

# **Evaluation of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults**

## **Impact Case Studies**

**July 2023**

# Fife Women's Tent



## The organisation

Fife Centre for Equalities received a £10,000 grant from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by Scottish Government, to deliver the project "Fife Women's Tent".

The project aimed to promote positive physical, emotional and mental wellbeing for disabled, minority ethnic, transgender and other marginalised women in Fife by encouraging them to make positive connections and support each other.

## The funded project

The project was delivered in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and gave women the opportunity to engage with and support each other through a range of activities.

The project facilitated three live events in North West, South West and Central Fife. Activities at the events included taster sessions for yoga, live music events and a disco. 144 women benefited from these experiences. A fourth event took place to celebrate International Women's Day which saw some 800 women taking part.

Project participants also received peer-to-peer support through the development of an online Facebook-based platform. All content of the online and in-person events was member-led and events were open to all women who were interested in taking part.

Project staff provided the support to organise the monthly online events, and the in-person events.

## The impact

Feedback collated by staff was very positive and the project helped to address social isolation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Participants reported engaging with a wide range of people they would not normally have had the opportunity to meet. The project gave the participating women more confidence to try new things and inspired them to continue with these activities at home.

The activities at the in-person events were very inclusive and helped people who might otherwise have self-excluded (for example due to a disability) to take part.

The project is still live online but there has been a natural reduction in participation levels as the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have reduced. The focus is now on posting interesting information which others can see and respond to.

# Western Isles Cancer Care Initiative



## The organisation

The Western Isles Cancer Care Initiative (WICCI) was set up in 2019 with funding from Macmillan Cancer Support. It operates from a base in Stornoway and supports people who are undergoing cancer treatment or are affected by cancer. The support offered reflects individual needs and can include, for example, financial assistance to meet the additional costs faced when undergoing treatment, alternative therapies and signposting to relevant services.

Prior to the pandemic, if a need was identified for counselling a counsellor from the mainland would be flown to Barra to provide face-to-face sessions. The costs of this were considerable with both travel and accommodation being required. The £10,000 Year 1 funding has been used to recruit an island-based counsellor. Year 2 funding has enabled the continuation of the service.

## The funded project

People are referred by a healthcare professional or they can self-refer and they receive six counselling sessions (although the number provided varies according to need). The island-based counsellor has enabled the Initiative to provide counselling every week from the Stornoway base. To ensure equitable provision across the Western Isles, online sessions are also provided and a mainland counsellor still travels to Barra when required. At the end of Year 1, 48 counselling sessions had been provided to 16 people.

The counselling service supports people to process the emotions experienced during cancer treatment or following the loss of a loved one. Timely access to support is essential for WICCI service users and having a counsellor on the island means that support can be provided when it is needed.

"People dealing with cancer, they go into the NHS system, have a fantastic treatment and then when they come home, as part of the recovery journey, they're just adjusting or coming to terms with the changes and effects of this....they sort of then, probably even more so on the island, feel quite isolated and that's where the support we provide is really good for covering the wellbeing of people going through this." (Project staff)

## The Impact

Project staff described how the counselling supports people to come to terms with their circumstances and adjust to the changes brought about by cancer.

"Most people coming in say that they're tense, emotional, apprehensive and alone but after the sessions, they feel comforted, refreshed and stronger."

For a local health care professional, the counselling had "made a huge difference" in enabling their own service to offer a "support mechanism" for patients. Without it, there would be limited support for those struggling to cope with cancer.

An independent evaluation of the service found that beneficiaries felt listened to and better able to cope with their circumstances. Anxiety, depression and stress were also reported to have been reduced. A beneficiary explained how the counselling had helped them to process the emotions after their cancer treatment:

"It was a safe place for me to go to and discuss things that I didn't want to discuss with loved ones, you don't want to put that burden on them...it feels like a lot of things have been stripped away from you. Going there I felt I was able to express how I was feeling about that and be able to get it all out in a safe environment."  
(Beneficiary)

# East Renfrewshire Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)



## The organisation

East Renfrewshire Citizen Advice Bureau (ERCAB), which is part of the Scotland-wide network of citizens advice bureaux, has specialist advisers who offered assistance with homelessness/evictions, debt & money advice, completion of benefit application & appeal forms, benefit appeal representation, Patient Advice Service, and an Armed Services Advice Project.

The advice they provide is free, independent, confidential, impartial and available to everyone.

ERCAB received £31,040 from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by the Scottish Government, to deliver a community-based project to support people experiencing mental health problems with the aim of preventing them from experiencing disadvantages.

The project provided holistic advice, representation and advocacy services (welfare rights and financial inclusion).

## The funded project

A specialist wellbeing adviser was recruited to provide advice to those ERCAB clients experiencing mental health; and where appropriate and within resources, provided a casework support service to those clients who presented with more acute mental health issues.

As part of this service, advisers provided information, support and, where appropriate, representation on money management, debt-related problems and social security entitlements. They also assisted with the development of practical money management skills and signposted them to other local services where appropriate.

Service user with mental health issues were referred to the service via a range of partner organisations including the East Renfrewshire Council Community Care Team (Mental Health); and the NHS Advocacy Service. Some clients also self-referred to the service.

The project was accessible through all CAB services in East Renfrewshire and 218 clients benefited from this service.

## The impact

At the end of the project's first year, the adviser role generated £516,267 in client financial gain (CFG) for service users with mental health issues - for every £1 invested, £12.90 was generated and this financial gain came from:

- successful Personal Independence Payment (PIP) applications
- successful Universal Credit (UC) applications
- access to Adult Disability Payment (ADP)
- small percentage generated through ESA applications - a benefit for clients too sick to work due to ill health or disability. To be eligible for ESA however, clients need to have requisite National Insurance contributions and clients with longstanding mental health challenges often did not have the required contributions to be eligible for this benefit.

This is particularly important as awards for disability benefits based on mental ill-health are less likely to be successful than applications based on physical disability.

"It was a great help - without it I would have struggled as when I was getting my treatment I was on half pay." Beneficiary

ERCAB continued to operate this project through a successful Year 2 funding award.

# Neil's Hugs - West Lothian

## The organisation



Neil's Hugs Foundation was set up in 2016 to support families and friends affected by suicide.

Since then, the charity has developed and grown and in addition to supporting those who are struggling to cope with the attempted or completed suicide of a loved one, now provides support to those dealing with mild to moderate mental ill health. They use the principles of Time, Space and Compassion to deliver the support.

They received a grant of £50,336 from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by Scottish Government, to expand their suicide prevention activities for people bereaved through suicide and people with mental ill health with a particular focus on young people and the LGBTQI+ community.

## The funded project

The project delivers a range of activities including 1-to-1 support; befriending (using volunteer befrienders) support groups for people who have lost someone to suicide and for those with mild mental ill health; and signposting to other support services.

Their team of 18 trained volunteers are supported by the development worker and as well as providing support, they work with partners like schools, football clubs and the local college to widen their reach. For example, they work with West Lothian College where they hold weekly Cuppa and Chat drop-ins during term time. They also have attended the local LGBTQ+ support group "Glitter Cannons" and provided training in partnership with See Me.

They have also worked with police officers who now carry a Neil's Hugs information card and can offer it to people at risk of suicide; and tattoo artists who can identify signs of self-harming and so they are hoping to train them in suicide prevention and mental health support.

## The impact



The project has supported more than 100 people during Year 1 and staff explained the value of their service in providing a safe space and a listening ear.

"We get people in who nobody else is listening to. We help them to understand the positives in their lives" (Project staff member)

Staff emphasised that the project provided a lifeline to many of the people it supports with one beneficiary declaring that "Without Donna I would be dead."



The money from the Fund created additional capacity which has enabled them to work with more volunteers, and as a result they have been able to support more people through their range of activities, addressing their mental health needs early before they reach a crisis point.

The funding has also enabled them to develop their approaches to monitoring and evaluation so that the organisation is better placed to provide robust evidence of the impact of their interventions.

# Forget Me Not - Aberdeenshire



## The organisation

Forget-Me-Not Club is a small charity which provides dementia support across Aberdeenshire.

They have a specialist resource centre in Banchory providing respite care which includes a range of weekly activities including crafts, exercise and live entertainment, as well as a healthy two-course lunch for members.

They received £6,000 from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by Scottish Government, to deliver a pop-up sessions which provide a stimulating environment for those living with dementia and respite, advice and information for families.



## The funded project



The Aboyne project was set up to address a lack of services for families living with dementia in the area.

They built relationships with local organisations and held an open event to raise awareness of their sessions and to raise awareness of mental health and dementia. The project funds enabled them to purchase new equipment including curling poles and shuttles, and they put together a 'mobile kitchen' to take to the venue each time they hosted a pop-up session.

Existing staff were used to deliver the new session and they also recruited a local volunteer who was a former mental health nurse and had support from a college student.

They visited all families interested in accessing support and discussed their individual needs and interests. Involving people with lived experience was an important component of the project and helped to shape the pop-up sessions.

## The impact

Local families had a weekly session that provided mental and physical stimulation to participants with dementia through activities, social interaction and lunch. Carers and staff reported that if the project did not exist, participants would be at home, with limited social contact beyond family members, and would be socially isolated.

"Mum really enjoyed herself on Monday and really keen to make sure it can happen again. I worried the plan would not fall into place, but it did and worked. Thank you so much for making her so welcome, she is really enjoying spending time with you." (Carer)

The support to family members has improved their mental health and ability to look after the person living with dementia and themselves.

The project also raised awareness about dementia and addressed misconceptions, trying to make the local community more dementia-friendly. For example, they spent time talking to the emergency services to ensure they were able to respond in a more informed way to people who phone in. They run fundraising activities and have a visible presence through their clothing bank.

# Art Angel - Dundee



## The organisation

For 27 years, Art Angel has supported people with mental health problems to get better and stay well through active participation in the arts.

Art Angel is run for, and by, people with lived experience of mental ill health, offering a long-term programme of arts activities in a welcoming non-clinical environment, mentored by experienced staff.

People are often referred to Art Angel following a mental health diagnosis and the experience of being involved in and enjoying the therapeutic nature of art helps participants to build their confidence and self-esteem and supports their recovery towards a hopeful future.



## The funded project

The Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by the Scottish Government, was used to fund a six-month collaboration with the Botanical Gardens in Dundee. This meant that the Young Person's Group could meet weekly and access the different spaces in the Gardens - glasshouses, the education centre, poly-tunnels, and allotments.

Within this outdoor setting, the young people were able to use the natural environment to stimulate their creativity and support their recovery. The Gardens became a base for sketching, painting, writing and sculpture.



## The experience

During the six-month period, 52 young people aged 18-25 years, benefited from the project.

Although they had always lived in Dundee, for many of the participants it was their first encounter with the Botanics. It was also a first for:

- travelling by bus to that part of the city
- interacting with members of the public as they produced their creations
- experiencing the outdoors in this way.

The project culminated in a two-week art exhibition in the Botanics where they shared their work with family, friends, and the general public.



## The impact

The staff that supported the group explained that the setting was a powerful conduit for creativity. They described how the young people gradually became more confident and comfortable in their surroundings. This resulted in more ambition in their artistic creations and increased their self-esteem. Young people 'came out of their shell' and were less socially isolated than before.

"I felt calmer and more focused there, it gave me a boost to be able to work outside and to be brave about what I could achieve. I felt more relaxed and started to open up more." (Young person)

## Young people's views

"I liked being outside and being able to talk to the staff about things I was worried about. Somehow being there made that easier. Other people in the group really helped me too. Having the exhibition made me feel proud of what I had done."

"I was really feeling low when this project came up, it was good to do something different, feel supported and not be alone."

# Open Hoose - Dumfries



## The organisation

The Stove Network is an arts and community organisation based in Dumfries.

They use creativity to bring together people and ideas, inspire and support new community-led projects, grow opportunities and celebrate local places and people.

The Stove received £29,750 from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by Scottish Government, to develop an existing pilot project, Open Hoose. The project supports people to come together in different ways to promote mental wellbeing and social inclusion.

## The funded project

10 groups were established (or re-formed post-Covid) through a community call-out for local group activity ideas and they represented a diverse mix of interests and involved a wide range of local people in terms of age (16-75) gender, sexual orientation and health conditions. The Stove's community café and meeting rooms provide a space for groups to meet and run different activities. A team of Community Event Producers provide tailored support to help the groups deliver their activities which can range from mentorship and signposting to governance development and marketing. Project activities include:

**Free Improvisation:** Run by musicians and open to those who wanted to improvise and compose; **Queer Club:** LGBTQIA+ activists met to advocate for the community and established Dumfries Pride; **Climate Kitchen:** Meet to discuss the climate crisis & identify solutions; **Doughlicious:** A breadmaking club that used the café to support people to make healthy bread; **De-Growth Club:** that met to discuss alternative living that was socially and environmentally conscious; **River Nith Conversation:** that focused on how to protect the local river; **Doon Gamers:** Role playing card gaming club that met monthly for gaming sessions in the venue; **Café Cuts:** A lo-fi DJ evening on Saturday nights; **Repair Shop:** that repaired, fixed and built things from older things; and **WRITE!:** A monthly creative writing workshop.

## The impact

Open Hoose was initially set up as a pilot project before Covid-19 but the pandemic drove activities online. The monies from the Fund enabled the project to restart face-to-face group activities in a safe way. The different activities offered through the project have created new connections, enabled participants to build trusted relationships and addressed social isolation:

"It is about that community spirit and one of the things that I really like is seeing those people .... basically making friends and chatting and knowing that we've been part of connecting those dots. It's all about reconnecting the community." (Project Staff Member)

Other impacts of the project included:

- **Increased capacity within the local community to support and promote good mental health and wellbeing:** Grassroots community groups have been set up and/or developed to address specific issues, connect local people and meet their wellbeing needs.
- **Organisational development:** The funding has enabled Open Hoose to build upon a pre-Covid pilot to expand its services and increase the accessibility of the venue by investing in more appropriate lighting and an audio loop. The Stove has also used the learning from the project to develop its aims and "revolutionise" how its community space is used to benefit the local community.



# Breaking Bread - East Ayrshire



## The organisation

Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust took over and repurposed the local station buildings in 2014 and have been supporting the local community through social prescribing activities ever since.

The Breaking Bread project was set up in 2021 with funding from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by Scottish Government, with match-funding from the Robertson Trust to tackle social isolation.

Funding was used to extend the project's activities and develop its offer. 51 people have benefited from it. Although families most at risk of poverty have not been targeted, the location of the project in an area of deprivation has led to their engagement.

## The funded project

The project supports people with social isolation and anxiety through a six-week breadmaking programme. If additional support needs are identified, participants are referred to the Trust's counselling service.

Participants can access Breaking Bread through referrals from partners, including Community Connectors (based in GPs' surgeries and other agencies, or they can self-refer.

Self-referrals tend to be made after engaging with another of the Trust's activities or services. For example, one of the participants interviewed described how they had been attending mindfulness and acupuncture courses at the Trust when they saw an advertisement for Breaking Bread on their Facebook page.

The bread and other baked goods made during the course are sold in the Trust's café. Showing participants that people are willing to buy their goods was perceived to be an important mechanism through which confidence and self-esteem could be increased.



## The impact

Project staff described how Breaking Bread had been life changing for some of its participants. It had provided a space in which people who are experiencing anxiety and isolation could meet and interact with other participants. In doing so, it had given them the confidence to move forward and join other groups or take on a volunteer role. Participants reiterated this:

'I wasn't getting out much at that time but it gave me the incentive to go out and something to look forward to.'

They reported feeling more confident at the end of the course. Another unemployed participant described being offered a place on the project and how Breaking Bread had helped them:

"I got back to where I belong and went on to volunteer in the Trust."

# A Bite & A Blether - East Dunbartonshire



## The Funded Project

In partnership with East Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), and other third sector organisations, CEARTAS (a registered charity providing independent advocacy support to adults), created the project A Bite and a Blether which received funding through Scottish Government's Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults.

The project was developed as a response to social issues, particularly around loneliness and isolation during and following the Covid-19 pandemic. The organisations involved had noted that GPs were referring high numbers of people with mental health issues and concerns about social isolation. The project involved working collaboratively with local residents to support their wellbeing and provided them with opportunities to meet in a group setting.

201 people were supported including lone parents; a disabled person; families with 3+ children; minority ethnic families; families with young children; mothers aged under 25 and a few members that are carers, all of which are priority groups within the Best Start, Bright Futures tackling child poverty delivery plan.



## The Impact



The project has created routes into independent advocacy, has resulted in new partnerships and during the winter months the project also became a “warm space” for people affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Service users and staff reported a range of impacts including providing participants with someone who listens and who can understand them; making them feel safe, valued and respected; people feeling supported to face challenges; participants having increased confidence; participants having an increased sense of wellbeing; and participants feeling more socially connected. Service users were very positive about the impact the project has had:

“You meet new friends, and the food is absolutely delicious, homemade soup and lots of sandwiches and biscuits, and everything’s just... thumbs up. My family like to see me going because I was in a mess before, I just sat in the living room looking at four walls and that is not good for you. I need people in my life. All kinds of people. I just love it, that’s all I’m saying!” (Beneficiary)

“Such a beautiful venue and catering. C said when I took her home that she felt uplifted and so happy after her day out.” (Carer)

Staff were also very positive about the impact of the project, reporting that “it is a really good outlet both nutritionally, as no one has to pay for food, and emotionally as a lot of the people who attend are stuck indoors. It gives people a purpose, a structure, a routine, and friendships are made.”

The project worked with other groups and organisations to gather information to be shared with group members so that they were well informed about where to access the appropriate support they need. The project hoped to continue to develop and expand.

# Edinburgh Women's Aid

## The organisation



Edinburgh Women's Aid (EWA) was founded in 1973. It is a charity set up by women for women and children who are at risk of domestic abuse. It provides them with a safe and friendly base to turn to for support, information and refuge accommodation.

Their staff team had observed an escalation in mental health issues, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, and were finding that mental health needs were preventing their service users from concentrating fully on the risk issues for themselves and their children.

They received £19,662 from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by Scottish Government, to develop a specialist mental health support role.

## The funded project

EWA wanted to support women's mental health with the funding, they recruited a Mental Health Advocacy and Therapy Worker who provided participants with six therapy sessions each. 33 participants accessed the service in Year 1.

There was a high demand for the service and a waiting list was in place (although shorter than for other NHS services in the area). Women categorised as high priority were supported immediately and those on the waiting list were referred to locality-based support workers whilst they waited for their therapy sessions.

The service was informed by discussions with service users with lived experience. The therapeutic support provided was highly tailored to take account of the abuse issues that the women had encountered. Support was also provided to EWA staff, for example, providing them with training on what to do if someone presents saying that they are suicidal.

## The impact

The project received consistent positive feedback from service users. Some of the women they supported had previously received therapy, but they reported that because this therapy was domestic-abuse informed it was more beneficial and it helped them to understand that the abuse was not their fault. Staff described service users as having improved self-esteem and being more empowered.

Another service user described how the therapist taught her coping mechanisms for panic attacks that she was experiencing which made them easier to control and work through. The service user felt that the therapy had stopped her from becoming housebound:

"I would be unable to control the panic attacks I was having and the fear of having one out of the house would have stopped me going out of the house completely. She gave me the confidence to go for a walk every day and encouraged me to walk a bit further each time".

Staff within EWA reported that as a result of the project they are having more success in engaging women on a range of other issues, and a reduction in repeat presentations to the service as a result of the project. They described the women as more receptive to support due to the therapy they have received. This allowed staff to help the women to make better decisions regarding key issues such as leaving the perpetrator, and housing.

# Pachedu - Renfrewshire



## The organisation

PACHEDU was established in 2016 to address social isolation amongst minority ethnic groups in Renfrewshire and to support them to be more visible and pro-active in shaping their communities. The charity works with diverse minority ethnic groups to promote diversity, tolerance and dignity for humanity.

"There is a desperate need for support for ethnic minorities, for new arrivals into the country there are a lot of issues around cultural shock, they are faced with a lot of barriers and no knowledge of what services are available to them, we reach out, we get to know them, we are the bridge trying to make everything work."

## The funded project

The project was developed in response to a need to support service users to overcome various mental health and wellbeing challenges that had escalated during the pandemic. It received £9000 in Year 1. Recruiting a qualified minority ethnic mental health practitioner was central to understanding the needs of service users and to build trusting relationship with participants. They delivered a range of activities and events that brought people together in a very engaging way, for example-cycling, walks, bowling, a "Rediscovering Africa" event, and virtual information sessions/workshops and a gardening project at Sherwood Greenlaw Church.

Over 250 beneficiaries were supported by the project and more than 70 people received resource materials via email. The project worked in partnership with Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Health and Wellbeing team, Renfrewshire Anti stigma Alliance, Recovery across mental health (RAMH), Engage Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire Affordable credit Alliance, Department for Pensions & Work (DWP), Poverty Alliance, and various organisations providing support for mental health, loneliness and isolation, wellbeing, and community connections.



## The Impact



Loneliness and isolation were reduced among service users, and the project improved participants' confidence. Staff reported that many are now happier to talk about their life challenges with others and are more likely to seek support when faced with challenges.

- 20 service users were given employability support through training, information sharing and networking, and had the opportunity to take part in volunteering activities.
- 19 service users were signposted to the Hardship Fund scheme managed by Renfrewshire Council, and received a grant of £100 each.
- 8 volunteers joined the Pachedu team as part of the project and
- 4 students from Glasgow University were able to take part in work placements with the project.

"During COVID I was depressed and stressed. I was scared to ask questions and had no confidence and then I found Pachedu. I could discuss how I was feeling and realise it was quite normal. I learnt that I could get help with job applications, food banks, and coping mechanisms for my anxiety I was feeling. (Project participant)"

# Survivors Unite - Scottish Borders

## The organisation



Set up in 2013, the charity supports adult survivors of sexual abuse. It offers one-to-one counselling, peer support and peer support groups. The charity offers unlimited counselling so survivors can access the service for as long as they need to. Counselling can be accessed via NHS referrals or self-referrals. To date 108 people have been supported and there is an active caseload of 36.

Funding from multiple sources, including the Lottery's Community Fund, Scottish Government and the Robertson Trust, covers core, staff and project costs. The £80,000 awarded by the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, provided by Scottish Government, was used to increase the capacity of its counselling service and establish pre-support provision for those on the waiting list.

## The funded project



Those accessing support are described by staff as some of the 'most complex and profoundly affected people in the community', some of whom are still experiencing abuse.

The Fund's monies have been invested into the counselling service to increase weekly provision by 30 hours and counselling is now offered four days a week (services were previously available only one day per week).

By increasing the capacity of the counselling service, the Fund is estimated to have enabled 20 additional people to access support. As part of the new pre-support provision, an additional 20 people on the waiting list are receiving regular check-ins from a counsellor to safeguard their wellbeing and provide an opportunity to identify those at significant risk of harm and triage people when needed.

## The impact



By increasing the capacity of the service, the Fund has led to a reduction in the counselling waiting list from approximately two years to six months. People receiving this counselling support have a reduced their risk of suicide and self-harming and are being helped to move on from complex trauma.

A recent evaluation of Survivors Unite showed the transformational change that this service brings. For some, it is life-saving. The unlimited counselling offer was identified as particularly important and meant that people were able to move forward at their own pace. For project staff interviewed, the service did not offer 'unicorns and rainbows' but a sense of hope that people could lead 'a meaningful life after complex trauma.'

Although the Fund's monies were invested into counsellors' time, this had the indirect effect of enabling the charity to re-direct other funding to expand its activities. This led to it being able to offer a range of different projects (e.g. art, meditation, online safety) and also explored the provision of alternative therapies. Project staff felt that there was now an increased sense of community.

# Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO) - Partnership working



## About

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, provided by Scottish Government, gave ACVO the opportunity to strengthen relationships with a breadth of third and public sector organisations across the City.

One way these relationships have developed is with the collaborative working between ACVO and Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). The team managing the Fund worked with the HSCP team responsible for disbursing the Health Improvement Fund which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Aberdeen with project funding of up to £5000.

“We realised that a lot of the same groups would be applying but it was also a time when organisations were trying to get back up and running after the pandemic so if we could link up with ACVO and the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and try and get as many people to access the funding then that would be really beneficial for the people of Aberdeen”. (HSCP)

The teams at ACVO and the HSCP worked together to create a process that enabled applicants to complete one application form that could be shared between ACVO or the HSCP if the bid was more suited to the funding criteria of each other's funds. They were able to design their application forms in a way that included similar questions, even though priorities differed, and asked applicants to give permission for their application to be passed over to the other fund, if suitable.

## Results of the process

The synergy and the differences between the HSCP's established Health Improvement Fund and the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, and the ambition of both partners to streamline their application processes and support projects across the City, has enabled many more third sector organisations to be funded without having to go through the disappointment of their funding application being rejected due to being ineligible, or requiring them to waste time writing another application form.

This approach has resulted in a number of other benefits:

- it reduced the time spent reviewing applications that were not eligible for one Fund but were eligible for the other
- it increased understanding of fund management practices across both teams
- it improved awareness and knowledge of what the need was for funding and support across the City

The two organisations are now looking to other funding streams and teams, like the Fairer Aberdeen Fund, to see if they can link together and further streamline their processes.

“Collaborative working between funders could be transformative for the third sector. Writing applications is a huge investment in time and can be very stressful for organisations too. Many organisations are volunteer-led, and the time spent writing applications is time away from the community they support. If more partnerships between funders could be forged, application processes and ‘fundable’ projects could be shared (with permission of the applicant), and potentially life-changing community projects could be put in front of the right funder and gain financial support” (ACVO)

# Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council (EVOC) - Community Commissioning



## About

EVOC is one of three partners that make up Edinburgh's TSI and managed the Fund on behalf of the partners. EVOC took the opportunity to design an approach where the decision making was undertaken by communities rather than others who may not have a clear understanding of the needs and wants of the local area.

"We were given the space to take this risk and given a budget to put our money where our mouth is and move away from a system where the organisations that can best write applications get funded rather than identifying what communities need and what can you do to meet those needs. So we turned it around; with community needs up front, not organisational aspiration and not organisational agendas" (EVOC)

EVOC also wanted to design an approach that moved away from the competitive structures that regular grant making, and procurement produce, and instead create a process that encouraged collaboration across organisations and with local communities.



## Results of process

"The less laborious application allowed more humble, grass roots organisations to apply. The applications were published online and by doing so encouraged community and capacity development, allowing applicants to see how they might contribute to a wider community of practice". (EVOC)

The process frustrated some of the more professional, larger charities who relied on fundraisers, whilst smaller organisations often represented by development workers and practitioners welcomed it". (EVOC)

## Four main stages to the community commissioning process

