceeded its target for beneficiary referrals received by 20% in January-March 2022 quarter, securing 72 referrals. The project is increasingly working closely with local GPs and social prescribers, offering a range of opportunities to people accessing

their GP who are affected by isolation and poor mental health as a result of the pandemic.

3.4 Theme 2 Digital Inclusion and Awareness

(a) Theme Overview

There are two schemes in this theme, concerned with promoting Information, Communication and Technology skills support and training for older people and the development of digital skills and training for young people.

(b) Scheme A: ICT Skills and Digital Careers (Three projects)

(i) The three projects under this theme all provide digital ICT skills to residents and continue to build their knowledge, giving them the confidence to use digital devices to access online activities and health information. Older people have been empowered during the period covered by the report to do a wide array of tasks online, from making GP appointments to accessing online employment support workshops. Examples of successful LCF project progress in this area has included:

- Limehouse Project's DigITIES project enabled 10 older people to learn to use three ICT platforms
- Newham New Deal Partnership's @online club Network Tower Hamlets project enabled 15 older residents to do more things on-line

(ii) During the October 2021- March 2022 period organisations continued to adapt their delivery due to the challenges of the pandemic, despite all projects reporting that service users had adapted to the lockdown restrictions and can continue to attend online ICT sessions. All three projects under this scheme reported limited face to face delivery.

(iii) Co production in project activities and increasing engagement from BAME communities was also reported on by projects, particularly as COVID-19 impacted BAME communities significantly. Projects took steps to ensure that digital inclusion was promoted amongst residents from BAME communities and that residents from these communities had access to GP services and essential services in the council. Wapping Bangladesh Association's Digital First project supported 15 older adults to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the potential benefits of learning to use computers and how to navigate around the internet. Using digital services for personal and professional purposes has improved participants wellbeing and sense of connection.

(c) Scheme B: Online Safety (Two projects)

- (i) The priority of this theme is children and young people's online safety. The two funded projects in this theme have empowered children to recognise and deal with the impact of online abuse, resulting in young people speaking out and getting the help that they need, including from their families. Parents have gained skills and knowledge to keep their children safer online. For example, 33 of the project participants on SocietyLinks' Tower Hamlets E-Safety project between October 2021 to March 2022 reported taking a specific action at home to improve online safety. Participation in the project had provided them with the required skills to carry out these actions.
- (ii) Community cohesion was a new theme for this period, as the focus is young people. Topics discussed in this scheme, and that young people want a deeper understanding of, have ranged in this period from racism and issues of inequality, particularly around the Black Lives Movement and the relationship of football and racism.
- (iii) Online fraud awareness had also increased during this period as more service users reported either being a victim of fraud or unable to decipher what is a genuine request for information. Service users reported increased number of bogus calls claiming to be from the NHS requesting confidential information. Sixty one parents and children who took part in Sporting Foundation's Building Digital Resilience project between October 2021 to March 2022 reported increased awareness of risks pertaining to on-line activity
- (iv) Projects under this scheme have reported increased confidence in ICT skills from beneficiaries, particularly on how to stay safe, understanding online scams and confidently checking what their children are doing online, plus being able to provide advice to what is appropriate online usage. Twenty two local women trained by SocietyLinks' Tower Hamlets E-Safety's project to be Digital Champions, to champion e-safety in the community, reported feeling confident enough to make a change in ICT practice and in telling others to do so too. The importance of digital footprints was also reported on by both projects in this scheme, as young people continue to develop confidence and be empowered.

3.5 Theme 3 Advice and Information (Two projects)

- (a) Both of this theme's projects provide social welfare advice and information, one delivered by a consortium of providers and one delivered by a partnership of two organisations. Both projects in this theme have made good progress between October 2021 to March 2022 on meeting their KPI targets, outputs and outcomes, despite the high level of demand on their resources:
 - East End Citizens Advice Bureaux-led Advice Tower Hamlets Consortium assisted 10,477 clients with social welfare advice and supported 2,170 beneficiaries to increase or maximise their income.

- the above Consortium enabled £25,455,375 of beneficiaries' income to be increased or backdated and secured £11,497,000 in reduction or write off of personal debt for beneficiaries
 - Island Advice Centre / Tower Hamlets Advice Training and Capacity Building Project delivered 24 Advice Workshops to 247 participants on a range of issues, such as benefits, housing, homelessness, employment and immigration.
- (b)** During the October 2021-March 2022 period there has been reduced levels of face-to-face services due to lockdown restrictions relating to the pandemic. This has had an adverse impact on progress against some of the themes' targets as many beneficiaries, largely from BAME communities, do not possess required digital and language skills for digitally based services delivered by LCF providers. However, LCF providers have introduced action plans to address the above shortfalls, whilst they make the transition to an increased level of face-to-face services. They have taken steps to provide a well-balanced service to all their clients, offering provision delivered via telephone, SMS, e-mail, video link and face to face advice.
- (c)** All advice agencies have seen a greater demand for their services. They have faced challenges due to staff and volunteer sick leave because of COVID-19.
- (d)** Projects have not seen a change in case matters affecting individuals. Their work has continued to focus on:
- evictions
 - Personal Independence Payment/Disability Living Allowance appeals
 - debt
 - benefits issues
 - Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) overpayments created by the pandemic
- (e)** The above needs and pressures have resulted in sudden losses of income for beneficiaries, leading to a surge in Universal Credit claims and increased levels of homelessness and mental health support needs. The need for food banks, gas and electricity vouchers and other financial support continues in 2022.
- (f)** The projects continue to promote community cohesion through partnership working, which helps them to have a better understanding of clients' needs.

3.6 **Theme 4 Employment and Skills**

(a) **Theme Overview**

Theme 4 incorporates three schemes focusing on supporting socially excluded groups to access employment, delivering employment and training support to project beneficiaries and working with employers to provide employment and work placement opportunities for beneficiaries.

(b) **Scheme 4A: Developing and embedding good practice in the workplace for people with disabilities, learning difficulties and physical and mental health barriers to work (One project)**

Real DPO's Then and Now project has increased its membership and started to work with some larger and more well-known employers, owing to the growing reputation of the project in the local area. It has also seen some real, practical successes with local employers taking on disabled people, who have been involved in the project, in various capacities, due to the extensive employer-engagement work that the project has undertaken. Five new employers partnered with the project in the last three months, including the Royal College of Psychiatrists, with whom the project has been able to carry out some excellent one-to-one support work with project beneficiaries. Some larger employers have attended the provider's workshops, including the British Film Institute and Screwfix Direct. Almost all employers who have engaged with the project on one-to-one support have reported taking on a disabled person in some capacity and have credited the project with being a big part of making that happen.

(c) **Scheme 4B: Reducing barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups (Four projects)**

The projects in this scheme continue to work closely with their beneficiaries and project partners. Projects are engaging with beneficiaries to motivate them, increase their confidence levels and delivering training to them in work-related qualifications. Focus of individual projects has included

- Limehouse Project's Developing Potential project securing 20 laptops, through an external funding bid. These laptops were distributed to individuals with no devices, who are from low-income families. The project continues to work with a regular cohort of trainees in childcare, teaching assistant roles and functional skills to upskill BAME women who are furthest away from the labour market.
- St Giles Trust's Choices Tower Hamlets project working with a cohort of 13 young people who are not in education employment or training (NEET) to improve their mental health and wellbeing and support their progress into training and education courses.

- SocietyLinks' Tower Hamlet's Job Club demonstrating innovation by helping beneficiaries to obtain employment through apps that offer a better work-life balance.
- Stifford Centre Limited's BAME Women's Employment Support Programme continues to offer face-to-face support through its women's programme to those most impacted by economic inequality in the borough. It has delivered training in ESOL and NVQ Level 2 in Health and Social Care, and other related accredited qualifications, to 18 BAME women in January-March 2022.

(d) Scheme 4C: Support focused on increasing access to art and cultural industries (Four projects)

(i) Many of the venues related to the arts and cultural industries have re-opened with the easing of the pandemic, enabling LCF projects to increase their levels of activity and therefore increase beneficiaries' access to arts and cultural industries. Areas of project progress have included:

- Auto Italia South East's Learning Live! project delivering a training and mentoring programme to support young residents to progress into higher education courses, with the aim to increase access into the arts and cultural industries. Sixty young residents participated in the project's technology workshops between January-March 2022.
- seven trainees on Four Corners Ltd's ZOOM Film School completed their training in camera, production and editing and undertook their Open College Network accreditation tests in person

(ii) Projects have continued to use social media platforms to increase engagement with beneficiaries and have managed to meet their quarterly targets and outcomes. They have set up several workshops, events and sessions with theatres, schools, colleges, and organisations to increase skills in creative writing, filming and arts and crafts. The projects have also managed to secure jobs for their clients, as more and more arts and cultural organisations have begun to re-open. The Bromley by Bow Centre's Creative Communities project works with people from under-represented communities to increase their participation and readiness for employment in the creative sector. Between October 2021-March 2022 five people who had been supported by the project were able to secure an arts-related work placement within three months of having completed the project.

3.7 Theme 5 Community Safety

(a) Theme Overview

Projects in this theme are concerned with protecting children and young people, improving community cohesion – including between young and older people – and combating domestic violence.

(b) Scheme A- Reduction in the exploitation of children, young people and other vulnerable groups (Three projects)

Projects in this scheme are focused on supporting children excluded from mainstream education, developing the confidence and emotional intelligence of children in secondary schools and developing peer support amongst young people. Notable areas of progress for projects for the period covered by the report have included:

- Kazzum Arts' Build project has relaunched a beneficiary group to address speech, language and communication needs in order to support avoidance of potential conflicts caused by misunderstanding between young people. The group, which supports 11 beneficiaries, focuses on promoting understanding between group members through team building activities - such as model making, building a bridge or a structure to support and contain an object – followed by self-reflection and discussion exercises to develop understanding of communication with each other.
- Osmani Trust's Youth Intervention Officers, working on behalf of its Schools and Community Resilience Programme, have mapped and identified geographical areas in the borough with prolific incidents of violence, with follow up work in these areas by officers to build relationships with local young people and the community to avoid the potential for future violence. Officers have also been able to respond to violent incidents that were taking place after school, enabling conflict to be defused.
- Streets of Growth's Resilient Young Leaders Programme has established a core group of 23 young leaders, of which five are now in paid roles as Senior Young Leader Ambassadors, to promote community safety amongst young people in the borough.

(c) Scheme B - Improving the perception of young people in the community (Two projects)

This scheme's two projects are concerned with enabling children to be a positive part of the community, promoting community cohesion and inter-generational relationships between young and older people. Significant achievements between October 2021-March 2022 for projects in this theme have included:

- the work of children supported by Four Corners Ltd's Into Focus Photography project being displayed at an exhibition in the borough in December 2021-January 2022. Beneficiaries have received support from professional photographers and artists to develop their photography skills.

- Leaders in Community's Project Connect hosting a quiz event involving young people, who hosted the event, and elders, to provide a fun, interactive and competitive space to build intergenerational links in the borough.

(d) Scheme C - Services for people affected by domestic violence or other unsafe circumstances (One project)

Hestia Housing and Support's Families Safe and Secure in Tower Hamlets project has promoted awareness amongst children and families of domestic violence and sexual abuse, including information on how to report this abuse and access appropriate support services. Project has delivered awareness sessions in the community and in its own refuge in the borough on healthy relationships and different types of abuse. It has also run mindfulness sessions, including yoga activities. for young people in the refuge.

3.8 Premises update

- (a)** There are several LCF funded organisations that are based in Council-owned buildings. It is a condition of funding that LCF organisations occupying Council owned premises have an appropriate property agreement in place. There are monthly meetings between officers responsible for the VCS and the Council's Asset Management Team to ensure that these agreements are in place, and, where they are not, to monitor progress. Where organisations are not actively negotiating with the Council to put appropriate agreements in place, quarterly instalments of LCF funding may be delayed or withheld.

3.9 Infrastructure & Capacity Building

- (a)** Although the current Infrastructure & Capacity Building Programme funding was awarded through a separate process, the management and reporting arrangements are the same as for LCF and performance reporting is thus included as part of this report. Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services (THCVS) is the lead organisation in a partnership with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) to deliver an Infrastructure and Capacity Building project. Tower Hamlets Community Transport (THCT) was a partner in this project, but, as reported to GDSC on 12th January 2022, it had to suspend its services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is focused on increasing the range and number of VCS organisations in the borough that are well-run, resilient and sustainable and strengthening the VCS as a key public sector strategic delivery partner in Tower Hamlets. From October 2020, after approval by Cabinet, the project has also supported VCTH to continue to deliver and managed the COVID-19 Volunteering Recovery Hub to recruit and place volunteers to support local VCS organisations to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and assist the recovery process in the borough.

(b) THCVS

During the reporting period THCVS delivered the following development support to VCS organisations:

- supported 36 organisations on 52 areas between in October-December 2021, with positive feedback received from organisations for 38 of the above 52 interventions (73%)
- supported 49 organisations on 88 areas of intervention between January-March 2022, with positive feedback received from organisations for 69 of the above 88 interventions (78%)
- most common areas of intervention between October 2021 to March 2022 included:

- Funding and Finance/Funding	65
- Digital Support	29
- Premises	23
- Business/Project planning	20
- Publicity	19
- Getting Started	12
- a higher proportion of the above support is ongoing in nature and focused on partnerships.

(c) VCTH continues to exceed progress towards its KPI targets between October 2021 to March 2022:

- delivered training to 48 volunteer managers (targets for two quarters is 16), with 98% of trainees completing feedback survey reporting that either they have increased their knowledge or are committed to making changes in their organisation due to their participation in above training
- 16 organisations provided with best practice support to ensure organisations' volunteer programmes and policies are robust, high quality and well managed (annual target of 18)
- 12 VCS organisations registering with the COVID-19 Volunteering Recovery Hub for the first time (annual target of 16)
- 54 VCS organisations supported to register their volunteering roles with the Hub (annual target of 75)
- 398 new volunteer registrations with the Hub (annual target of 500 registrations).

(d) At the GDSC meeting on 12th January 2022 it was agreed that £18,000 of project funds that had been designated for THCT, both before and after it suspended its services, should be allocated to VCTH to deliver within the project a small programme of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) trustee

training, that would also involve matching these trained trustees with local VCS organisations. The programme, which is now in the process of being delivered, with an end date of September 2022, will involve the following outcomes and outputs:

- **Outcomes (by end of programme)**
 - 22 individuals from BAME communities will have increased their knowledge and understanding of charity trusteeship and awareness of local trustee opportunities available to them
 - 15 trained BAME individuals will have become trustees on Boards of local charities
 - between 7 and 10 local organisations will have strengthened their governance and diversified their Boards, including by having suitably skilled and trained BAME trustees.

- **Outputs**
 - trustee training programme developed and 2 cohorts of training delivered
 - 22 individuals from BAME communities vetted, recruited and trained as trustees
 - between 7 and 10 VCS organisations recruited and supported to participate
 - 1 matching event delivered

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A strategic equalities assessment was undertaken of the 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 adverse 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 This report updates on the performance of Local Community Fund programme and the impact of Covid-19 on delivery of objectives.

6.2 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 overall agreed grant budget of £10.64m (£9.31M agreed to 31st March 2023 plus £1.33m agreed extension to 30th September 2023).

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The Council is required to obtain statutory Best Value in the administration 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.

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 – Local Community Fund Programme Management Arrangements
- Appendix 2 – LCF Project Summary Oct 21 – Mar 22

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

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A