



Evidence to the MK Council
Response to COVID -19 Pandemic in Milton Keynes Task and Finish Group

Introduction:

At a glance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since the beginning of the pandemic MK Community Foundation launched an emergency appeal to support the local Voluntary, Community...• During the emergency phase of the grant programme the Community Foundation has supported over 170 grants to the value of £1,000,000.• It is now essential that MK Community Foundation provides sustainable funding through the COVID-19 MK Recovery Fund to support VCCS...

£1.02 M in Covid Grants made last year
New (present) Recovery Fund -> £50k for MK Council -> £250K Community Foundation drawdown money allocated
Writing to groups to encourage applications, based on the fund criteria

Impact on Foundation:

- Recognising the role the Foundation needed to play
 - Sector experts
 - Sector knowledge
 - Bringing groups together to work in partnership
 - Links to “seldom asked groups” (not hard to reach)
- Recognising our role of support to the sector
 - Business case development support
 - Trustee & governance support
 - Application writing support
 - Challenging assumptions
 - Better collecting and interpreting f data
- Practical Impact
 - New Application process – Streamlined
 - Pro-active approach
 - Encouraging and insisting on partnership working (to boarded and increase impact)
 - Finance systems – prep ahead of app assessment, fast payments (one week process)
 - Grant due diligence and decision-making streamlining and in advance

David’s questions / areas to cover:

- Building Back Better (now an international mantra but how does this apply to MK)?
 - From a voluntary sector perspective we forecast support requirements for the sector to strengthen, developing new fundraising strategies, delivering services in a new more dynamic way
 - opportunity to strengthen the sector’s governance through our capacity building programme working with the council

- A reflection of Key Facts / data from the past 18 months or so
 - £1.02mn in covid grants
 - 214,000 beneficiaries (a lot of these will be repeat and generally aimed at the majority of people in MK) – individual interventions (often multiple intervention with same people)
 - 175 specific covid 19 related grants (average £5200 per grant)
- The perceived/real impact on inequalities
 - Funding of BAME communities still below required level, currently at 12% (of our funding), recognise we have much more to do , working on all 9 protected characteristics.
 - Further analysis of requirement of communities needs to be conducted and will be as part of our strategic plan research
- The nature of employment moving forward
 - 16–24-year-olds have suffered job losses more than any other age (hospitality and retail was hard hit, often where young people have starter/entry level jobs)
 - Our Next Generation Fund will help support young unemployed people with education, work and entrepreneurship
- New skills and training – lifelong learning
 - See above regarding Next Generation Fund
- Reimagining the High Street(s)
 - Acorn House and Margaret Powell House are re-opened, offices re-filling, start of week most busy. Conference centre booking coming back at about 40% pre C19
- Can you supply ward specific economic profiles/comparisons (before and after as it were)?
 - Vital Sign available shortly (although borough wide). Long report has data sources that can be drilled down to wards in many areas
- Early reflections on the long term impact of the pandemic
 - The voluntary sector has shown great resilience to the pandemic. We are not aware of any group that has had to close as a result
 - However, we need to ensure that groups get specific support to secure future sustainability. Therefore, our Strategic Recovery grants programme will ensure security for the sector going forward
- Reflections on skills and resilience
 - We have set up a capacity building project for the Voluntary and community sector, this aims to connect business, with groups to offer professional support and to develop new trustee pipeline.
- Reflections on living online and the implications for wellbeing
 - We found many community groups switch their services to go online. However, as lockdown ended and restrictions are eased, more community groups are offering more in person support, but also offering hybrid options
- Long term impact on parents and families
- Impacts on SEND children
- The need for reflective consultation and engagement with residents

- Impacts of Long Covid
- Impacts on Care Homes and care homes staff
 - Vital Sign report picks up on many of these issues, we then run a series of Vital Thinking events throughout the year which bring together groups across the borough to identify gaps and to develop partnership responses and funding application
- Government support for charities / community trusts etc
 - Government support for covid relief support was very good
 - There were issues with very tight or inflexible deadlines. As we know covid was a moving feast and communities had to react very quickly but some of the deadlines made this difficult
 - We secured £212,000 from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
- Free School Meal Impact scheme
 - St Marks Meals who provide free meal boxes to parents of children in school, saw an increase of 100% in boxes delivered from 300 to 600 per month during covid. This group alone serves 2500 people.
- Housing Rough Sleepers
 - Housing rough sleepers during covid – positive drop in rough sleeping, however this needs to be followed through once special measures are lifted if we are not to go back to high numbers of rough sleeper on MK streets
- Impact on the Leisure/cultural/ creative sectors
 - We undertook limited cultural fund as many projects and venues shut, also we are aware of separate cultural funding stream set up by Government and to which a number of MK cultural organisation made successful applications.
 - As restriction are removed organisation remain vulnerable with limitation of audience sizes and underlying fear of people to gather in large groups inside
- Greening the post Covid recovery for MK in line with MKC’s declaration of a climate emergency
 - The Foundation is adopting the UN Sustainable development Goals, will be incorporating this in our vital signs report and is embarking on a review of our operation to reflect these priorities and will seek to incorporate SDGs in our funding programmes
 - We are supporting the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee “Green Canopy” campaign, however we need to grow our environment related funds
- Child Poverty
 - Child poverty in MK is generally quite high with 17.7% of children living in poverty and in some wards it is as high as 34% (Vital Signs 2020).
 - We will report a slight decrease for 2021 but this could be due to the enormous amount of support the voluntary sector were able to provide, including MK Foodbank Xtra, St Marks Meals, DREAMSAI and many other organisations.
 - The picture for 2022 could again drop back to 2020 levels or worse, this will depend on what measures are continues, reduced, removed over the next few months/year (temporary universal credit uplift for example)
 - We facilitated the set up of the Child Poverty Partnership, a forum of organisations determined to end child poverty in MK, aiming to work together better impact and to identify gaps in service
- Vital Signs Reporting – any early indications of the various datasets
 - Vital Signs 2021 report is embargoed till 5th October where we will launch the report at our event.

- People can get in touch with us if they would like to attend
- Both short and long report and video of event presentation at www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk
- Reflections on dialogue with your partners/clients
 - Needed difficult conversations, but found people and organisation really stepped up. Challenges to people and org received well with everyone willing to change amend and improve working methods to support the massive community effort
- Recovery and renewal - an element of building back better
 - Our Strategic Recovery Programme is aimed at building back a better voluntary sector for MK
 - Our Next Generation Fund is aimed at supporting young people back into either education, employment or self employment. We are looking for donations into this fund
- Where the emergency money was spent – and where it was not spent when perhaps it should have been?
 - We feel that we supported the many varied causes and organisations throughout the pandemic. We witnessed a sector that adapted and delivered vital services in a new way and in challenging circumstances
 - Impact report details all grants (page 20-21) [MK Community Foundation - Impact Report \(fliphtml5.com\)](http://fliphtml5.com)
 - We maybe could have connected more with the various diverse communities in MK but the outreach work we are now doing in diversity will place us in a much better position for any future emergency requirements of the VCCS sector.