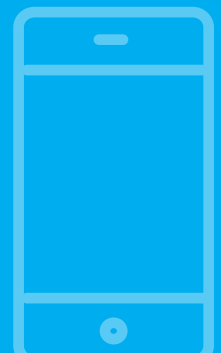

Distribution of Scottish Government Winter Funds

Evaluation Findings



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Introduction

2021 will see a new wave of Coronavirus impact. This will be the deep and long lasting social impact of the pandemic. Many of the previous themes we have highlighted in our [2020 COVID research](#) will become more stark in 2021. Vulnerable children and families are likely to be poorer, less socially connected, have fragile mental health, a significant gap in their learning and will struggle to find meaningful work.

Like the rest of the world we are learning as we are going, but the hope is that the previous boundaries between public service, charities and those they seek to serve are now blurring.

Being in that space of social renewal offers STV Children's Appeal an even greater opportunity to deliver on its objectives of change. Balancing that with meeting immediate and ever growing need is proposed as the focus of 2021 investing. We will be delivering a summer campaign that focuses on young people's mental wellbeing – raising the public consciousness, shining a light on local responses and investing to address immediate need. With our experience of managing both the Wellbeing and Winter funds we propose a mid year award programme tied to a public campaign that funds small local projects. These funds will provide flexibility for charities to respond to need as and when it arises around the themes this research has shown will be prevalent and are described in more detail overleaf.





Mental Wellbeing

Research recognises that mental health and wellbeing will be a massive priority in the years to come, for both children and young people and for whole families more generally.



Social Interaction

We might also envisage hesitancy and resistance to re-engage with typical leisure and group activities, because of fear and how unfamiliar it has become. So a focus on outdoor learning and sports, arts and culture provision might be good to counter this – as well as providing opportunities for much needed social interaction.



Food/Fuel/Digital

It is evident from our work so far this year that food and fuel poverty will become an increasing concern for families as well as digital exclusion. We found that in the digital space the issue was not necessarily access to a device, but also sufficient data and skills to make use of those devices.



Learning & Attainment

Much has been made in research about the incalculable impact of COVID on attainment. We also know that it is a key marker of future social mobility and offers a route out of poverty. Those who are in greatest need are also the same group who will be the most adversely affected.



Early Years

The consequences of COVID on under-5s is yet to be estimated with the pandemic giving rise to deeper and more complex issues in this area than might otherwise have been the case.



Post 16 Destinations & Employability

For many of our young people, the landscape of work has changed beyond all recognition. Technology has played the largest part in our ability to respond to COVID short term and is likely to continue to be significant part of our long term recovery. The skill sets required for this sector will mean that many of the young people we invest in will miss out. Coupled with a shrinking job market and limitations on wider routes into training, the prospects for young people are worrying. Without labelling them “The COVID Generation” and dooming them to a life of little prospect, prioritising this area for our investment will be important.

This research has helped us to sharpen our focus on these areas and make timely recommendations for our 2021 activity.

Our 2020 investments, influenced by our COVID Research have begun to address some of these challenges and are all focussed on what we are seeing and hearing on the ground:

- ▶ the micro projects we are funding via our partnership with The Corra Foundation;
- ▶ our pilot of the Place2Be and Youth Scotland Mental Health Training for Youth workers;
- ▶ our Tutoring Initiative in East Lothian;
- ▶ the Outdoor Centre partnership we have with Children 1st.

Background

In December of 2020 The Scottish Government announced a £100 million Winter Support Fund to help communities at risk.

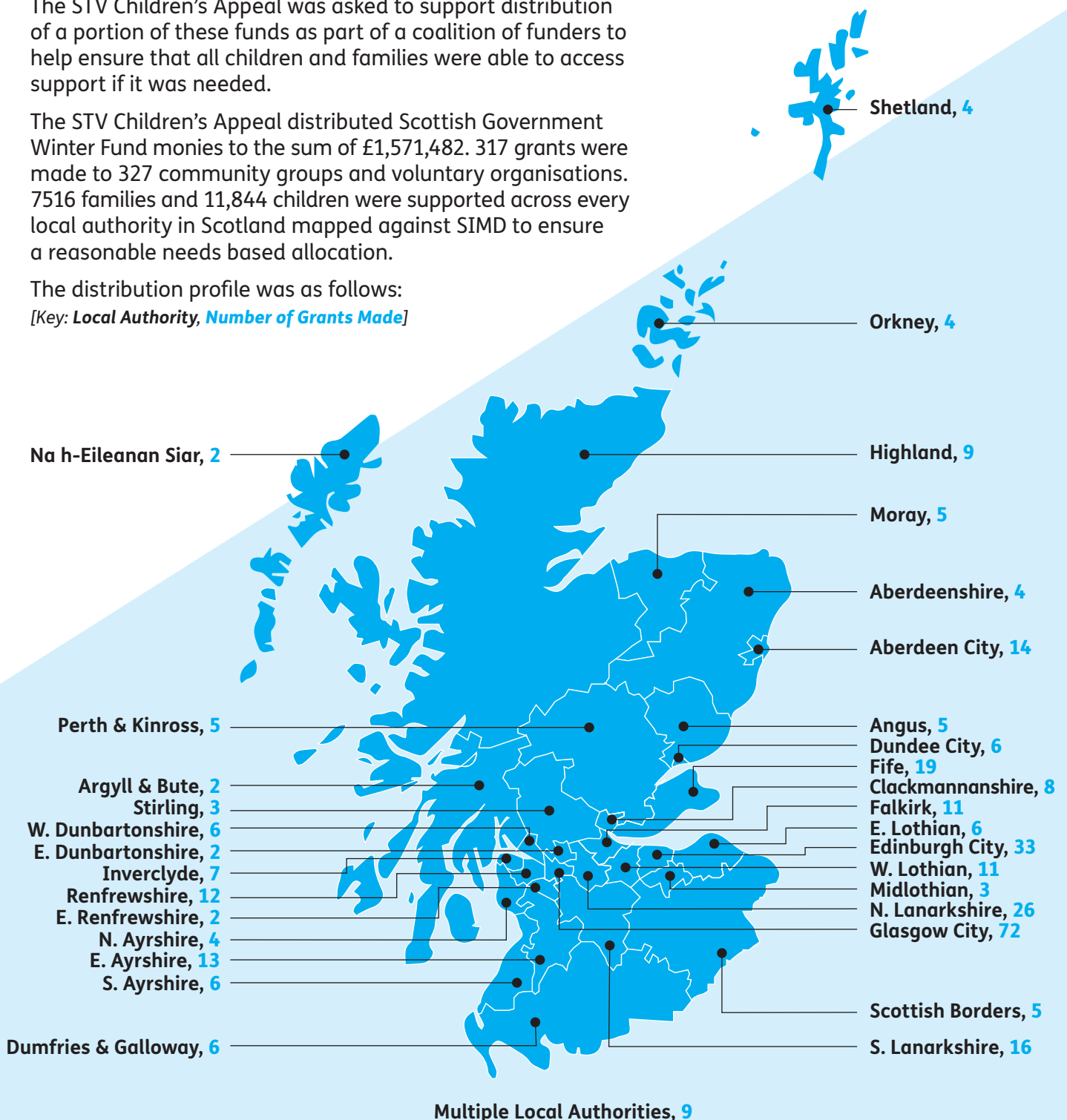
This funding sought to help people pay for food, heating, warm clothing and shelter during the winter period (www.gov.scot/news/winter-support-fund-for-families-and-children).

The STV Children’s Appeal was asked to support distribution of a portion of these funds as part of a coalition of funders to help ensure that all children and families were able to access support if it was needed.

The STV Children’s Appeal distributed Scottish Government Winter Fund monies to the sum of £1,571,482. 317 grants were made to 327 community groups and voluntary organisations. 7516 families and 11,844 children were supported across every local authority in Scotland mapped against SIMD to ensure a reasonable needs based allocation.

The distribution profile was as follows:

[Key: Local Authority, Number of Grants Made]



Our approach

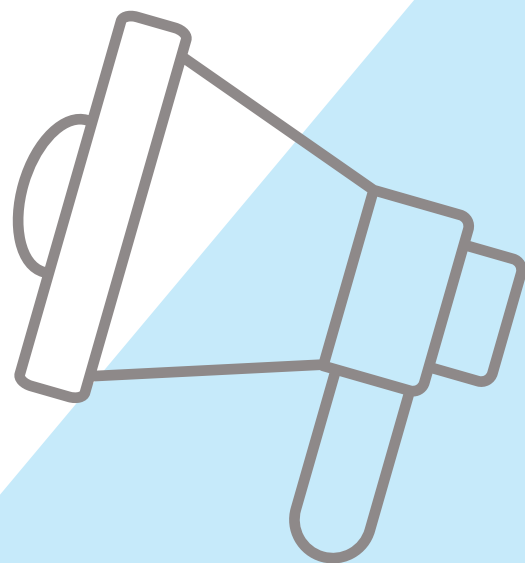
With the agreement of The Scottish Government and to ensure a rapid local response, the STV Children's Appeal utilised the community groups and voluntary organisations within their portfolio whom they had previously funded and had completed all relevant due diligence on. The funds were spent by grantees by the end of April 2021.

The approach we undertook was three fold, evolving in response to feedback from organisations about their ability to both respond to the criteria set by Scottish Government and address the variations in the needs of families as they emerged:

1. Organisations distributed funds of £100 per child to those experiencing hardship but not in receipt of Free School Meals.
2. We then made more flexible awards of a similar level to those remaining organisations working with families in hardship to be spent as defined by those families' needs.
3. In the final phase we identified five larger children's charities we have a funding relationship with and that have existing emergency funds and related infrastructure to administer alongside a Scotland wide reach: Buttle Scotland, Save the Children, Youth Scotland, Home-Start and Children 1st. We worked with them to target key 'cold spot' local authorities where we need to focus funding in order to achieve SIMD profile.

The emerging process was agreed with Scottish Government as we learned more about how projects were responding to local need.

We contacted charities who didn't feel they met original criteria as set by Scottish Government and proactively approached those who had not responded at all. We switched from online to telephone applications to get a better understanding of the need and assess how they could benefit from a grant.



Research

Following dispersal of funds, The STV Children's Appeal conducted two pieces of research. A short online questionnaire facilitated by ScotPulse was sent by the STV Children's Appeal to recipients of grants. In addition to completing the short questionnaire, charities were asked to indicate whether they would be happy to be recontacted. Follow up in depth interviews were then arranged with a sample of respondents.



Methodology

Phase one focused on those organisations receiving Winter Fund grant awards during this period. Electronic surveys were distributed and a 75% response rate ensued. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix One.

Phase two comprised further in-depth, online and/or telephone interviews with 26 organisations receiving funding and who had indicated a willingness to participate in further discussion. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix Two. The organisations detailed at Appendix Three were chosen to provide a representative sample of the geographic spread and diversity of the Appeal's current portfolio of third sector organisations. Communities Connected were commissioned to undertake the qualitative research.

A pre-interview discussion was held with the participants to advise on the questions to be discussed allowing them some time to prepare for the interview.

The research sought to get behind the operational issues of the Winter Fund scheme and capture the views of a wide range of third sector organisations.

The research objectives were to understand:

- ▶ The impact of this fund and the difference it had made to the beneficiaries;
- ▶ What challenges had to be overcome by organisations in front line delivery during this period;
- ▶ What organisations think the future holds for them and any particular concerns that they might have moving forward;
- ▶ In line with normal practice, The STV Children's Appeal was keen to learn from the organisations involved if they could have provided better or different support during this period.



Phase 1: Quantitative Research Findings

Who was helped by the funds

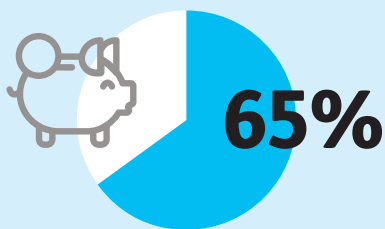
The majority of funds were dispersed to lone parent families and those with pre-school children (a key group that was not targeted by Local Authority distribution channels which focussed on those children in receipt of Free School Meals). Black, Asian, Mixed and Other families and those with a disabled child also featured strongly.



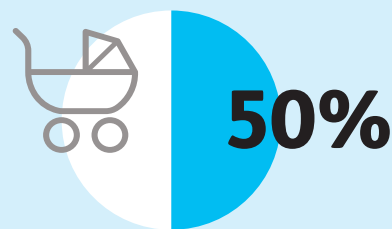
Did your organisation target support at any specific households/families?



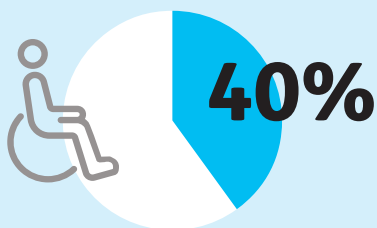
Table 1



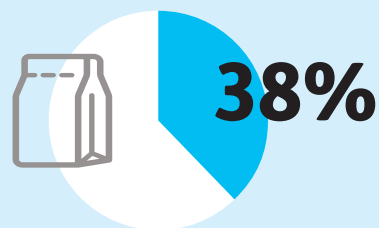
Low income households or those who have recently lost employment



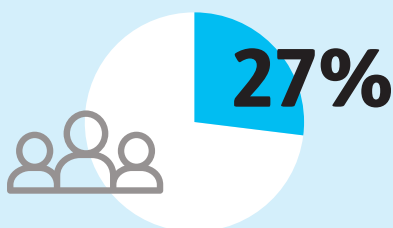
Families with a pre-school child



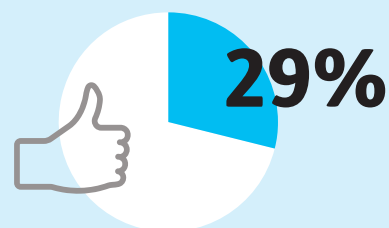
Families which include a disabled adult or child



Families with children eligible for free school meals



Black, Asian, Mixed and Other families



Other

How the money was spent

Spending is noted below. We saw a distinct increase in the prevalence of mental health and wellbeing in support offered. Whilst material need still featured strongly when compared to our summer research on the Impact of COVID (https://stvappeal.tv/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/STV-COVID-19-Report-A4-Final_updated_WEB.pdf) the growth in mental health related support was worrying.



How was the support provided to the families by your organisation?

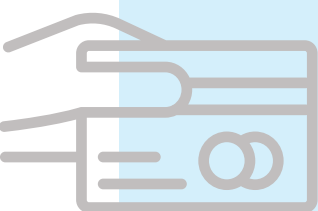
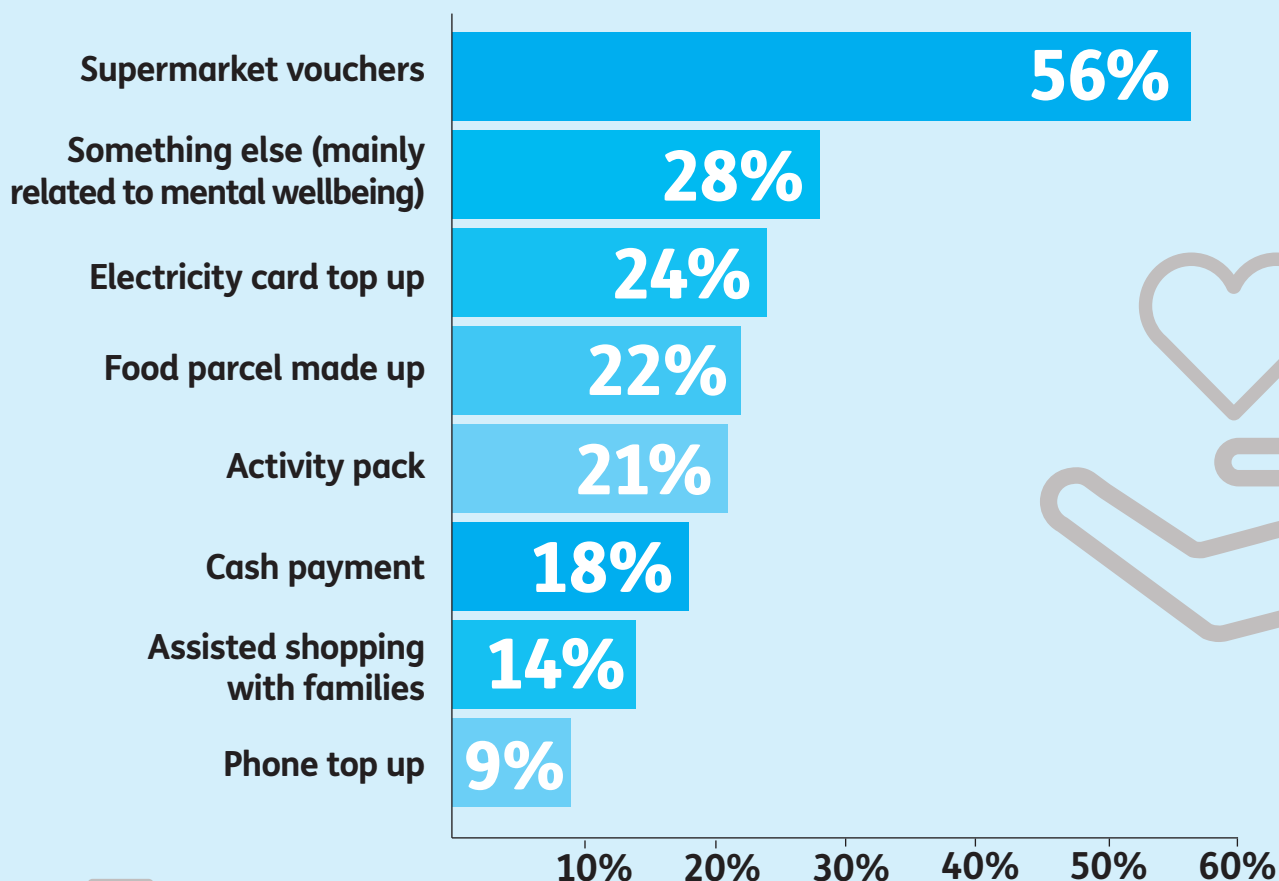


Table 2



Phase 2: Interview Findings

The 26 organisations detailed at Appendix 3 who agreed to participate in the follow-up interviews received funding awards varying from £1,000 to £150,000.

In total £625,325 was allocated across these projects. Between them they made 1,202 awards, benefitting 1,314 families and 1661 children. Organisations interviewed did not take a uniform approach to grant distribution. Encouraged by the staff team at The STV Children's Appeal, organisations developed local solutions to local problems.

The main findings of the interviews correlated strongly with those of the quantitative research and allowed us to explore in some detail the nature of spend noted in the previous bar graph (Page 9).



Material need

Food /supermarket vouchers were the number one priority for **85%** of the organisations. Thereafter, heating and clothes (**48%**) broadband/phone top up (**26%**) and cash payments (**26%**). The research confirmed that the money was a lifeline to families at that time. Affording families choice removed a number of barriers for them during this period.



My name is [REDACTED]. I am 21 and a single mum to an 11-month-old baby girl and a 4-year-old boy. I am on universal credit and am really struggling with this lockdown and missing the support from my mum and sister. I have my own house and it has been hard. I am using more heating and more food being stuck in most of the day and night with lockdown. If you give me a grant to help me out now, I promise to pay it back to you. It might only be £1 a week as I don't have much but I promise to pay it back. I would be so happy if you helped me. Thanks. XX

When pressed about what respondents were seeing on the ground and what they believe the future holds. Irrespective of size, infrastructure, nature and location, all were fairly consistent and, in some cases, unanimous on the issues raised.

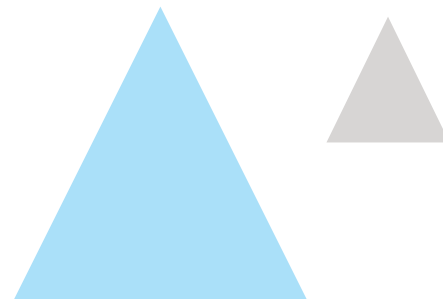


Mental health

52% of organisations surveyed highlighted mental health and wellbeing as a critical issue now and in the future, particularly for young people. In relation to this group, **15%** of respondents expressed concerns about the increasing suicide rates amongst young people within rural communities in particular.



I think now is the time for funders like the STV Children's Appeal to look at the crisis we have with our young people's mental health. I agree that all those online services are not the answer. Children find it very difficult to open up, especially to a stranger and how can they feel able to talk at all if they perhaps have parents in the next room. They also need to trust the person they are talking to. It's therefore very important that services are in place that can be accessed by young people in local surroundings with those they know and trust.





Implementation of Universal Credit and benefit changes

41% of organisations expressed serious reservations about changes to Universal Credit and benefits in general. Lockdown is having a significant impact on people's ability to access the system. A new and growing cohort of people who are on and about to come off furlough, are facing financial pressures and hardship never experienced before. The majority of the projects expressed concerns about what the situation will be like when furlough is lifted, and the full impact is known. All were clear that they lacked the capacity to support this sector unless additional resources were made available to them.

A number of projects confirmed that many new entrants are finding the benefits system including Universal Credit an impossible system to navigate with limited funding available at the end. This is compounded by changes to the benefits system - particularly for those from a disability or black and minority ethnic background or seeking asylum - coupled with delays in payments and is now reaching a tipping point for many.



Domestic abuse

22% of organisations expressed concerns about the impact that the pandemic and lockdown is having on domestic abuse within households with some participants indicating that they were seeing more visible evidence on the ground. One participant highlighted concerns about an "opening of the floodgates" around Child Protection Orders as children and young people return to school.



Physical health

11% of the organisations participating expressed real concerns about the impact of lockdown on people's physical health particularly amongst young people who have been hibernating for a year.



Drug, substance and alcohol abuse

11% of organisations indicated that they are clearly seeing a rise in the use of these substances within their communities.



Poverty and disadvantage

All participants (**100%**) clearly agreed that the situation facing clients experiencing long term poverty and disadvantage is not going away and is getting worse. Families they are working with still do not have access to enough food or fuel. As a consequence of lockdown, children were having to stay home during the winter, resulting in increased heating and fuel costs which exacerbated the pressures that they were already facing at that time. It was clear from the responses that funding allocated to families was a lifeline not a life-changer. For some it took away the anxiety and fear for a few months and allowed them "to be a parent for a wee while".

Over **50%** of respondents expressed concerns about what is going to happen post furlough as they are struggling to cope with the numbers trying to access their services now. **15%** of participants wanted to put on record that they had real concerns about the disproportionate impact of these changes within rural communities.

A number of projects anecdotally reported that now that frontline staff were coming into face-to-face contact with clients through implementing this fund, they were seeing more evidence of mental health and domestic abuse.

The research also highlights key issues for this sector – operational issues and the fear of the unknown.

(continued overleaf)



Operational issues

The research confirms that localism undoubtedly works. Going local with projects on the ground whose infrastructure, knowledge and understanding – built up over a number of years – was critical and instrumental to the success of the Winter Fund. **85%** of the organisations responding had strong independent local structures and databases or similar systems in place.

This was clearly an asset in targeting beneficiaries of the schemes. **55%** confirmed that they had strong to very-strong partnership arrangements with statutory sector partners which helped during this period. Organisations delivered on the ground with dignity being at the forefront of their activity.

Case study: Beith Trust

Over 10 weeks at the beginning of 2021, Beith Trust distributed £12,000 in cash vouchers to North Ayrshire families with pre-5 children who were in severe financial difficulties.

The Trust worked with their local Health Professionals to get the vouchers to the most in need as quickly as possible.



91% of families said the support was either 'a lifesaver' or 'helped a lot'



The help I received is such a relief as the £100 voucher helped with buying things I didn't have the money for (a stair gate) & would have to save for it.

It [also] helped me pay for just under a week's food shop. Again a bonus as the money I saved on food that week I put onto my gas meter. So I'm very happy for the support of Beith Trust & I thank all involved.

A mum supported by Beith Trust

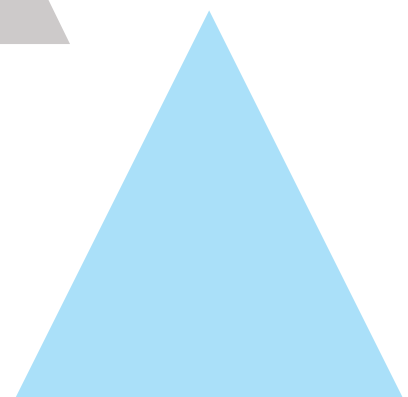


Fear of the unknown

All are clear that the impact of the COVID pandemic on vulnerable groups has by no means peaked. All are unanimous that the situation on the ground is getting worse for those experiencing poverty and disadvantage. The end of furlough and the devastation that will bring, figured prominently in discussions. A number of projects expressed concerns about the increasing number of people entitled to public funding having little recourse and falling through the cracks. All anticipated increasing demands for services, whether through self-referral or signposting from statutory agencies, set against reduced funding available to them. Two projects intimated that the current relationships with the statutory sector will change with the third sector losing out.



I would like to thank you for helping us with funding from the Scottish Government and STV Children's Appeal. I have a disabled husband and three school age children. Lockdown has been harder this time and the cold weather has bumped up our heating. The kids are eating constantly and it's hard to refuse them. I am having to ration the heating and hot water and put it on at certain times. We are all huddled in one room to save heat. [redacted] organised £50 food and £50 electricity for us and it has been a godsend. Such a caring person to help us especially. Thank you, funders, for your generosity. You don't know how much it means.



STV Children's Appeal approach

All research participants were incredibly positive and supportive of the approach undertaken by The STV Children's Appeal, pre, during and post funding.

Trust was the number one factor cited, as well as the light touch application process.

Some organisations expressed concerns about having to absorb the costs associated with administering the scheme without some financial support from STV Children's Appeal particularly when they had staff furloughed.

Some participants wanted to put on record that:


- ▶ To have such confidence in our organisation is massive;
- ▶ Delegated responsibility felt good and empowering;
- ▶ Your approach allowed them to grow and be proud of what they had done in a relatively short time frame;
- ▶ Your staff are incredibly non-judgemental – never underestimate that;
- ▶ Trust is paramount, the emotional support an extra surprise;
- ▶ "E-kindness" outstanding.

When asked what else STV Children's Appeal could have done:

- ▶ Be an advocate/champion for the sector;
- ▶ Consider establishing a crisis fund;
- ▶ Absorb costs of organisations administering schemes;
- ▶ Create a sharing platform for good practice.



What we take from this for our own learning

- 
- ▶ Small and local is where we need to be therefore we will grow our portfolio of small local projects by a third in 2021.
 - ▶ We will in our 2021 campaign prioritise mental wellbeing in our investments and in our programming.
 - ▶ We will build on current Mental Wellbeing investment through Youth Scotland and Place2Be, to extend and deepen our contribution to mental health support in the youth work sector.
 - ▶ We will work with a collaboration of funders to undertaken a consultation exercise with mental wellbeing charity providers on what they need from us.
 - ▶ 2021 summer campaign to combine telling the story of COVID impact on Youth Mental wellbeing and to illustrate the “small things” that can help – participation in sport and the arts/being connected/peer to peer interaction.
 - ▶ Through the STV Children’s Appeal summer campaign we will fund 50 small project awards to enable young people to **participate** in opportunities for mental wellbeing, recognising that often material poverty prevents engagement even where opportunities exist.

Appendix 1

Grant Monitoring Review

You recently received Winter Support 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.

Q1 – Details

Summary of Grant

Name of Organisation:

Amount of Funding Awarded:

Period of Funding:

Q2 – Area

Where is Scotland was your activity delivered?

Tick all that apply

- National / Scotland-wide
- Aberdeen
- Aberdeenshire
- Angus
- Argyll and Bute
- Clackmannanshire
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Dundee
- East Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- East Lothian
- East Renfrewshire
- Edinburgh
- Falkirk
- Fife
- Glasgow
- Highland
- Inverclyde
- Midlothian
- Moray
- Na h-Eileanan Siar
- North Ayrshire
- North Lanarkshire
- Orkney
- Perth and Kinross
- Renfrewshire
- Scottish Borders
- Shetland
- South Ayrshire
- South Lanarkshire
- Stirling
- West Dunbartonshire
- West Lothian

Q3 – Children and Households Supported

How many individual children / households received support from your organisation?

Children

Households

Q4 – Total Awards

Total number of awards made:

Q5 – Targets

Did your organisation target support at any specific households / families? *Tick all that apply*

- Families with children eligible for Free School Meals
- Families with a pre-school child
- Low income households or those who have recently lost employment
- Families which include a disabled adult or child
- Minority ethnic families
- Other (please specify)

Q6 – Distribution Methods

Please provide a breakdown of how your organisation provided support and the total number of children supported beside each method of distribution. *If a child received support via more than one method of distribution, please count them more than once (e.g. if one child received supermarket vouchers and electricity card top up as part of their award, please add this child into the counts for both methods of distribution).*

	Q7. Did your organisation provide this method of distribution? <i>Tick all that apply</i>	Q8. Number of children receiving this method of distribution	Q9. Please provide any additional information about this method of distribution
Cash payment			
Supermarket vouchers			
Electricity card top up			
Food parcel made up			
Assisted shopping with family			
Activity pack			
Phone top up			
Other (please specify)			

Q10 – Adapted Support

Did your organisation adapt the type of support provided or offer a combination of methods of distribution depending on household / family needs? If so, please provide some details here.

Please say below

Q11 – Challenges

Please let us know about any challenges or barriers your organisation faced in delivering this activity, and changes that were made as a result, and any gaps in provision you have identified.

Please tell us below

Q12 – Feedback

If possible, please provide quotes and feedback from children, parents and staff (*anonymise any names to ensure confidentiality*)

Q13 – Case Study

If possible, please provide a case study highlighting the impact the award had on a child /children you support:

Q14 – Recontact

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

- Yes
- No

Q15 – Contact Details

If you are happy to be recontacted, please supply your name and a contact phone number

Contact name

Contact phone number

Complete

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 2

Format and Questions for Winter Fund Project Interviews

General Introduction/Background to Research

- Outline research as detailed in email
- Confirm that whilst group are submitting monitoring form interview will dig a bit deeper
- Conclude by outlining what key outputs of research will be
N.B. All done in a pre-interview call setting up interviews and putting participants at ease
- A bit about your organisation
- Getting more information and a feel for what is happening before going into the questions
- Name/title/contact details for the participant (and our records)

Questions – Current Situation

- Q1. Numbers: How many awards did you make? How many households did you support? How many children benefitted from the scheme?
- Q2. What challenges did you face in identifying beneficiaries and how were they overcome (or not)?
- Q3. What in the main were beneficiaries of the award using it for? (in general terms as monitoring form will give us more detail). Probe a bit further on the cash payments.
- Q4. What difference did it make?
- Q5. Capacity question – how did you distribute the money e.g.; did you buy fuel cards or give the money to the individuals to do for themselves?
- Q6. Tell us what is happening on the ground – what your gut is telling you?

Questions – Support and Processes

- Q7. How useful did you find STV Children's Appeal's approach to your organisation during this period?
- Q8. Is there anything else that STV Children's Appeal could have done for your organisation during this campaign apart from more money?
- Q9. With hindsight would you have done anything differently during this period?
- Q10. 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?
- Q11. Have I missed anything?
- Q12. Case studies that could be included.
- Q13. Quotes/statements that could be included. Thanks for participating – advise get copy of write up for their files and outline process for report moving forward.

END

Appendix 3

List of Organisations Participating in the Interviews

- ▶ Acis Youth Project
- ▶ Abernecessities
- ▶ Drug Initiative Group Forfar
- ▶ Dundee Dragons Wheelchair Club
- ▶ Beautiful Inside and Out
- ▶ Kilmarnock Kinship Carers
- ▶ Kindred Advocacy
- ▶ Shakti Women's Aid
- ▶ LIFT Muirhouse Millennium Community Centre
- ▶ Falkirk Homelessness Project
- ▶ Fife Alcohol Support Services
- ▶ Royston Youth Action
- ▶ Refuweegee
- ▶ Govan HELP
- ▶ Team Jak
- ▶ Wick Youth Group
- ▶ Connect Berwickshire Youth Project
- ▶ South Ayrshire Befriending Project
- ▶ Callander Youth Project
- ▶ Y Sort It West Dumbarton
- ▶ Bathgate Fabb Club
- ▶ Children 1st
- ▶ Buttle
- ▶ Home-Start
- ▶ Youth Scotland
- ▶ Save the Children



stv
children's
appeal

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STV Appeal SCIO SC042429