

# The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on third sector organisations

Research commissioned by  
the STV Children's appeal



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stv  
children's  
appeal

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**In this report we hear from charities that, in normal times, offer face-to-face counselling and therapy services, but have instead focused their attention in recent months on delivering basic food parcels to families in desperate need of them. This is the kind of quick-thinking and adaptability that has made the Third Sector such a critical force throughout the pandemic.**

**Baroness Ford, STV Children's Appeal Chair**

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# Chair's Remarks

## The findings of this far-reaching research into the impact of COVID-19 on the Third Sector are stark.

There's no question the pandemic has been a painful and hugely challenging experience for voluntary organisations across Scotland. But we've also seen charities at their very best – swiftly adapting to unprecedented change and doing whatever it takes to support communities in need – and the research indicates that, amidst the hardship, COVID-19 has highlighted important opportunities for learning that must be captured and shared.



**Scotland's Third Sector didn't wait around and nurse its wounds. Instead, it diversified – and fast.**

When this awful pandemic struck back in March, many organisations doing crucial work within communities were simply forced to shut up shop. Some funding streams began to quickly dissipate too. When faced with such a quandary, Scotland's Third Sector didn't wait around and nurse its wounds. Instead, it diversified – and fast. We saw organisations step up to the challenge and develop innovative solutions at a grassroots level.

In this report we hear from charities that, in normal times, offer face-to-face counselling and therapy services, but have instead focused their attention in recent months on delivering basic food parcels to families in desperate need of them.

This is the kind of quick-thinking and adaptability that has made the Third Sector such a critical force throughout the pandemic. The sector's efforts should not only be recognised, but lauded – and its ability to respond to extraordinary crises like COVID-19 should not go underestimated or ignored in the future. Disappointingly, the research suggests that most organisations feel their above-and-beyond work this year has not been sufficiently valued. That's something that needs to change – and a greater understanding of the Third Sector's capabilities is one of 16 vital recommendations made in this report.

Another recommendation is that the constructive relationship fostered between the Third Sector and statutory sector during the pandemic continues to strengthen and evolve. The Third Sector eagerly stepped in when local authorities became overstretched, and the collaborative working between the two sectors has been one of the great positives to come out of this crisis. Post-COVID, the Third Sector still very much requires a seat at the table, and clarity and support from the public sector will be more important than ever for charities as they start to rebuild.

For all its tremendous efforts, the Third Sector is undoubtedly facing an uncertain future. Charities are anxious that smaller organisations are going to be driven out by their larger counterparts; corporate support is going to dwindle; and, fundamentally, an increasing demand on the services of the voluntary sector will coincide with a continued reduction in funding. These are all valid concerns, and ones that we must overcome in order to move forward and cultivate a thriving Third Sector.

I hope the lessons learned from this report will help us go some way to achieving that.

**Baroness Ford**  
*STV Children's Appeal Chair*

# Context

**In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, third sector organisations have been diversifying in response to what they see in their communities, offering localised solutions, being fleet of foot to change when required and meeting individuals where they are in their period of crisis. This has brought a deep opportunity for learning that requires to be captured and shared. This report attempts to capture the voices of those at the frontline response.**

Probono Economics research highlights the **risk of 50% of charities potentially going out of business within the next six months** rising to 70% by the end of the year. The impact on civil society of such a catastrophic decline would be monumental – fiscal benefits from lives turned around, uncounted volunteer hours ensuring low cost service delivery and economic benefits of gains achieved through - for example improved childhood outcomes. Preparing for a possible reduction in the number of third sector organisations surviving COVID-19 and taking pressure off public services will be key to our rebuilding phase.

In addition, **communities were themselves developing their own solutions and using their own assets to respond to COVID-19 weeks before funding was announced.** These new collaborations tended to be smaller and locally delivered. They were more likely to be closer to the issues and more representative of local need. **We need to ensure that those who are effective can thrive in a context where large charities with incomes exceeding £1m make up 3.7% of the sector but account for 81% of its income (£4.7bn).**

We have also seen what are becoming known as **the “New Poor” – those who were previously just coping** and now facing huge need trying to navigate a system they have never encountered before and do not understand or know the language of. A new challenge for us all and a diversification in what we have previously understood about this group.

The crisis has “laid poverty bare” and helped service providers to understand in a deeper more human way what this means. **Proximity of this pandemic forces “professionals” to realise not numbers but names!** This has created the

opportunity to look at the person in the round. Seeing families who have **multiple service inputs (15 being common) still unable to move forward...** How do we unlock the potential of this combined resource? The crisis response has “made public” existing deep rooted poverty – yet the current response may not be addressing long term systemic issues, so these will remain once funding ceases.

Organisations have been diversifying into different thematic groups/communities and now need to think about whether they continue to pursue work in these new areas as we move forward into rebuilding phase.



**How do we build out from the opportunity for change that COVID-19 has inadvertently created for us?**

# Executive Summary

**Our findings show that the sector is grappling with eight related but very distinct themes.**

Funding is a significant issue, marrying a deepening and more complex need with increasingly scarce resources. Organisational structures are under pressure. Many charities who rely on volunteers have had to completely review their business model. New requirements around PPE and social distancing place economic and organisational burdens on all charities, but those who are smallest feel this most of all. This report seeks to share the voice of the sector – large and small and present their thoughts on what the future could hold.

## Recommendations



### The Funding Landscape

1. Funders must tackle fairness and inequality in their funding streams enabling small organisations to compete with larger, and be more responsive and fluid in their approach to organisations supporting local communities.
2. The public sector has realised the contribution that the charitable third sector had made during this pandemic. These relations need to continue and be strengthened.
3. Clearly identified within the research is the belief that the public sector needs to provide confidence and certainty about funding support to the third sector to help them in the critical re-set and re-building phase.



### Operational concerns

4. The statutory sector needs to have a far better understanding about how and when voluntary organisations will emerge on the other side and in what shape. There is a pressing need for the statutory agencies to continue to listen to and support this sector post COVID-19. We knew that the third sector was important in supporting communities at a grass roots level, but we have learned from this research that the impact of the pandemic on the sector has been even more catastrophic that we might have first assumed.
5. COVID-19 has demonstrated that this sector had the agility and ability to respond to this crisis quickly and effectively. It is important that the sector is properly recognised and valued, not only now but more importantly in the future. This needs to be made more explicit in the planning of future essential services.
6. Consideration should also be given to establishing a national steering group for third sector contingency planning.

## Recommendations (continued)



### Connectivity or lack of

7. Funders must consider these issues in their strategy and build connectivity and digital access into their core offering to ensure that parity in access to the now commonplace digital world is achieved.



### Partnership working

8. A relational approach to funding where a “funder plus” model is adopted could provide the necessary context for good partnership. Here funders can bring their wider networks of partners who share similar values together. We saw some exceptionally good examples of where this occurred including STV Appeal own work with Youth Scotland and Place2Be.
9. All funders (including statutory services) should create conditions for partnership that do not create a competitive marketplace that drives cost over effectiveness.



### The importance of a local approach

10. Community led organisations are more likely to be closer to the issues and more representative of local need. We need to ensure that those who are effective can thrive in a context where large charities with incomes exceeding £1m make up 3.7% of the sector but account for 81% of its income (£4.7bn).
11. We must maximise opportunities arising that will lead to increased community cohesion, targeted support, and intervention for the third sector.



### Targeted support

12. Work with COSLA and Health and Social Care Partnerships to explore how the third sector can co-ordinate, resource and deliver services with and on behalf of the statutory sector acting as local navigators and advocates.
13. Further consideration should be given to maximising the online social solutions identified.



### The future is believed to be bleak

14. The Scottish Government should be encouraged in their approach and commitment to lifting people out of poverty and in improving the nation's health and wellbeing, again particularly for young people.



### Opportunities

15. The crisis has “laid poverty bare” and helped service providers to understand in a deeper more human way what this means. We now have the opportunity to look at the person in the round and this should actively be encouraged moving forward.
16. The research evidenced some families who have multiple service inputs still unable to move forward and falling through the trapdoor of COVID-19 which has rendered the situation more critical. We need to put our shoulder to maximising arising opportunities that will deliver increased community cohesion, targeted support, and intervention for the third sector.

# 1. Background

- 1.1** As COVID-19 swept across the nation, the STV Children’s Appeal became acutely aware of the devastation the pandemic was causing families and communities across Scotland. We responded by implementing four programmes of work to help alleviate the impact, including:
- a. making an award of £400k to Fare Share to address the resultant spike in food poverty across Scotland as a result of COVID-19;
  - b. re-purposing existing larger grants of between £25K and £400K to six, third sector organisations (Appendix 5 (b) refers) currently in our awards portfolio on a short-term basis to assist those organisations, where appropriate, in addressing a number of issues that the COVID-19 crisis had highlighted for them;
  - c. running a joint fundraising and awareness raising campaign with the National Emergencies Trust that resulted in circa £100k raised and dispersed to address the impact of COVID-19;
  - d. as part of a coalition of independent funders, distributing Scottish Government Community Wellbeing Grant Funding of £2,000 to 283 community groups and voluntary organisations whom we had previously funded and completed due diligence on, to allow a rapid local response. These organisations responded specifically to our request for further information on:
    - i. how COVID-19 has impacted on their organisation and the services they provide;
    - ii. how the needs of their communities had changed as a result of the pandemic;
    - iii. how they would use the grant to support the identified need; and
    - iv. what further issues they forecast as a result of COVID-19 in their communities and how they might respond in the medium term.
- 1.2** The impact of COVID-19 on the third sector has been catastrophic and we recognised at the outset that a sensitive but immediate approach was imperative. Prior to the crisis, our approach was “light touch” founded on trust and partnership support. This allowed us to move swiftly and efficiently into the next phase of support.
- 1.3** This approach, together with the nature, range, and scale of the organisations within our portfolio, presented an ideal opportunity to evaluate the issues impacting on the third sector as a direct consequence of COVID-19. It also enabled us to obtain additional information to help us in our thinking and inform our actions moving forward.
- Whilst it is important to understand what organisations did with the money, we were keen to learn if we could have provided better or different support to the them during this period. We asked about the challenges they faced and - given time to reflect - whether they would do anything differently in a similar situation in future. We were also keen to get a clear understanding on what they feel the future holds for them. We therefore agreed to commission some independent research into these issues. Communities Connected was commissioned to undertake this research on our behalf.
- 1.4** The findings from our research are outlined in section 4 below together with additional information on detailed interventions, impacts and learning in relation to COVID-19. These findings also detail key issues impacting on the third sector moving forward.



## 2. Research Methodology

- 2.1 We conducted research in three phases using qualitative and quantitative methodology.
- 2.2 Phase one focussed on proactive awards to organisations known to the STV Appeal who received Community Wellbeing grant awards of £2,000. A total of 283 electronic surveys were distributed and a 79% response rate ensued. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix 6c.
- 2.3 Phase two comprised a follow up in-depth, telephone interview with 25 organisations who had been in receipt of those Community Wellbeing awards and had indicated a willingness to participate in further discussion. A copy of the telephone survey is attached as Appendix 6d. The organisations detailed at Appendix 6a were chosen to provide a representative sample.
- 2.4 Phase three comprised in-depth, telephone interviews with:
  - Fare Share, who had received a single large award to respond to COVID-19 in order to understand the impact of their award on communities across Scotland and the new issues/opportunities emerging in this area; and
  - six larger, third sector organisations funded by STVA detailed at 6b to capture, first-hand, what these organisations feel are the key issues facing them at the moment and what concerns they may have about the future.
- 2.5 The telephone research sought to capture the views of the participants, the purpose being to better understand the multiple issues impacting on them as a consequence of COVID-19, now and in the future.
- 2.6 Finally, we were keen to learn from all projects who participated in the research whether we could have provided better or different support to the organisations during this difficult period. Our findings are outlined in the next section.

### Case study: STV Children's Appeal focus on mental health

Stirling Carers Centre was set up to ensure all carers in Stirling can fulfil their caring role as effectively and happily as possible. Under lockdown there will be little respite for young people with caring responsibilities who are balancing home schooling and caring at what must be an incredibly stressful time. And without support, this could take a huge toll on their mental health in the short and longer term.

The project recently received an STV Children's Appeal grant of £2000. Ordinarily, Stirling Carers Centre hosts regular face to face events and day trips to provide respite and peer support, but during lockdown, they have innovated to ensure their young carers remain connected and supported.

The service has been hosting group sessions via Zoom, making regular calls to keep in touch with their young people, and continues to provide relevant information and advice on the current situation. Their Facebook group encourages young

carers to keep in touch by providing creative ideas for arts and crafts at home that the group can get stuck into and share with others in a similar position.

The project team have even made socially distanced visits to those they support to drop off parcels of home crafting supplies to help guard against social isolation and provide a much needed distraction.

Funding Development Officer, Kathryn Cooper said: "On behalf of the Board, staff and unpaid carers of Stirlingshire, I want to express our delight and gratitude at our recent grant award.

"At this time when charities like ourselves are being increasingly challenged, the impact of this award cannot be underestimated. The needs of our carers continue to grow during Covid-19, and the funding from the Community Wellbeing Fund will really help to ensure that we can adapt to best support our young carers and their families at this time."

# 3. Our Findings

Analysis of our research revealed eight themes which are highlighted below together with recommendations to address the issues raised.



## 1. The Funding Landscape

Concerns about the funding landscape for the third sector post COVID-19 was the prevalent issue raised in the research and one which has a significant bearing on its future. Evaluation of the research suggests that there is no clear understanding of what the future holds for this sector - **irrespective of funding previously received, size or nature of the organisation.**

Clear concerns were raised about the impact that COVID-19 will have on the independent funding landscape which has been particularly affected. In particular, some funds have been put on hold with time lost that cannot be recovered by the organisations applying for funding. Corporate support has also significantly dwindled. Some respondents also acknowledged from practical experience of working at the coalface that the priorities and demand for support were changing and cited the example of the “new poor” or young people experiencing mental health issues. They expressed concerns that a number of funders were not in a position to quickly revise priorities on the funding they had responsibility for to support this need.

A significant number of respondents expressed concerns about the support and assistance being provided by the public sector, in particular local Authorities. They suggest that public sector support through direct grant aid and service level agreements will diminish significantly. It was noted by a few respondents that some local Authorities are also making increased demands on the services of the third sector who have responded well to the pandemic without any additional financial re-course.

Most notably from respondents in rural areas was the imminent loss of LEADER funding primarily as a consequence of BREXIT which will have severe ramifications for these areas.

## Recommendations

1. **Funders must tackle fairness and inequality in their funding streams enabling small organisations to compete with larger, and be more responsive and fluid in their approach to organisations supporting local communities.**
2. **The public sector has realised the contribution that the charitable third sector had made during this pandemic. These relations need to continue and be strengthened.**
3. **Clearly identified within the research is the belief that the public sector needs to provide confidence and certainty about funding support to the third sector to help them in the critical re-set and re-building phase.**



## 2. Operational concerns

Our research also highlights the myriad of operational issues impacting on the third sector as a consequence of COVID-19. Given the significance of these issues and the lack of a co-ordinated or strategic response from the statutory sector, some smaller organisations in particular feel that they may not survive in their current form or see the financial year out without intervention.

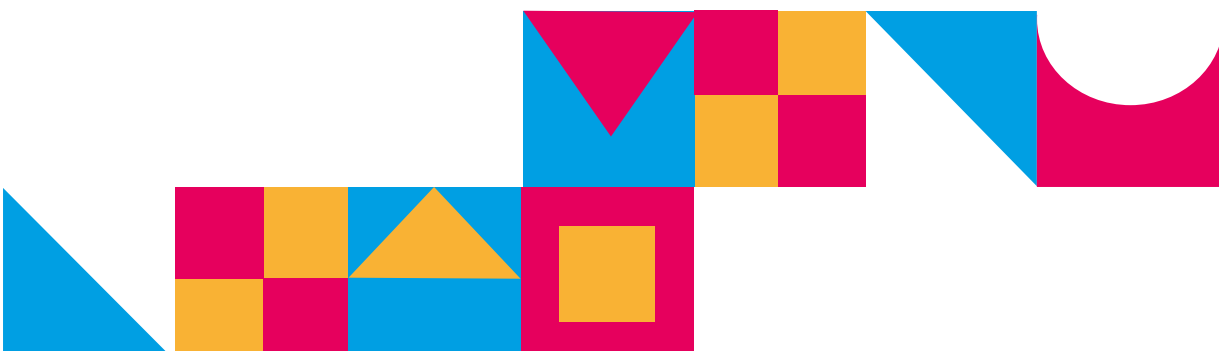
Hardest hit are front facing services with a direct client base. For example, youth work, employability and social care services who need to adapt quickly for their client group in challenging circumstances.

These issues include the impact and subsequent cost of providing services in operational buildings, with a reliance on agencies who are focussed at the moment with their own organisational issues, such as schools, to let accommodation.

There are considerable concerns being raised about the introduction of new protocols will clearly impact on service delivery, target outputs and outcomes with a potential drop in revenue funding.

### Recommendations

4. **The statutory sector needs to have a far better understanding about how and when voluntary organisations will emerge on the other side and in what shape. There is a pressing need for the statutory agencies to continue to listen to and support this sector post COVID-19. We knew that the third sector was important in supporting communities at a grass roots level, but we have learned from this research that the impact of the pandemic on the sector has been even more catastrophic that we might have first assumed.**
5. **COVID-19 has demonstrated that this sector had the agility and ability to respond to this crisis quickly and effectively. It is important that the sector is properly recognised and valued, not only now but more importantly in the future. This needs to be made more explicit in the planning of future essential services.**
6. **Consideration should also be given to establishing a national steering group for third sector contingency planning.**





### 3. Connectivity or lack of

Our survey shows that 40% of the community wellbeing applications related to connectivity in some shape or form, underlining an existing challenge that was exacerbated by the pandemic. Connectivity pre COVID-19 was a major issue in a number of areas and this was compounded by the pandemic in the rush and need for people to get online. However further analysis would suggest that digital exclusion including internet access is a significant issue. The biggest barrier to the majority of families, adults and vulnerable groups is access to online services. Online content is not as easy as it sounds, most only had internet through phone data, many older people only had text or call phones, with little or no access to digital technology.

Poor broadband connectivity particularly in rural areas coupled with limited technology was also a major issue.

#### Recommendations

- 7. Funders must consider these issues in their strategy and build connectivity and digital access into their core offering to ensure that parity in access to the now commonplace digital world is achieved.**



### 4. Partnership working

Our survey shows that 74% of the organisations responding worked in partnership with other bodies. This level of partnership working has been incredibly positive and is to be welcomed particularly as they have come together to support local communities. The majority responding felt that this was a positive experience bringing many benefits.

Some, however, felt that this approach led to increased competition at a local level for limited resources, focussing on the same client group creating unnecessary barriers.

Overall, there was general belief that people had come together to deliver joined up services.

#### Recommendations

- 8. A relational approach to funding where a “funder plus” model is adopted could provide the necessary context for good partnership. Here funders can bring their wider networks of partners who share similar values together. We saw some exceptionally good examples of where this occurred including STV Appeal own work with Youth Scotland and Place2Be.**
- 9. All funders (including statutory services) should create conditions for partnership that do not create a competitive marketplace that drives cost over effectiveness.**



## 5. The importance of a local approach

Our survey confirms that applying local solutions undoubtedly works and is an incredibly powerful tool when properly resourced. Organisations were trusted and funded to respond directly to local need with immediate effect. This was key to the success of this funding. Respondents were keen to emphasise that this approach based on trust was heartening and welcoming, as was the light touch applied to the funding process. However, many were keen to point out that this approach should continue to be applied to the sector moving forward. As one respondent put it **“If we can be trusted to deliver in a pandemic, we should be trusted to delivery in any recovery plans – we are first to deliver on the ground but last to the table in any discussions.”**

### Recommendations

- 10. Community led organisations are more likely to be closer to the issues and more representative of local need. We need to ensure that those who are effective can thrive in a context where large charities with incomes exceeding £1m make up 3.7% of the sector but account for 81% of its income (£4.7bn).**
- 11. We must maximise opportunities arising that will lead to increased community cohesion, targeted support, and intervention for the third sector.**



## 6. Targeted support

Although targeted support reached a lot of people there was recognition from a number of respondents that specialist support – for example, young people’s mental health - could not be addressed adequately. Some organisations reported decreasing levels of referrals which suggests, amongst other things, that there are vulnerable children and young people who are not receiving the support they otherwise would have had access to. On a similar vein, there was recognition within the survey of people requiring multiple statutory interventions - for example, Dementia - unfortunately, falling through the gap. This is a major and growing issue for the statutory sector. The survey notes that organisations expended a considerable amount of time and energy during the pandemic on online social solutions to mental health particularly within the areas of sport, therapeutic arts, and music.

### Recommendations

- 12. Work with COSLA and Health and Social Care Partnerships to explore how the third sector can co-ordinate, resource and deliver services with and on behalf of the statutory sector acting as local navigators and advocates.**
- 13. Further consideration should be given to maximising the online social solutions identified.**





## 7. The future is believed to be bleak

Looking to the future, respondents see trouble and uncertainty on the horizon. There are concerns about the rising and changing levels of deprivation and need in our communities. People are adjusting to the economic and social hardship that COVID-19 has brought to bear. Many more families have been affected in terms of their employment than previously thought and are now facing a huge challenge in navigating a benefits system that they have never used before. COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation for those who were particularly disadvantaged pre COVID, including the increasing numbers affected by in-work poverty. Our research also identified in particular concerns about the ongoing impact social isolation on people's mental health, in particular young people.

### Recommendations

**14. The Scottish Government should be encouraged in their approach and commitment to lifting people out of poverty and in improving the nation's health and wellbeing, again particularly for young people.**



## 8. Opportunities

Despite the challenging time we are all living through, there is recognition in our research that the community spirit and will towards helping the most vulnerable in our community has never been more profound, palpable, or fragile. Many respondents felt that lockdown had given rise to positive changes despite the challenges and pressures they were under. These changes included adapting to home working/schooling, increased volunteer participation and stronger local community cohesion.

Many commented on the targeted support and intervention made available within a really quick time period and the opportunities arising from local groups and organisations working together.

### Recommendations

- 15. The crisis has “laid poverty bare” and helped service providers to understand in a deeper more human way what this means. We now have the opportunity to look at the person in the round and this should actively be encouraged moving forward.**
- 16. The research evidenced some families who have multiple service inputs still unable to move forward and falling through the trapdoor of COVID-19 which has rendered the situation more critical. We need to put our shoulder to maximising arising opportunities that will deliver increased community cohesion, targeted support, and intervention for the third sector.**

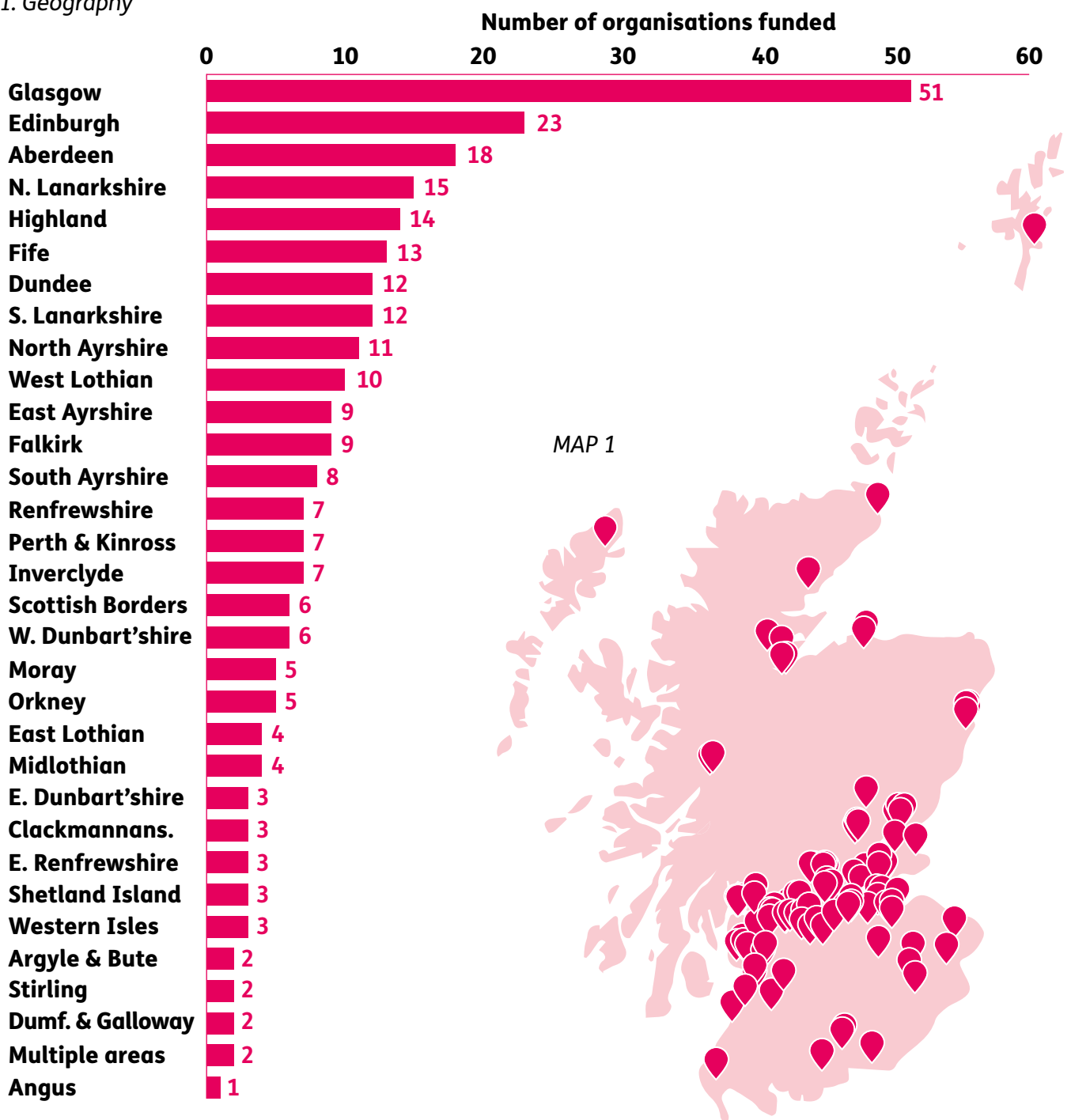
# 4. Research Outcomes

## 4.1 Phase One: Responses to the online survey

### 4.2 Who applied for funding?

From the 283 organisations funded in Phase one, 226 organisations (79%) responded to our survey. As detailed at Figure/Map 1, Glasgow has nearly twice the number of organisations receiving funding from the community wellbeing fund than any of the other local authority areas. This reflects the level of poverty and disadvantage within the city. A large number of organisations within the central belt have been able to access this funding, as have a number of organisations within rural Scotland.

FIG 1. Geography



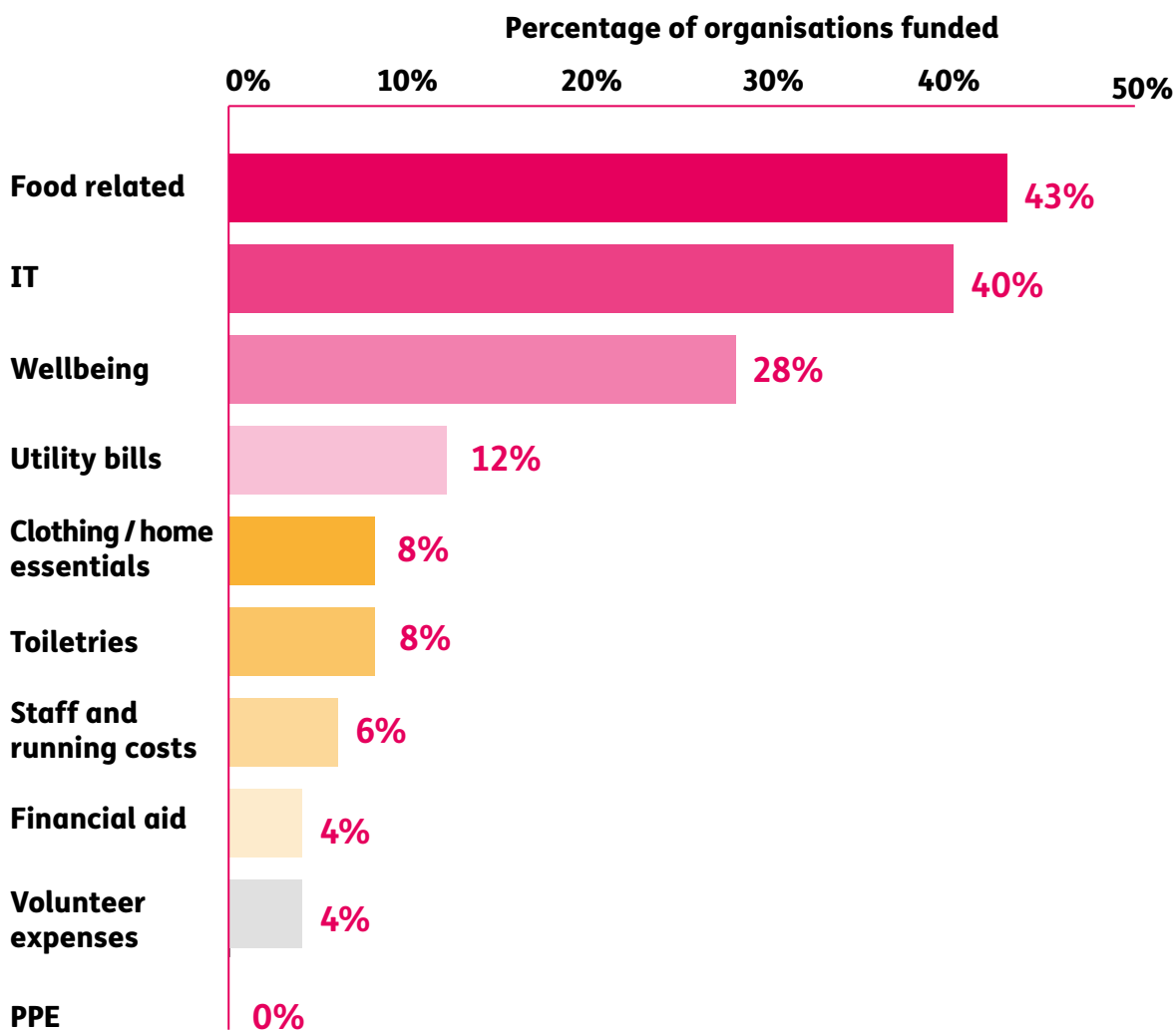
### 4.3 Working in Partnership

When asked about working in partnership with other groups and organisations, 74% of respondents had an element of partnership working whilst 26% worked on their own.

### 4.4 How the money was used

Responses confirm that 88% of the organisations responding used the money as intended in their application. 11% of the organisations deviated slightly from their original submission and only one organisation (having sought approval from us in advance) used it for totally different purposes to meet urgent need.

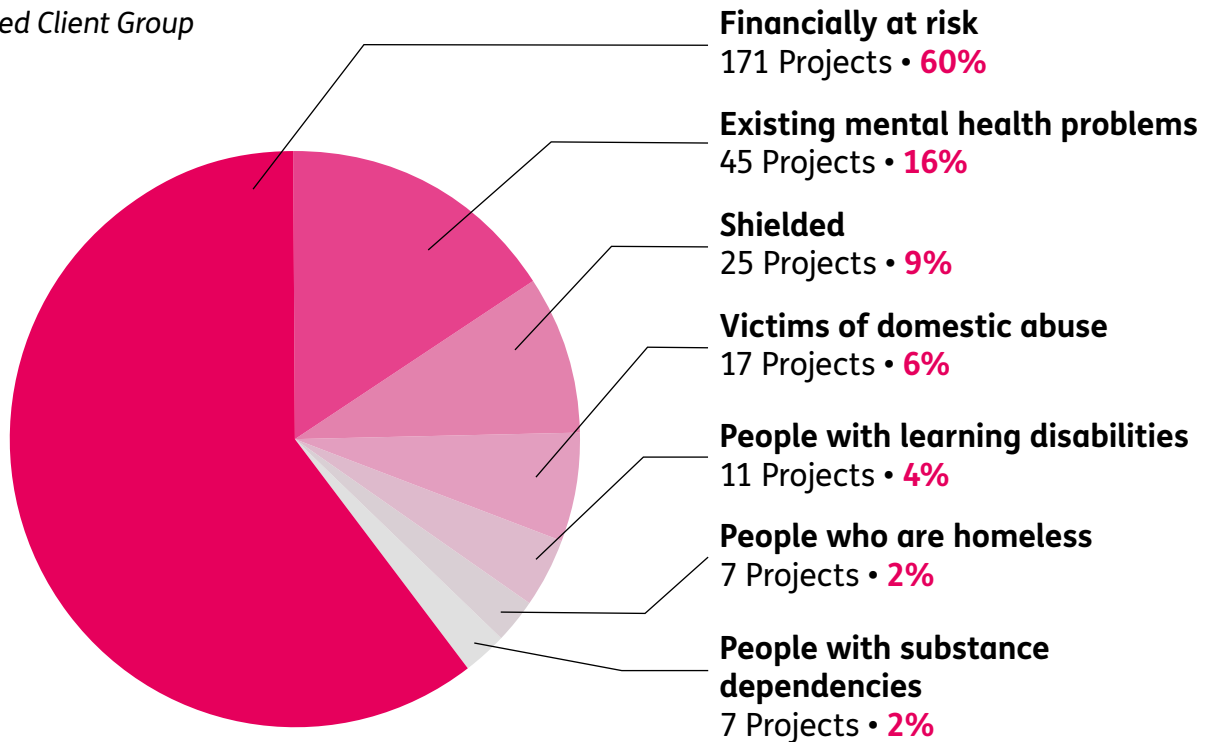
FIG 2. Breakdown of funding



Analysis clearly shows that funding was targeted on food, connectivity, and wellbeing issues – in particular, mental health. Direct financial aid was also given to cover utility bills, home essentials and on one occasion unforeseen expenses for funeral costs.



FIG 3. Targeted Client Group



As Figure 3 illustrates, just under 60% of the funding awarded went to organisations supporting those individuals deemed most financially at risk. 15% went on those projects dealing with existing mental health issues, with the remaining 25% on projects tackling domestic abuse, homelessness, substance dependencies and to support individuals with learning difficulties.

FIG 4. Outcomes from client perspective

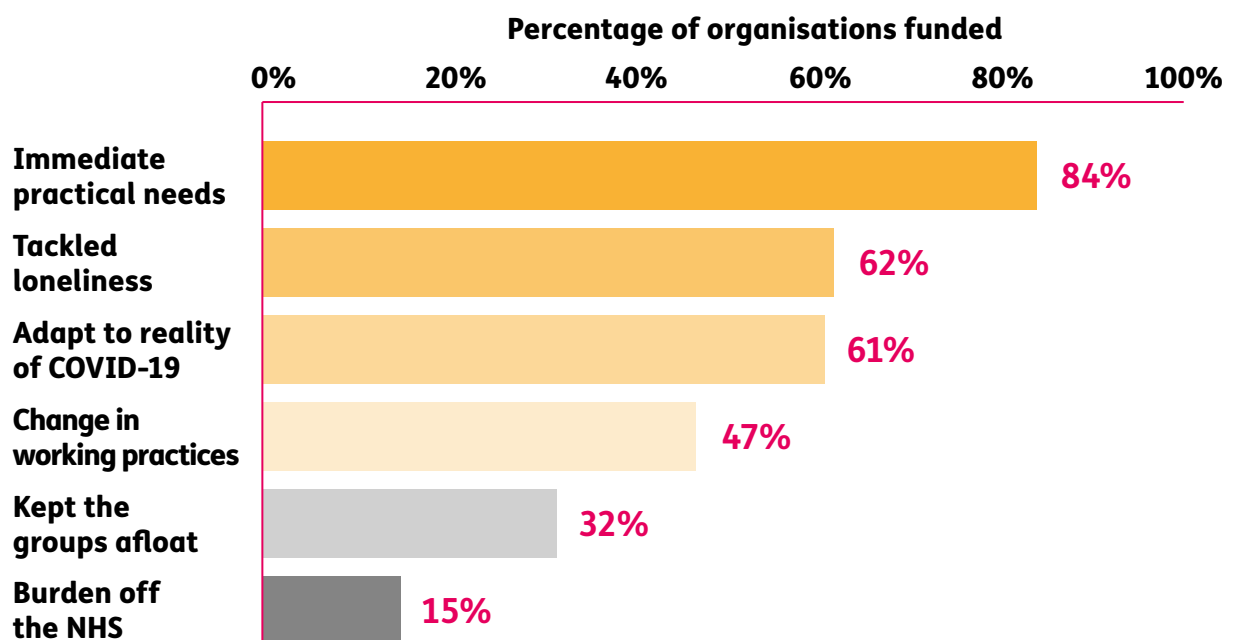


Figure 4 details outcomes from a project's perspective. The funding awarded allowed 84% of the organisations to meet the immediate practical needs of the vulnerable during this period. 62% to tackle loneliness and promote wellbeing. 47% to make changes to their existing working practices. Funding awarded also kept 32% of the groups afloat during this time and allowed 61% of the organisations responding to help people respond to the realities of COVID-19. Services provided by 15% of the organisations helped to reduce the burden on the NHS.

## 4.5 Phase Two & Three: Responses from telephone interviews

This section highlights the key issues identified and concerns raised by respondents when asked about what they believe the future holds. All respondents irrespective of size, nature, or location of their organisation, were fairly consistent and unanimous on the issues raised. These fell into two, clear categories - operational issues and the future funding landscape. These are detailed below.

### 1. Operational issues

#### Structure

- all agree that there are new challenges on the horizon- new ways of working will be required and new protocols to be adhered to. These will have a major bearing on organisations, not least the small staff-to-client ratios, increased PPE, and the increased costs this will bring.
- some felt that organisations who provide direct face to face services will be hardest hit particularly in relation to new protocols that could restrict numbers and led to increased costs.
- certain respondents expressed concerns about their ability to survive any re-structuring that they anticipate will come about as a consequence of COVID-19 particularly in relation to the level of support and subsequent resources that will be made available through the public sector.
- new protocols will have implications for those projects with their own buildings, such as youth facilities. Numbers in attendance/participation may reduce leading to increased costs.

#### Statutory Services Partnerships

- the role of the public sector figured significantly in responses received. What will the public sector look like in the future, what will they be looking for from the third sector in the future, what timescales will they be operating within and what resources will they bring to the table.
- similarly, a number of the projects work alongside the statutory agencies sharing premises and resources with a lack of clarity on what will happen from here on in.

#### The role of the sector

- concerns were voiced about the operational importance of the third sector being at the table to assist/participate in any long-term planning/strategic response to crisis and competition.
- most believed that the third sector has not received recognition that it should have for its contribution during the pandemic.
- most respondents were clear that the Third Sector played a critical role in addressing the impact of the Pandemic but was not recognised correctly for this. As one respondent put it, **“If we can be trusted to deliver in a pandemic, we should be trusted to delivery in any recovery plans - we are first to deliver on the ground but last to the table in any discussions.”**
- partnerships have been key in the past but there are concerns that this could fracture moving forward.

#### Volunteers

- doubts exist on whether some specific sectors of service users and/or clients will still want to get involved as long as COVID-19 remains (e.g. elderly/those with learning difficulties).
- volunteering has been invaluable during COVID-19, but questions remain on how to capitalise on this in the future as there is always a cost element.
- digital exclusion is a significant issue, particularly access to online services. In particular, digital hardware was cited as a significant problem with many older people having little or no access to technology.

*(continued overleaf)*

### Digital

- poor broadband connectivity, particularly in rural areas, coupled with limited technology was also cited as a major issue.

### Changing need

- there were concerns about the rising levels of deprivation and need in our communities that will be exacerbated by COVID-19 not least through the massive increase in unemployment anticipated.
- some respondents felt that COVID-19 phases one and two, plus Brexit are creating the perfect storm for a major recession.

- they are already evidencing many families who have been affected through unemployment, never experienced in the past.
- COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation for those who were particularly disadvantaged pre COVID-19, including the increasing numbers affected by in-work poverty.
- nearly all respondents highlighted their concerns about impact social isolation on people's mental health, in particular young people.

## Case study: STV Children's Appeal helps to spread bubbles, outdoor adventure and smiles on the Black Isle

Wee Wild Hearts is a charity based in the Black Isle which, ordinarily, teaches children how to explore and enjoy the outdoors to help them gain confidence, build self esteem, focus on their health and wellbeing and interact with their surroundings.

The charity was only founded last year, but has already engaged over 100 local children in woodland activities such as bug hunting, tree identification, wild art, mindfulness and learning about what lives in the wood.

With the impact of COVID-19, the charity was no longer able to continue with planned outdoor group sessions, but as a charity embedded within their local community, they wanted to continue to provide activities during lockdown for the children they support.

Wee Wild Hearts received a £6,000 grant from the STV Children's Appeal, which the project has put towards supplying activities children could safely undertake at home

or in their local area to continue exploring the outdoors while schools were closed and other activities were restricted.

In the first 100 days of lockdown, Appeal funding has benefitted over 1000 kids who have received gardening equipment, kits for growing plants and going bug hunting, bird hampers, books and bubbles (as pictured above), sensory items, and materials for fun art activities like painting fairy doors and gnomes.

One mum commented: "The girls really miss Wee Wild Hearts and they were thrilled when their bubbles and books arrived. They instantly knew where the bubbles had come from, having played with them in the forest before. They had a lovely sunny day to play out in the front garden, with their neighbour across the street watching and blowing bubbles back. Thank you for brightening up their lockdown with a wee slice of Wild Heart joy."

## 2. Funding issues

### Clarity/uncertainty

- Concerns about the funding landscape for the third sector post COVID-19 was without doubt the number one issue raised in the research. Respondents unanimously agreed that the lack of clarity in this area will have a significant bearing on the future of their organisations and the sector generally. These comments are reflected in the responses below.

### Funding

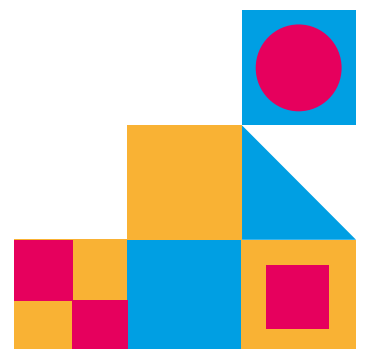
- all respondents acknowledge that there is no clear recognition about what the future holds for the third sector.
- all agree that moving forward there will be an increasing demand placed on funders, coupled with a reduction in funding available.
- whilst welcoming the monies made available by Scottish Government to the third sector and speedy process in which it was allocated, some respondents expressed concerns about the potentially detrimental impact that this could have on funding being made available from Scottish Government in the future.
- a few of the respondents highlighted issues that they were facing with applications currently with independent funders who had either closed their schemes temporarily or revised their priorities to tackle COVID-19. Putting these applications on hold has created additional challenges for these organisations not least lack of clarity on what will be funded and a diminishing timeframe for organisations to access funding.
- a number of respondents rely heavily on corporate support some of which to quote one respondent has “fallen off the cliff edge with immediate effect”.
- larger charities are impacting on the opportunities for smaller charities to access funding and this will only get worse.
- public fund raising which is critical to many organisations has been put on hold – smaller organisations do not have the capacity, skills nor the audience support to organise online activity.
- some funds which rely on “Matched Funding” need to be re-visited by the funders as these are now locked with the funder until a match can be found in the most difficult of circumstances.

### Europe/Brexit

- Respondents from rural areas also cited the loss of LEADER funding, which is seen as a lifeline in some area to support community led activity focussing on employment and diversification in the rural economy, primarily as a consequence of BREXIT.

### Statutory Relationships

- Clear concerns were raised about any future relationship and input from local authorities be it through direct grant aid/service level agreements or demands placed on third sector organisations currently. These included expectations on what the new protocols being put in place will bring, increased costs accruing to the third sector through additional PPE for example and the level of resources that Local Authorities will have to invest.
- concerns that a number of third sector organisations will lose out on funding due to increased need and competition being placed on the sector with larger more high profile charitable organisations winning out , with requests that funders “step up to the plate” to tackle fairness and equality in funding distribution.



# 5. Our Approach

**5.1** The STV Appeal was keen to hear from those receiving funding and/or support from them whether they could have provided better or different support to the organisations during this difficult period. The response to this question was overwhelmingly positive. Nearly all participants, whether online or in telephone interviews, responded positively to the approach taken by the STV Appeal. In short, the timing of the grant award, the process, staff support and advice during an incredibly difficult period was most welcome. When pressed, a number of respondents felt that the trust shown by us was the key. Two respondents wanted it put on record that “STVA’s approach was awesome and “nailed the need” and that our approach gave them “much needed headspace at this time.”

In response to the question is there anything else we could have done:

- three respondents suggested a signposting/connectivity role for STVA whilst acknowledging staffing constraints on the organisation; and
- six respondents whilst recognising that there was nothing else, we could have done, wished it put on record that “there was something to be said for a funder that trusts you and that it’s quite a morale booster”.

## Case study: Families in Clackmannanshire

Home-Start is a local community network of trained volunteers and expert support helping families with young children through challenging times.

When lockdown was announced, the Home-Start project in Clackmannanshire had to suspend all family groups, outings and home-visits, and changed the way they could support families. But, by working remotely, the project was still able to provide advice, regular contact, support group Zoom calls, activities for children and food and care packages for those facing financial challenges or isolation.

Thanks to fundraising for the STV Children’s Appeal Emergency Coronavirus Campaign, £2,000 was awarded to Home-Start Clackmannanshire to supply food parcels and care and activity packs to their families.

This support has been vital during a very challenging time and is making a real

difference, as can be seen from the feedback from some of their families:

“The food boxes have been a godsend as the kids are at home for every meal and we were running short of money. We have also received activity packs which kept both children busy while school is closed. Thanks too for the help to apply for funding from various organisations and for listening and helping sort out issues with school.”

Another family commented: “Thank you for being there supporting me emotionally when I was feeling down. I was struggling due to shielding with children and Home-Start was there delivering food, school lunches and provided a friendly face. Having a regular chat and getting advice from another adult has provided me with much needed support during this time.”

# Appendix 6a

## List of Organisations funded via Community Wellbeing Fund who participated in follow up interviews

- Blantyre Soccer Academy
- Dr Bells Family Centre
- Safe Harbour Inverclyde
- Perth Autism Support Group
- DRC Generation
- Horrad Community Development Trust
- Helm Training Ltd
- Tweeddale Youth Action
- Connect
- Wester Hailes Youth Agency
- Stirling Carers
- Murray Fresh Start
- Street Cones
- Focus Youth Project
- Regen FX
- We Are With You Dundee
- Beith Community Trust
- Step by Step
- One Parent families Support Service - Dundee
- St Machans Parents Group Aberdeen
- Larkhall Community Growers
- Clued Up Kirkaldy
- Toonspeak

# Appendix 6b

## List of larger Organisations who participated in in-depth interviews:

- Fareshare
- Street Soccer Scotland
- Independent Care Review
- Children 1st and Ardroy Outdoor Centre
- Who Cares Scotland
- Youth Scotland



# Appendix 6c

## Copy of Community Wellbeing Fund e-survey

You recently received Community Wellbeing funding from the STV Appeal to help you deal with the impact of the Coronavirus in your local area. As funders we are keen to learn if we could have provided better or different support to you and your organisation and this research will help us in future.

We want to know what you did with the money, how it helped, and having had time to think about it, whether you would have done anything differently.

*Please note that this survey is being facilitated by ScotPulse.*

**What did you do with the £2,000 award you received through the Community Wellbeing Fund?**

*Please say below.*

**Was this what you originally applied for or did you use it for something else? Don't worry if it's different – we understand that things have been fast-moving and changing!**

- Yes – it is as originally applied for
- No – it is a bit different to what we applied for
- No – totally different
- Not sure

**Was the money used to...?**

- Help sort out some of the immediate difficulties you and your group were facing because of COVID-19
- Develop a new idea or way of working during this time
- Bit of both

**Which, if any, of the following did the money help you to do? Please select all that apply.**

- Meet the immediate practical needs of vulnerable individuals and families.
- Tackle loneliness and promote positive living, wellbeing and strong communities.
- Change working practices to operate remotely and/or meet increased need.
- Keep your group going during this period
- Take some of the burden off the NHS and care services.
- Support the people you work with to adapt to the reality of the current COVID-19 epidemic.

**What were the main differences this money made to the people you support?**

**Have you worked with any other groups and organisations during this period?**

**Have you learned anything during this time that you would want to tell us about that can help us to plan? Please say here.**

**Can you tell us a little more?**

**Are there examples of stuff happening with your project that you would like us to share?**

**Would you have done anything differently?**

**And finally, please could you tell us which organisation you are representing.**

Organisation name

Postcode

Contact name

Contact phone number

**We would like to contact some organisations by phone to have a more in-depth conversation. Are you happy to be contacted?**

- Yes
- No



# Appendix 6d

## Copy of telephone interview questions

### Date, time and nature of interview

#### Intro – Background to research

- Outline research is as detailed on e-mail from Lynn Hendry STV appeal (check they are happy with what we are covering)
- Confirm that we are looking initially at project specific impacts before moving onto wider policy issues
- Conclude intro by outlining what key outputs from the research will be.

*N.B. All done in pre-interview calls to set up interviews.*

#### About you and your organisation – Seek out background

- Name
- Title
- Contact details

#### Questions – Current situation

- Q1. What was lifelike pre COVID-19?
- Q2. What was the immediate impact of COVID-19 on your organization?
- Q3. What did you use the grant for – was it same or different?
- Q4. What difference did it make?
- Q5. What are you doing during this period and how effective is it?
- Q6. How useful did you find STVA's approach to your organization during this period? Probe did they need the money?
- Q7. Is there anything else that STVA could have done for your organization at that time Apart from more money?
- Q8. With hindsight would you have done anything differently during this period?
- Q9. The "If only" question - Have you learned anything during this time that you would want to tell us about that can help us to plan?

#### Questions – Looking and moving forward

- Q10. How soon (acknowledging current situation) can you bring your original project back online?
- Q11. What are the long-term plans-direction of travel for your organization?
- Q12. Looking at the bigger picture what concerns do you have for you and your organization moving forward (teasing out issues in relation to uncertainty and the future funding landscape)
- Q13. Finishing on an upbeat note (COVID-19 crisis withstanding) are there examples of stuff happening with your project that you would like us to share?

#### Questions – Current situation

- Q14. Have I missed anything?
- Q15. Case studies that could be included?
- Q16. Quotes/statements that could be included.

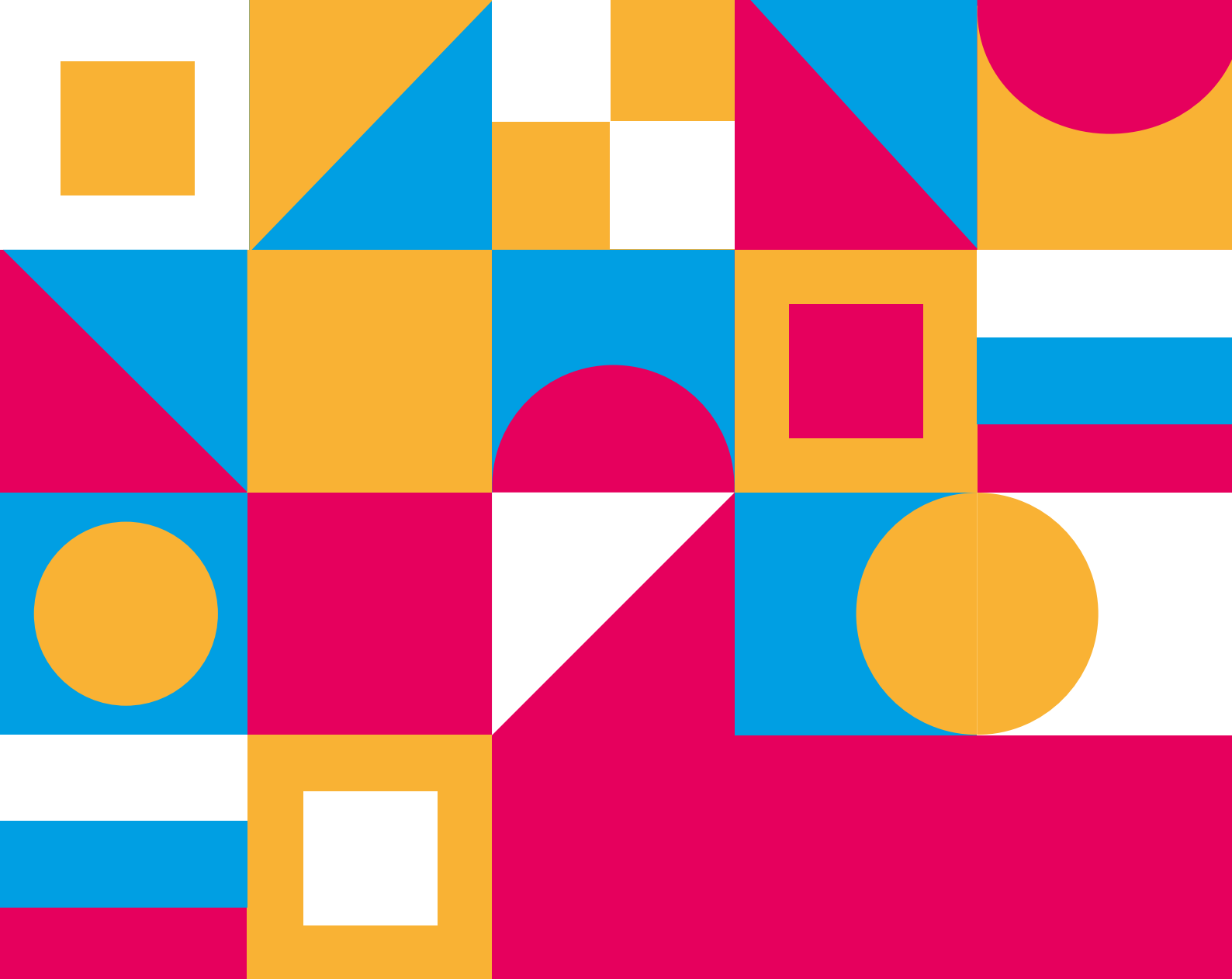
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**There's no question the pandemic has been a painful and hugely challenging experience for voluntary organisations across Scotland. But we've also seen charities at their very best – swiftly adapting to unprecedented change and doing whatever it takes to support communities in need.**

**Baroness Ford**, *STV Children's Appeal Chair*







stv  
children's  
appeal

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