



COVID 19 RESPONSE PROJECT

Reducing isolation and supporting re-integration of
people and communities affected by Covid-19 in Rotherham



In partnership with
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND**

COVID-19 RESPONSE PROJECT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	Page 1
About Us	Page 2
Project Scope	Page 3
Aims, Objectives and Activities	Page 6
Outcomes and Impact	Page 9
Success Stories	Page 11
Learning and Recommendations	Page 20
Conclusion	Page 22



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, CYPF Consortium members maintained a close connection with children, young people and families. It is through their voice and their articulation of activities which would be helpful and relevant that our members became acutely aware of issues such as; increasing cases of domestic abuse, unemployment and safeguarding concerns, as well as, declining mental health and a lack of positive places to go and things to do for young people in Rotherham. These issues were further exacerbated by fear of the pandemic, the impact it had already had on people's lives and peripheral concerns around isolation, loneliness, transport, safety, digital exclusion, social distancing, lack of support for parents during lockdown.

In September 2020, The Children, Young People and Families' Consortium was successful in securing £99,806 from the National Lottery Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF). The funding was used to deliver a 6-month project comprising 9 Consortium member organisations and aimed to enable a joined-up response to the impacts of COVID-19 on people and communities in Rotherham.

Consortium member organisations involved in the project had already adapted the way their services were delivered in response to government guidance and restrictions. However, most required support to increase organisational capacity to meet demands, increase accessibility of adapted services or enhance their service offer to accommodate working in a new environment. The project therefore, furthered the strength of this VCS response and contributed to preventing a reduction in essential services.

Despite encountering two national lockdowns and the challenges navigating fluctuating changes to government guidance throughout this project, we are incredibly proud of our Consortium member organisations for their ability and willingness to adapt and implement the most appropriate service offers at any given time, placing services users firmly at the heart of what they do.

I offer this report as a demonstration of how the CYPF Consortium provides an effective vehicle to unite services and a recognition of the camaraderie and collaboration from those involved in this project in navigating the pandemic together and producing some truly amazing outcomes for our most vulnerable people and communities in Rotherham.

Ashley Leggott

Strategic Coordinator of the Children Young People and Families Consortium



ABOUT US

Established in 2003, The Children, Young People, and Families Consortium around 30 Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) organisations who work collaboratively and with partners to develop and raise standards, influence the children and young peoples' agenda in Rotherham and provide the best possible VCS contribution to improving outcomes for children, young people and families in Rotherham.

As a registered charity, we use various models of collaboration when bidding for contracts and grants to maximise resources and jointly bring funds into the borough. By working together, we know how this can increase knowledge, good practice and capacity amongst our member organisations and enable them to engage as effective partners in delivering innovative, cost-effective, collaborative projects and services.

The consortium has a history of joint working, sharing resources, information and expertise backed by a strong connection with and between communities, the VCS, infrastructure organisations and the local authority. By adopting a collaborative, consortia approach, we unite likeminded organisations and work together to collectively bring about changes which individual organisations cannot achieve alone.

For more information, please contact Ashley Leggott, Strategic Coordinator via ashley.leggott@cypfconsortium.org.uk or visit www.cypfconsortium.org.uk



RESPONDING TO NEED

“Service users were experiencing that many of their usual services were either unavailable or had to rapidly adopt new ways of providing support, leaving vulnerable people not knowing where to turn to get help.”

PROJECT SCOPE

CYPF Consortium members met to discuss the current and emerging issues which had been identified through work with children, young people and families during the pandemic and found that these summarised into two core areas; **Supporting Re-integration** for those who wanted to return to a sense of normality and **Reducing Isolation** for those who require additional support to access services to meet their needs.

Our target audience primarily focussed on young people aged 10-25, but also considered how Covid-19 had impacted all ages and was widened to include their families, parents and carers.

Voluntary Action Rotherham as a consortium member was the lead organisation on behalf of the consortium with a further 9 CYPF Consortium member organisations coming together to support the increase in demand for services by investing funding from the National Lottery CCSF in technology, mobilising support to communities and offering a range of in-person, online and detached services across Rotherham between September 2020 and March 2021.

We adopted a collaborative consortia approach from the outset with the intention of responding to opportunities and challenges, maximising on resources and delivering high-quality outcomes. An impact monitoring framework was designed for the project and used by delivery partners to help build a picture of the difference made across a variety of service areas. A working group also met monthly throughout the project to ensure partners maintained connectivity and were able to utilise the strength of the consortium and relationships within it.

PARTNERS



Voluntary Action Rotherham

Voluntary Action Rotherham is the lead body for supporting, developing and promoting the voluntary and community sector in the Rotherham borough. Its core activities and associated projects are a keystone for local community engagement and development.



Clifton Learning Partnership

Clifton Learning Partnership (CLP) exists to support the local community to increase its capacity in order that it can: "Give every child and family the best chance to succeed".



Endeavour

Endeavour works hands-on with some of Britain's most disadvantaged, disaffected and forgotten young people and believe that every young person deserves to have the skills, knowledge and resilience to create a positive future.



GROW

GROW supports women with a wide range of issues, often those who are in crisis and have experienced distress and trauma by providing a holistic service that enables these women to make informed choices.



Rotherham Parent Carers Forum

Rotherham Parent Carers Forum was set up in 2009 as a registered charity run by and for families of children and young people (aged 0-25) who have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).



Rotherham United Community Sports Trust

Using their passion for empowering communities and creating positive change, RUCST deliver high quality wide ranging projects which generate life changing habits through Education, Health & Wellbeing, Inclusion and Sport Participation.



RUSH House

Rush is a charitable organisation providing a range of accommodation and support services including advice, independent living skills and training to young people aged 16-25, as well as Education, Employment and Training programmes for people aged 18-30.



Swinton Lock Activity Centre

Swinton Lock is a community based charity meeting the education and social needs of the communities in Rotherham and surrounding areas, focusing on those who through disability, social and economic disadvantage face barriers to accessing these opportunities elsewhere.



YMCA White Rose

YMCA White Rose seeks to transform communities so that all children and young people truly belong, thrive and contribute through a range of creative youth work projects, using the arts as a vehicle; inspiring and empowering CYP to increase their emotional resilience and build aspirations.



YWCA Yorkshire

YWCA provides accommodation and support to a range of vulnerable women, children and families in supported accommodation in South Yorkshire, with a focus on female empowerment, creating better futures, and making a difference to peoples' lives.

AIMS

Our core aims of the project were to;

- **Reduce isolation**
for those who require additional support to access services
- **Support re-integration**
for those who want to return to a sense of normality

In the lead up to the project, we also considered the wider impacts and acute difficulties which Covid-19 had introduced or brought to the fore. For example; safeguarding referrals had reduced by 50% indicating a reduced visibility of safeguarding concerns. Consortium members were also encountering increased cases of poor mental health and domestic violence / abuse involving people who lacked the emotional resilience tools to deal with these issues.

In order to maximise the potential impact of the project and address local issues, we included some additional aims around;

- Addressing rising cases of domestic abuse
- Managing an expected surge in safeguarding referrals
- Supporting social, emotional and mental health issues
- Increasing parenting support
- Responding to increasing levels of poverty and unemployment

"These activities were a **life line** for us **at a very difficult time** when we were not able to meet with friends and were **missing physical interaction** of school and other activities we normally engage with."



OBJECTIVES

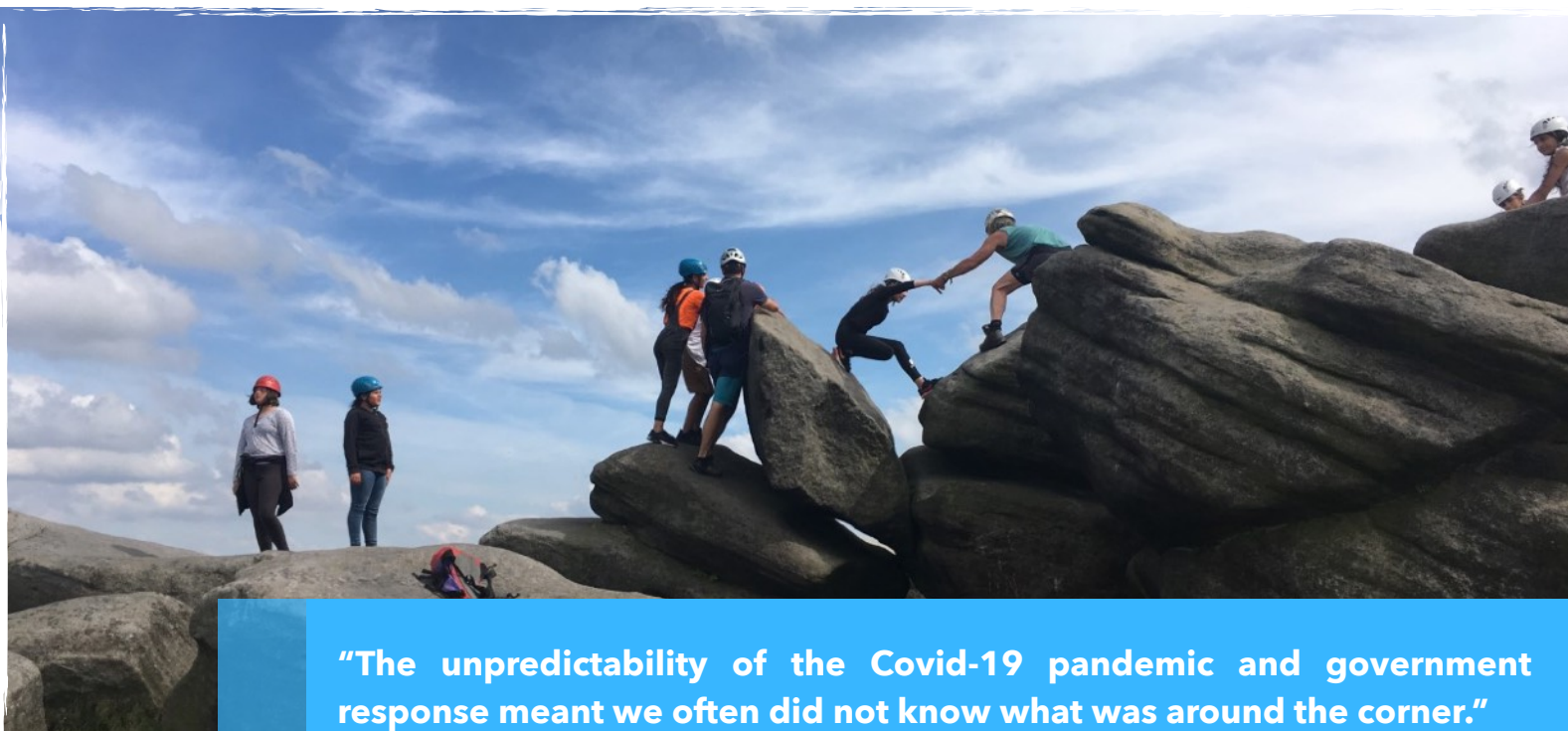
ONLINE, IN PERSON, MOBILE

Consortium member organisations explored ways to utilise organisational specialisms whilst providing a wide enough range of services to sufficiently and inclusively meet current and emerging needs. We also appreciated the importance of flexibility and recognised the unpredictability of the pandemic in order to agree that our project would also need be able to respond to newly identified needs as they arise.

In order to fill the awareness gap following the sharp reduction in service availability and enable necessary referrals, we felt it was essential to increase meaningful engagement for vulnerable people and agreed to adopt a three-pronged approach to ensure accessibility of this online, in person and in communities. Also recognising the increased risk factors for young people whilst not in education during the lockdown, we sought to increase protective factors as best possible for these young people within government guidance and restrictions.

Our objectives for the project included;

- Increasing youth provision safely
- Increasing detached / outreach provision
- Mobilising support to communities
- Increasing family support for acute difficulties
- Delivering online services
- Utilising outdoor spaces for engagement



“The unpredictability of the Covid-19 pandemic and government response meant we often did not know what was around the corner.”

ACTIVITIES



These activities took place across various localities in Rotherham including; Rotherham Central, Clifton, East Dene, Eastwood, Rotherham East, Ferham, Masborough, Rawmarsh and Flanderwell as well as borough-wide via online and mobilised support.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

1779
People
Supported

1422 Age 0 - 18

357 Age 18+

Prominent Groups Included;

| **330** Parents / Carers (19%) |

| **752** BAME (42%) | **310** SEND (17%) |

Reducing Isolation

By **regaining contact with staff**, **keeping in touch** with clients and **reassuring** them with ongoing information, advice and guidance, clients increased their **understanding of what to expect from services** and **gained confidence to access these**. **Mobilising support** to communities helped **remove accessibility barriers** and **increased engagement** in online activity, particularly where materials were delivered ahead of structured online programmes or where parcels helped to meet people's **immediate and short term needs**. **Peer support** opportunities provided an avenue to speak to others in **similar situations** about their **concerns and worries**, helping to **reduce feelings of isolation**, especially for those who felt alone or 'stuck' in their situation.

49
Volunteers
Engaged

8 Young People

41 Adults

Supporting Re-Integration

The project provided **positive places to go** and **positive things to do** for people whose **lives were largely limited** to family, school life, homeschooling or were lived alone. Often, these were **shared opportunities for families or small groups** leading to improved family communication, increased respite and peer support for parents. Services **re-connected with young people** and **increased capacity to serve more clients** with additional activities and enhanced services. **Young people reported** that these **activities were a life line** for them **at a very difficult time** when they are not able to meet with friends and are very much **missing physical interaction** following closures of schools and other activities that they would normally engage with. **Targeted domestic abuse and trauma related programmes** helped address complex needs of clients, many of whom were previously on waiting lists and all reported that they felt more able to deal with the issues that they were facing during the pandemic. **88 referrals** were made out of the project for those who needed further support and 76% of these were accommodated by consortium members involved in the project.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Differences Made

Feedback from clients suggest the project also had the following impacts;

- People were **better informed about Covid-19**
- People better understood the **impact of Covid-19 on services**
- People were better able to **respond to changing circumstances**
- People were better supported to **access the services** they needed
- People's **physical health** was better
- People's **short-term basic needs were met** better
(e.g. financial, food, clothing, shelter)
- People had **more social contact**
- People **felt less lonely**
- People of all ages were **better protected from harm and abuse**
- People's **education and development** was better
- People's **mental health and wellbeing** was better
- People developed **better skills, strengths and assets**
- **Reduced impact of poverty rough sleeping, social, emotional and mental health issues, domestic abuse, and trauma** on individuals and their children.

AT A TIME OF GREAT NEED

"All of our normal Christmas activities have been cancelled this year. Receiving this was just the perfect lift and we are so appreciative of the effort that has gone into making this possible."



GROW



"I can't believe how much you have offered me and so quickly. Thank you so much."

In the lead up to the project, we experienced a sharp increase in demand for our service and despite working to capacity to accommodate as many women and girls as we could, some remained on waiting lists for services. The Covid-19 Response Project allowed us to extend our project to more women and girls who required support to address their practical and emotional issues.

Project workers quickly built trust and assessed each woman and girl engaging in the project around their support needs and networks. We then followed up with weekly contact, doorstep visits and a support plan which is co-produced with each woman so that they are able to schedule contacts and interventions themselves. Wellbeing and activity packs were also provided, often supporting preparation for structured sessions.

A trauma informed approach was used to respond to client needs, acknowledging their physical and emotional responses to their situation. As part of initial assessments, parenting was discussed for those who had children with time to consider the impact of Covid-19 on home schooling, returning to school, etc and explored ways to reduce this. In some cases, this led to young girls re-engaging with school after around 12 months of absence. Communication between parents and children improved through the use of arts and crafts, pictures / emojis, and opportunity to talk about how they feel in a calm space. We continued support until the woman / girls' needs were met, or an appropriate transfer / exit plan was in place. By the end of the project, only 4 women/girls required ongoing support, 2 of which will be covered through our other projects.

Success Story

A woman referred to us with three children (10, 7 and under 1) had just experienced a distressing separation from partner, leaving her in significant debt, at risk of being made homeless and with no income. A project worker responded immediately to resolve the most significant matters raised by the woman which were food and toys for Christmas. Within 2 days, her practical situation was stabilised with a food parcel/Christmas hamper and vouchers to buy fresh products and food for baby, as well as, emotional support to manager her wellbeing and supported access to toys via Families First, Universal Credit and debt advice service (CAP).

RUSH HOUSE

The project has made a positive change in difficult circumstances. We have been able to support our clients to access provision and move forward with their education, training, employment and personal goals. Isolation had impacted on people's anxiety and depression, which, combined with a deflated jobs market and lack of face to face training meant that the most vulnerable did not have the resources to access the online community and support they needed.

Our clients accessed online learning courses, attended interviews and many went on to start new training and employment opportunities. As learning providers re-opened, some benefitted from face to face learning which was especially useful for those with additional needs. We conducted safe and well visits to our most vulnerable, including; delivering food parcels, offering phone credit and support around trauma, Education and Health Care Plans, and signposted to various forms of mental health support.

Success Story

E was working full time and had a young family. Early into the pandemic he was furloughed, placed on a reduced wage and was suffering with his mental health. When he was told that he was being made redundant, he self referred to our Brighter Futures programme for support. We investigated with ACAS to support him to receive his full pay during his notice period after we discover the firm was only paying him 80% of his wage. We supported him to improve his CV, complete an AQA and identify relevant vacancies. Within a few weeks he had an interview. He was not successful but the feedback was positive and this motivated him to continue.

We persisted this support and maintained contact via telephone. Eventually he applied for Sheffield electric, had an interview and was successful. E struggled at first with the change from his last workplace where he had stayed since being an apprentice.

With our ongoing encouragement, he has now been working there for over 2 months and is in a much better place with money and his mental health.



"I increased my mental health through communicating with others, building my confidence and accessing online support."

ROTHERHAM PARENT CARER FORUM

Before the Covid-19 Response Project, we were delivering a virtual activity program to 75 people. This funding allowed us to reach an additional 160 people, support social, emotional and mental health issues of individuals and reduce feelings of isolation for families.



We made Christmas a more enjoyable time for families during lockdown by offering Christmas activity packs accompanied by online tutorial videos, running an online Christmas party and partnering with 'Santa' himself to send 74 individually personalised video messages to young people via youtube. The activities helped provide structure, break up boredom and bring the "magic that was needed" to families when most of their usual festive activities were cancelled due to the pandemic.

"He got more from his personal message than seeing Santa in person.

The look on his face was priceless, he looked at the video and then at me repeatedly in astonishment."



Over the 6 months, we also ran a weekly online support group for siblings of young people with SEND using activity packs to remove barriers to engagement and support accessibility of resources needed to take part at home. We also enhanced our ability to support the increasing SEMH issues of our young people and their families by upskilling 5 staff with training from the Apple Tree Centre. With the training, these staff were able to deliver 40 online counselling sessions during the project using a set of core outcome measures which look at young people's wellbeing.

Success Story

The counselling sessions helped a 13 year old male diagnosed with autism to reduce distressing feelings of unhappiness and nervousness. Another female aged 12 with autism went from declining to answer any questions to opening up, reducing frequency of self-harm and increasing her ability to cope when things went wrong.

CLIFTON LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

During the project we regained and maintained contact with our service users through in-centre sessions to support small groups of young people with their social, emotional and mental health. We also adapted our offer to include delivering activity packs to young people during the 3rd lockdown when government guidance restricted our in-centre provision. Our approach was to provide our community with support which they were telling us they needed, such as; Christmas preparation sessions, an outdoor Covid-safe grotto with a local man as Santa, constructing new goal posts in local areas, a food-bank and further ongoing support from volunteers and staff.

Success Stories

An 8 year old boy's dad recently had surgery, leaving his mobility limited and visits to dad being often indoors and mainly watching TV. By providing our packs, they had something to do together whilst in the house and were able to create some healthy competition with the games included in the pack. Dad felt he could not venture far on his own due to mobility issues, but had a natural interest in gardening and was happy he now had activities to do with his son, especially that his son wanted to take part in this with him as well as an activity when planting the seeds.

A family with 4 boys aged 8-12 received our activity packs. They used to attend our youth sessions pre-covid and we had also previously supported mum with housing issues. On a home visit, it was clear there weren't many toys and games in the home. We knew we were unable to have face to face sessions, but wanted to ensure we kept in touch with these boys and provide them with something productive and fun to do. When delivering the packs, the mum would repeatedly ask us when the 'club' (youth sessions) would restart as the boys had been asking for them and missed being able to see their peers.



"The young people clearly want to return to normal life in school, family and social life."

ROTHERHAM UNITED COMMUNITY SPORTS TRUST

The project helped us to open our new Youth, Community and Employability Hub at New York Stadium in late 2020 as a safe space for young people to interact with peers/staff and take part in our mental health resilience programme which we delivered both face to face and online. The sessions extended access for participants who previously attended RUCST programs and had been struggling mentally to cope with lockdown and also enabled us to introduce new young people who were identified by local academies as struggling similarly, to our space.



"The hub is a great opportunity for me to clear my head and think of ways to help overcome these challenging times."

Many on arrival to sessions commented that the activities were a life line for them at a very difficult time when they were not able to meet with friends and were very much missing physical interaction from school and other activities that they would normally engage with. It was clear that young people were in need of a safe space to express their feelings and gain support from trained youth workers and their peers. Each week, young people looked at themes around Health & Well Being ranging from healthy eating through to sleep, water intake and relaxation techniques to learn new coping strategies for the pandemic and develop their independent life plans.



Success Story

During the project, RUCST staff and local Police/ Fire services built relationships with a group of Roma young people, some of whom were on ASBOs. As a result of conversations, activities and opportunities for young people to influence and plan social action, the group planned a Community Litter Pick and Roma Day Football tournament to build raise awareness for other young people and build community cohesion. All young people also benefitted from increased confidence and knowledge around mental health, safe sex, ASBOs and pledged to be a positive role model in their local community.

ENDEAVOUR

During the project we were able to reach families and groups in Rotherham and support them to access outdoor activities delivered by skilled staff under strict social distancing and transport guidelines, as well as, mobilising support to meet their short term needs.

As an organisation, we were relatively new to delivering in Rotherham and by working with our fellow consortium members, we were able to build strong connections, raise awareness of our service and link in with new referrals streams such as Social Prescribing and the wider Voluntary and Community Sector.

"I felt on top of things."

Throughout the project, we discovered that families were largely hesitant or unable to access face to face services or due to fear of the pandemic or the impact it had on them. In response to these challenges, we diversified our offer to include alternative support utilising our minibuses and youth workers to support vulnerable people to go shopping or access appointments, offer light relief to parents or help young people access further education.

Despite the challenging weather over the Christmas period, we managed to support families of children with SEND to access the outdoors, enhancing and adding to the support they had already been receiving from Rotherham Parent Carers Forum. As we entered 2021, we resumed our outdoor activities and thanks to a flexible approach to delivery and newly formed relationships with RCPF, Rush House, RUCST, Jade Youth Club and Rotherham Opportunities College, we had supported over 60 individuals to access outdoor activities safely by the end of the project. Our participant feedback surveys report that all participants felt the experience working with Endeavour had helped increase their physical and mental wellbeing.



"The last time I exercised was before lockdown - this activity taught me how unfit I am and what fun outdoor activities are."

SWINTON LOCK ACTIVITY CENTRE

Our boat trips provided a unique and shared experience for families to engage with the outdoors in a positive and Covid-safe safe way. These families were often struggling mentally and financially to cope with the pandemic and many commented that this was one of the few positive structured activities they could engage with during the period, as everything else had been cancelled. Each trip included a youth worker to facilitate conversations and enable families to speak about concerns and worries they may have and access further support.



Around half way through the project, we were prevented from continuing our boat trip offer following guidance changes and restrictions by the Government and the Canal and River Trust. At the time, we were experiencing an increase in self-referrals and need crisis intervention for families with acute difficulties. We quickly diversified our offer in keeping with the project aims and focussed our attention on families needs at home. As lockdown restrictions prevented us bringing families into our centre, we decided to develop and deliver a free 'family night in' package including food, recipes, activities and old-fashioned board games to families which we had identified as in need.



Success Story

We partnered with fellow consortium member Rotherham Parent Carers Forum to extend our support to families of children with SEND. One family in particular engaged with our a "family night in" package which gave them something to do together and a much-needed break from their Covid worries. Whilst supporting the family, it became clear that the mother had been suffering largely with anxiety related to the pandemic. We continued contact and support for the mother around her anxieties and mental health resulting in access to other activities to support her needs.

"It gave us a much needed distraction from Covid-19 and really brought the family closer together during these difficult times."

YMCA WHITE ROSE

This project enabled YMCA White Rose to explore with young people what a return to centre-based working might look like and continue supporting them throughout a period where our centre (YMCA MyPlace) which many young people call “my home” was closed to the public.

Increased detached youth work enabled us to connect with a vast amount of young people; providing packs containing PPE items, activities, snacks and YMCA Rotherham wellbeing & activity booklets which promote positive well-being and provide tips on how to manage life within the pandemic. All of our young people, families and the wider community benefitted from information and advice about Covid-19, which was especially beneficial for those from Roma Communities who were often fearful or not fully aware of the latest developments of Covid-19.



Young people voiced their concerns and frustrations to us, which were mainly related to covid rules, dissatisfaction with school/college and restrictions on seeing friends/family outside of school. However, increased time with youth workers where they could build trust and positive relationships helped to open up engagement opportunities and increase access to support. For example, we connected as many as 40 young people with mental health and wellbeing support from YMCA and other VCS services such as Rotherham & Barnsley Mind, supported young people to access sexual health hardware sessions, provided access to equipment / resources to reduce the impact of rough sleeping and made referrals to necessary services for those with welfare concerns.



“Even if I can go back to the centre, it won’t be the same.”

YWCA YORKSHIRE

Throughout the project, we were able to extend our Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) programme to vulnerable women/young parents and enhance our parenting support for residents of our supported accommodation complex at Fleming Gardens.

We delivered mostly online, but also face to face on a 1-1 basis for those who felt uneasy about joining an online session. We also conducted safe and well visits for highly vulnerable women and girls such as those risk of sexual and criminal exploitation.

Success Story

Whilst supporting a vulnerable young parent, we discovered concerns around poor mental health and the impact this had on her ability to meet her baby's needs. We completed a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) with her via 1-1 sessions covering areas such as; triggers, early warning signs, crisis and post crisis planning. As a result, she has been able to identify situations which led to isolation, disengagement from services and negative routines, as well as, what she looks and feels like when she is feeling positive about herself. Since developing the tools to end these negative cycles, she has already seen positive changes such as; recognising her early warning signs, managing emotions better and being proactive in asking for support rather than disengaging from professionals/family. She has also been using her booklet from the programme as a visual aid to remind her of things she can do daily to lift her mood and prevent further negative impact. Following our support, her case has been de-escalated from a Child Protection Plan to Child in Need and despite experiencing early warning signs, she has managed to maintain a health routine for herself and her baby.



"I am now aware what I am like when I'm not well and things I can do to help me change how I feel. I am going to make more of an effort to try and get out more."

LEARNING

- The multi-layered response required to respond to the **Covid-19** pandemic has taken a significant **financial toll** and in some cases, begun to decimate financial reserves of Voluntary and Community sector organisations
- Attracting funds into the borough through a **joint-consortia approach** allows multiple organisations to **maximise on resources**, supports **VCS sustainability** and encourages partnership working, cohesion leading to more impactful outcomes.
- Despite this project providing 6-months of increased delivery to address a **climbing demand** for services, this is **continuing trend** as evidenced by a continually **increasing prevalence of self referrals and individual / family crisis**
- When **organisations work together** in partnership towards a common goal and welcome opportunities to **pool skills, resources and expertise**, they are more likely to be able to **intervene earlier** and **prevent escalation** of local issues
- A **collapse of funding** pipeline for VCS organisations could lead to **closures** or **reduction in services**. Funding continuity is essential for sector to thrive and to prevent **imbalanced dependency** on the local authority and statutory services
- Positive places to go and things to do for young people are available in certain areas of Rotherham but not consistently across all localities in the borough
- Sharp and drastic **changes to government** guidance can easily **undermine efforts and investments** from organisations to **prepare services** and **support transitions**.
- **Covid-19** messaging had not effectively reached all communities, with some **young people** only **recognising** its **reality/seriousness** as late as **December 2020**
- The VCS has a **major strength** in its **connection to vulnerable communities** and **ability to be agile and flexible** to meet the needs of these communities
- Our cohort comprised **over 40% BAME** and **17% children / young people with SEND** which is **disproportionate to the population** and **further demonstrates health inequalities**
- Understanding and navigating **referral pathways** during the pandemic has been **challenging and time consuming**

COVID-19

"Fake news and negativity around the Covid-19 vaccination programme is louder in some communities than the positives. We need to manage this reluctance and give more assurance."

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organisations needs to be connected / individuals connected to those organisations
- We need to **build partnerships in meaningful ways** and **continue working collaboratively** (communities, voluntary and community organisations, local authority and infrastructure organisations) to **intervene earlier, prevent escalation and develop wider strategy** which is **rooted in local intelligence**
- **Young people need further support** to ease their **transition back to centre-based services** in terms of managing mixed feelings and fear of disappointment that their usual service may be unfamiliar regarding rules, group sizes, activity limitations etc
- We can **utilise safe and well visits** and the **distribution** of food parcels and activity packs to **access people** to **other information and services**. (this is particularly important for those who are digitally excluded)
- **Work in partnership with and proactively commission the VCS** to contribute to delivery of borough-wide aims, maximise on its direct connection with communities, its strengths and specialisms and support the sustainability of essential VCS services
- **Ensure** that communications, particularly around Covid-19, services and support available to Rotherham residents are **accessible to all communities** and that they **respect the diversity of the borough** regarding language and cultural sensitivities
- **Continue to share learning** widely so that it continues to inform practice (including the voice of service users / case studies) and so that we as **organisations are able to continue acting both responsively and responsibly**
- Physical/mental well-being, social isolation, loneliness, disadvantage, digital exclusion and inequality will be at foreground going forward alongside the poverty agenda. We need to **understand the prevalence of these and identify service gaps**

DEMAND

"We were reluctant to promote our service too much in fear of being overwhelmed with demand without enough funding to provide the service."

- We need to **understand the needs** of our **most disadvantaged** communities and ensure they have **equal access** to **needs appropriate and culturally sensitive opportunities**

- Digital exclusion is an **ongoing issue** and **organisations need to be creative** in the way they deliver activities to **accommodate when access to technology is not possible**.



CONCLUSION

The 6-month project funded by the National Lottery CCSF supported the CYPF Consortium in the delivery of its strategic aims and enabled further development of its ability to bring likeminded organisations together to collectively and flexibly respond to the needs of a diverse range of organisations and the children, young people and families in Rotherham which these organisations support.

Following on from the project, the CYPF Consortium is committed to continuing to provide a platform for its member organisations to come together and develop cost-effective solutions to real local problems. We will continue to identify funding and partnership working opportunities to bring about innovative projects and ensure that we continue to provide the best possible VCS contribution to improving outcomes for children, young people and families in Rotherham.

Our thanks go to all those involved in making the project such a success;

Angela Hicks (Swinton Lock), Annette Uttley (VAR), Carole Foster (RUCST), Duncan Pearse (Endeavour), Ed Thatcher (Endeavour), Ellie Wilson (RUSH), George Boylin (VAR), Helen Littlewood (CLP), Janet Milnes (VAR), Jayne Fitzgerald (RPCF), Jayne Senior (Swinton Lock), Joanna Jones (GROW), Katalin Nixon (GROW), Kay Ellis (RPCF), Kayleigh Harrison (RPCF), Lisa Rachieru (Rush), Louise Graham (RUSH), Michelle Corker (RUSH), Nicola Harding (YMCA), Rachael Wilson (RUSH), Rachel Wilkins (RUSH), Shafiq Hussain (VAR), Sophie Wright (CLP), Susan Phillips (YWCA), Teresa Brocklehurst (VAR), Tracy Gollins (YWCA), Virginia Hoskings (Swinton Lock) and Zanib Rasool (RUCST)

Also a special thanks to our funders and funding officers for the project; National Lottery (Kate Parkes / Sukhy Gill) and HM Government.



More Information:

Visit cypfconsortium.org.uk

Address:

The Spectrum, Coke Hill, Rotherham S60 2HX

Contact Us:

01709 829821 / 07731021393

ashley.leggott@cypfconsortium.org.uk