

Small Grants Fund 2021/22 Impact Report

Background

Through our Small Grants Fund, Cloudesley makes grants of up to £10,000 over a twelve-month period. The Small Grants Fund is one of a number of funding streams under our Health Grants Programme 2019-24 which aims to reduce health inequalities in Islington by improving health outcomes for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

The 2021/22 round launched in December 2020, with projects starting in March 2021. The round was open to all and promoted through Cloudesley’s website, Voluntary Action Islington’s news bulletins and funding brochure, and the London Borough of Islington’s electronic notice board and periodic news bulletin.



Home-Start Camden & Islington

Applicants had to demonstrate how their project would bring about a significant health impact for their client group which complemented statutory provision, and the Fund prioritised funding for work with people who have been disproportionately affected by the impact of COVID-19, including Black and minority ethnic communities, Disabled people, and people living in poverty.

Applications

Applications	
Applications received	24
Amount requested	£243,990
Organisations not in receipt of current funding	18
Organisations new to Cloudesley	15

Grants	
Grants awarded	14
Amount awarded	£139,500
Organisations not in receipt of current funding	11
Organisations new to Cloudesley	9

58% of applications were successful

64% of grants were awarded to organisations that were new to Cloudesley

Grants

Organisation	Project Description	Grant Amount
Mencap Islington	Sensory wild garden to be created and maintained by local people with a learning disability	£10,000
The Elfrida Society	Health advocacy for people with learning disabilities	£10,000
Islington People's Rights	Specialist welfare benefits and debt advice, casework and representation for families with children with disabilities or long-term health conditions	£10,000
Islington Mind	Support for vulnerable individuals impacted by the pandemic, combining emotional support with assistance in a range of practical issues.	£10,000
Single Homeless Project	Trauma-informed therapy interventions for people experiencing multiple disadvantages in Islington.	£10,000
Manor Gardens Welfare Trust	To provide social interaction for people who are digitally excluded through telephone conferencing and outdoor activities	£10,000
Healthy Generations	Programme of exercise and wellbeing classes for older people, reaching more isolated groups disproportionately affected by Covid-19.	£10,000
Mer-IT Digital	Computers for disadvantaged residents in Islington	£10,000
Life Chances in Partnership with AFLAH	Reducing Health Inequalities for Ethiopian and Somali communities in Islington	£10,000
Healthwatch Islington	Digital inclusion programme to support more residents to get online.	£10,000
One True Voice	Covid Fight Back! project to support women to address issues caused by the pandemic and to build the future resilience of the Somali community by promoting the benefits of the Covid-19 vaccine	£10,000
ALAG/Autism Hub Islington	To expand the Autism Hub offer in response to Covid-19, providing specialist counselling, peer support, and workshops around wellbeing, employment support and community safety.	£10,000
Home-Start Camden and Islington	To grow referrals and expand the volunteer cohort, in order to provide emotional and practical support to disadvantaged parents.	£9,500
Prospex	A mental health counselling service for vulnerable young people and their families delivered in conjunction with Indigo	£10,000

Grants Support Fund

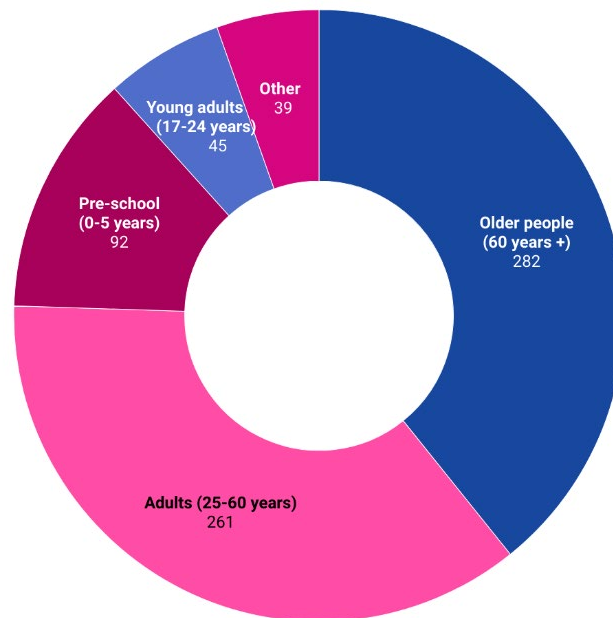
Three organisations also received additional grants from the Grants Support Fund to improve their internal processes and monitoring practice.

Organisation	Project Description	Grant Amount
ALAG	Towards the inputting of data onto the new case management system and monitoring system	£2,000
One True Voice	For the FSI monitoring and evaluation support package	£2,050
Life Chances/AFLAH	For the FSI monitoring and evaluation support package	£2,050

Beneficiaries

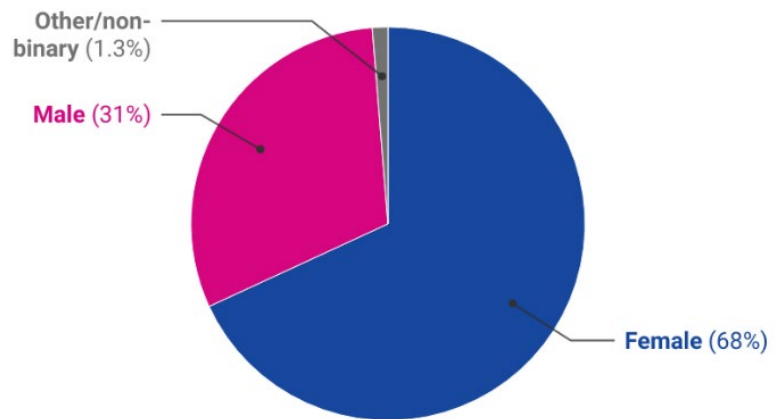
The Small Grants Fund reached **830** individuals overall. As can be seen below, the Fund disproportionately reached older people, but this is understandable as older people were significantly affected by the pandemic, which was the Fund's focus. The Fund reached 118 young people under the age of 17, a demographic not currently reached by Cloudesley's other funding. Beneficiaries were also predominantly female, a trend seen across Cloudesley's Funds.

Age



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Gender



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Ethnicity		Number
Asian	Bangladeshi	29
	Chinese	1
	Indian	3
	Pakistani	8
	Any other Asian background	27
Black	Black African	99
	Black Caribbean	30
	Any other Black background	48
Mixed	Asian and White	4
	Black African and White	4
	Black Caribbean and White	16
	Any other Mixed background	11
White	White British	176
	White Irish	11
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
	Any other White background	66
Other	Arab	5
	Any other ethnic group	51
	Undisclosed	9

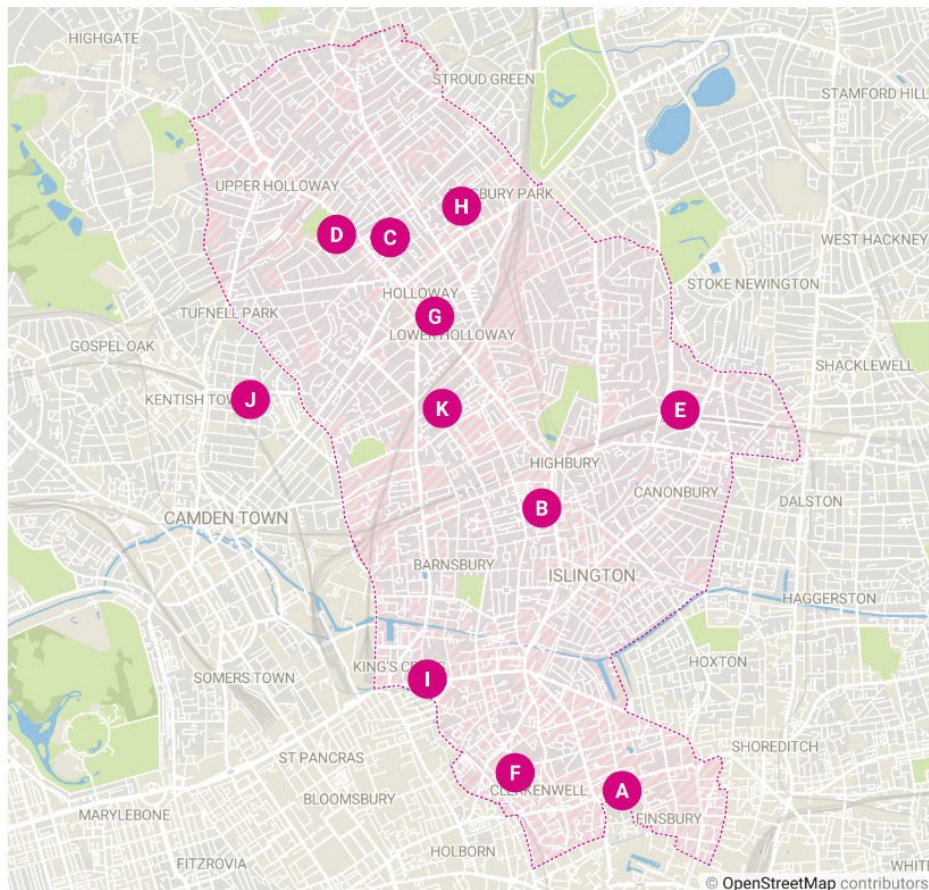
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A note on ethnicity figures: some groups only reported on the wider umbrella categories. Where this is the case, their figures were added to the “Any other X background” section. There thus may be some individuals classed in these sections that actually fit into the other categories.

Location

The table below shows where each organisation is located. It is worth highlighting that this does not necessarily reflect where they are working. For instance, Single Homeless Project and Islington Mind have multiple locations across the borough; whilst Home-Start primarily deliver services in their users' homes or local neighbourhoods. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the work has taken place remotely.

Small Grants Fund 2021



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| A Mencap Islington | B The Elfrida Society | C Manor Gardens Welfare Trust/Islington People's Rights/Healthy Generations/Healthwatch Islington |
| D Islington Mind | E Single Homeless Project | F Mer-IT Digital |
| G Life Chances/AFLAH | H One True Voice | I ALAG/Autism Hub Islington |
| J Home-Start Camden and Islington | K Prospex | |

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Outcomes

Each individual project has unique outcomes, making overall measurement a challenge. However, given the Fund's focus on supporting health outcomes in the context of a pandemic, there are a few common themes that span a number of projects. These outcomes are summarised below.

- **Improved mental health and wellbeing**

This was a stated outcome for eight of the 14 organisations. Feedback and outcome measurement demonstrated that clients and participants of these projects improved their mental health and wellbeing. Some observed that their participants were coping better, whilst others highlighted a reduced risk of hospitalization and crisis.

- **Increased social connections and networks**

This was a stated outcome for nine of the 14 organisations. Organisations offered isolated and vulnerable residents lasting social contact, supported their clients to gain improved social networks, helped participants feel more connected to others, and created a safe space for peer support and social interaction.

- **Improved access to services**

This was a stated outcome for ten of the 14 organisations. Organisations worked directly with clients to help them access health services, as well as signposting them and increasing their awareness of available services. They connected residents to local community services and resources, and helped them navigate systems in accessing relevant health and social care services.

- **Improved financial security**

This was a stated outcome for five of the 14 organisations. Organisations supported residents to access grants, access welfare benefits such as PIP and Universal Credit, tackle debt, and look for work.



Manor Gardens Welfare Trust

Learning

The funded groups also reported on the key learning points from the projects, as well as the challenges they faced. A lot of the learning was around adapting to a post-Covid environment. This included learning how to communicate the changes in delivery clearly and how to run activities in a Covid-safe manner. A significant learning for some groups was around hybrid delivery – many groups found that some users were desperate to return to face-to-face activities, whilst others were still fearful or unable to do so, and required the continuation of online activities. This meant that a lot of groups had to find a way to deliver their activities in a hybrid manner. Other key learning points included managing expectations of users when a service is funded for a limited time and may end, the need for continuous promotion and engagement, the benefits of partnership working and the importance of trust.

Challenges experienced by the groups were:

- **Funding** – many groups brought up funding as a key challenge. A lack of secure, long-term funding and funding for core costs were highlighted, and some groups felt that they were too small and didn't fit in to the funding landscape.
- **Increased demand and capacity issues** – many of the groups have seen an increase in demand for their services, as well as increase in the complexity of cases. This has resulted in their capacity being stretched and waiting lists being closed
- **Staff wellbeing and retention** – many highlighted that the increases in demand and capacity pressures were leading to wellbeing issues among staff. This in turn led to retention and turnover issues.
- **Volunteer recruitment and retention** – in addition to issues with retaining staff, groups found themselves with lower levels of volunteers than usual. Many of their existing volunteers are stepping back and they are finding it difficult to recruit new volunteers.

Conclusion

Overall, the Fund achieved its aim of providing support for a cross-section of the community that was acutely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This included digital inclusion support, support with mental health, improving social connections for people isolated during lockdown and addressing health inequalities. The groups were largely able to achieve strong outcomes for their



Mer-IT

clients given the short-term nature of the work.

The nature of our monitoring practice makes the data hard to synthesise, which limits the extent of the reporting. However, this practice also offers the groups flexibility. Many groups were limited in their ability to report on outcomes and collect demographic data, which indicates that impact measurement is limited amongst these smaller groups.

The challenges faced were largely the same across most of the groups, and paint a picture of a sector facing higher demand than it can cope with, taking a significant toll on staff and volunteers and thus causing further capacity issues.