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# Partnerships and Power sharing to reach communities of interest during Covid19: evaluation findings from a small grants scheme in Leeds

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# What are we talking about?

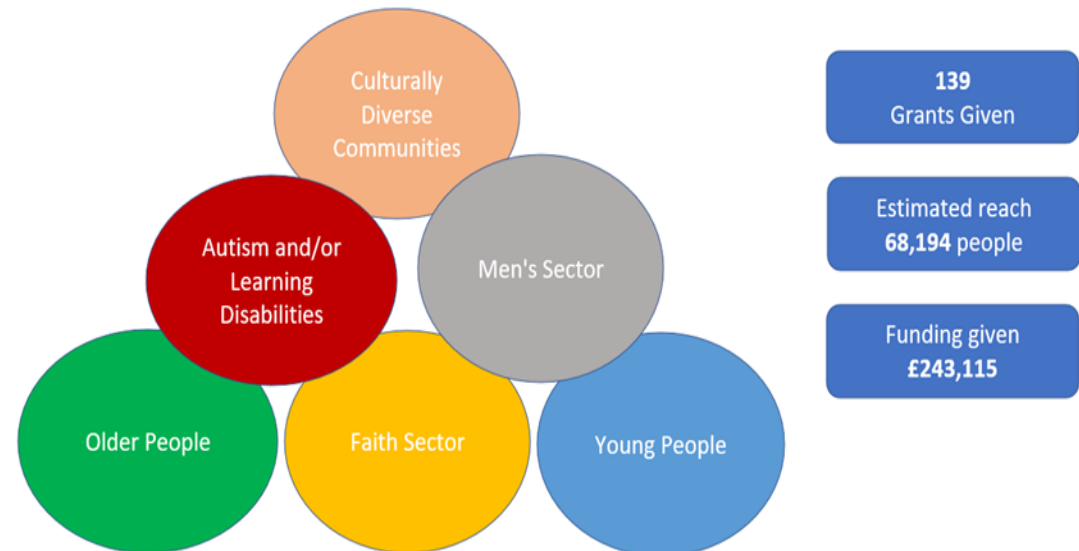
- We are presenting findings from our qualitative evaluation of one Third Sector response (grants programme) to Covid19 across Leeds, funded by the local city council.
- The work involved the creation of a partnership between statutory services and the Third Sector involving power sharing, and a delivery model based upon trust.
- The grant scheme was part of response to C19, which aimed to reach into communities of interest who were deemed to be vulnerable and most at risk for example, older people and people from deprived areas.
- This presentation outlines the delivery model, the project outputs across communities of interest, as well as lessons for a new way of working between state and voluntary sector partners on inequalities.

# The programme of work

12-months funding from LCC:

- Ongoing communications about Covid19
- Targeted community engagement, for those identified as being most in need
- **Micro-grants** (small grants to support communities to respond differently, administered by Forum Central)
- Coordination and networking (separate evaluation <https://forumcentral.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/communities-of-interest-network-4-1.pdf>)

Covid-19 Public Health Funding for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Covid-19 Key Messages



The grants have enabled organisations and groups to develop innovative approaches to deliver proactive and responsive actions addressing the key themes and issues highlighted in the insight gathered through engagement with the Communities of Interest network during the COVID-19 pandemic in Leeds.

# Our evaluation

## ***Research question:***

Our overall aim was to qualitatively assess the Third sector response to Covid19 through the grant programme across Leeds, using a people centred approach.

## ***Research method***

We conducted a qualitative online evaluation using a range of tools: observations, semi-structured interviews, and a qualitative survey, sampling a total of 27 participants. Whilst our sample is small, the participants' characteristics were intersectional providing rich detail and learning on inequalities action

# Sample detail

<b>Community of interest</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>
Young people	Observation of meetings (n=2) Interviews with professionals (n=2) Survey professionals (n=1)
Older people	Meeting observations (n=2) Interviews (n=5 professionals) Email comments (n=1 professional) Survey responses (n=10, 9 professionals and 1 volunteer)
Faith Sector	Interviews with faith sector community members (n=2)
Men	Interviews with a volunteer and a worker (n=2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>27 participants</b>

## Success = the model of delivery

- Existing networks were important
- Simplified procedures for grants were key
- Timescale was quick enabling rapid response to C19
- Flexibility was viewed positively – delivery and monitoring

*“The approach of the grant scheme is very straightforward: quick application process, found out very quickly whether we had been successful, got the funding very quickly, excellent support from the team.”*

[Survey respondent 1, older people]

*“It’s definitely a new way of working. This project is all based on trust and relationships that people have in the area already. ....It’s also a really organic project and lots of different things spiral from it because there is that trust.”*  
[Professional working with young people]

*“The evaluation and monitoring is not demanding, but achievable.”*

[Survey respondent 7, older people]

# Success = project outcomes

- Co-production
- Voice - Dragons Den
- Participation
- Softer outcomes
- Networking
- Information sharing
- Positive messaging



*"For people in the community they feel they have a place to have their voice heard."*

*[Survey Respondent 1, professional working with young people]*

*"Mixing with people...more confidence... how to speak to other people...talking to professional people...it is making a lot of difference. Funding made so much difference...everyone was so depressed for 7 months, staying indoors..."*

*[Faith Sector community member]*



# Success = project outcomes

- Partnerships
- Collaboration
- Shared learning
- Shared support

“It’s been a community of grant recipients...Forum [Central] helps workers stay motivated and funders get more value for money – people sharing ideas, referring to each other, working together.”

“The way that partners worked together to make this happen is something we should not lose...the trust between partners...the relationships we have built have enabled us to keep connected with lots of groups that we wouldn't have normally been connected with.”

# Headline findings

- Small amounts of funding at a very local level were easy to apply for and processed rapidly.
- The model of delivery involving trusted organisations and community members working together to respond to Covid19.
- Project outputs funded by the grant scheme were described positively by professionals and included the delivery of small-scale projects and the development of resources.
- Community members also described positive benefits (individual and community level) from being involved in the grant scheme.

# Areas for reflection

- Groups experiencing inequalities enabled to participate and drive their own agendas (model was responsive to community ideas, organic and developed in expediency but worked well)
- Network approach (social capital) important for reach and impact in terms of inequalities
- Context of wider inequalities remains.
- Sustainability of short-term funding vs. structural problems and limitations to power sharing
- More flexibility still needed e.g. information sessions at different points of the day
- More reach is needed into some communities – distrust, ways of working/social norms, do all want to participate?
- Some communities still need more support to apply for funding



# Final reflections

- Findings call into question whether detailed application processes and onerous post project monitoring are needed for small grants programmes targeted at vulnerable/unequal communities.
- The delivery model involved trusted organisations and community members working together to respond to Covid19 in a different style of partnership based upon co-production, collaboration, and peer support – inequalities to information clearly addressed in the programme.
- Community involvement resulted in creative responses to the crisis, wider reach into communities of interest and positive outcomes.
- Reach into some communities remained challenging, so further work is needed to avoid exclusion and the exacerbation of inequalities.



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# Thank you

Any questions?

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