

VCSE led Covid Outbreak  
Management Fund (COMF)  
Achievements

Impact

Legacy

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Together

The Alliance was a partnership of five voluntary sector organisations managed by DeVA\*



Plymouth & Devon Racial Equality Council



Voluntary Action in Mid Devon

(\*Devon Voluntary Action)

The Alliance supported over 37,000 people across Devon...

# The Achievements

Around 100 people secured over £325,000 in additional benefit payments

Rough sleepers accessed over 500 nights of emergency winter accommodation in Torridge

1100 people were supported through wellbeing calls, specialist victim support help, Covid related support for sight and hearing-impaired people.

33,900 people were supported to self-isolate through grant funded voluntary groups and social enterprises

Over 100 people were helped to use the internet through a network of 20 digital befrienders

93 people accessed a programme of free mental health counselling – support they would not have had if they were required to pay

Over 1000 ethnically diverse people were supported with Covid testing

220 ethnically diverse people who were impacted by racism relating to Covid were directly supported

100 families with young children were supported in Exeter

Funding for 78  
community groups  
with £300 grants  
totalling £23,400



Tumbly Hill Day Centre  
Kingsbridge Recovery Library and Drop-in.

Large grants for 9  
organisations and  
social enterprises  
totalling £165,000



A Digital Befriender Client

Funding 9 projects  
focussed on diversity and  
equalities communities  
totalling £76k



Chudleigh Against Racism (CAR)

Development support to 14 organisations and enterprises to build their capability and capacity

*“ The most positive outcome of the project was that we have been able to engage with 31 young people who were in desperate need of community engagement”* Pelican Project, Exeter

Commissioning 4 established equalities and diversity groups to deliver targeted support for key vulnerable groups

*“ There are already clear signs that the children are increasing in confidence. This is especially marked in the girls who initially tended to sit back and watch the boys talk”*  
PDREC

Recruiting additional advice staff to meet increased demand for Citizens Advice help

*“It was good to have someone to talk to because we were both feeling so awful and really struggling to think straight - so having someone to make suggestions for support was really useful”*  
Couple with Covid in Mid Devon

# The Impact

Overall the Alliance helped people:



Improve their resilience



Reduce their sense of isolation and loneliness



Boost their confidence



Develop skills



Build community connections



Access services

# The learning

The support given to individuals and groups was hugely important but what was the broader learning from the Alliance's work – for Devon and other areas?



A collaborative approach of this sort needs trust on all sides.



The commissioner, the lead partner and delivery partners need to accept some degree of risk for a programme with such a short set up and delivery timescale.



Good programme and grant management can be light touch where there is trust and real partnership.



Getting this amount of funding out quickly to where it is needed most needs to build on existing relationships and capacity.



Grant funding can be delivered effectively and efficiently by organisations with close links to their “own” communities, especially if they share information and cooperate.



Short application window can make it difficult to get grant applications from small groups and those less well connected – risk of being dominated by “usual suspects”

# The Legacy

The Alliance project may have been very short term, but it has left a valuable legacy

- Strengthened relationships and trust between voluntary organisations
- A more confident and collaborative voluntary sector
- Greater public sector confidence in the voluntary sector's collective ability to deliver
- A foundation for active engagement with the Integrated Care System through the emerging VCSE Assembly
- A model of devolved, effective and efficient grant making involving live data sharing amongst delivery partners
- An agile model for rapidly deploying support and services for the most vulnerable people which can be used in future crises and emergencies.



# The learning

continues...



Local voluntary sector support organisations are key to reaching groups working with people and communities in need.



Reaching people with protected characteristics requires the full engagement of organisations and networks which know and understand these communities.



Participation in grant assessment panels gave valuable insight into the breadth and depth of the voluntary sector's work – especially enlightening for the public sector



It is crucial to have an experienced, connected and respected organisation “holding” the partnership



And it is important to have flexible, engaged and trusting commissioners and senior voluntary sector advocates in the “system”.

“

*Sharing experiences with other practitioners in the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) network was really valuable. There are strategic meetings, but they hadn't really worked in this very practical way before.....*

”

# The Legacy

continues...

- An online platform for connecting people to their community and promoting social action (Devon Connect).

- A greater recognition that voluntary sector infrastructure is important

- Further funding through COMF 2 will ensure we can build upon all that has been achieved

- There is now clear evidence of need and impact in key areas – such as free counselling, digital inclusion and how to support isolated diversity and equalities communities.

“ *The COMF project enabled our voluntary and community sector partners to do the things they do better than any other sector. They galvanised and coordinated community activity and social action at a street level that connected people and communities to make sure no one was missed* ”

[Darin Halifax Integrated Care System for Devon (ICSD)]

# The Legacy in practice

Additional Funding building on previous work supporting

- resilience of vulnerable individuals through Equality and Diversity Partnership Projects
- Bolster the resilience and sustainability of Local VCSE sector
- Gathering insight & intelligence

# The Legacy in practice

## Devon, Plymouth & Torbay VCSE Assembly Development Programme

- £90K investment
- Establishment of Assembly Structure Design Group
- Two Hubs – Health Equity and Food Insecurity
- 3 VCSE Assembly Places on One Devon Integrated Care Service Partnership Board
- Active VCSE Collaboration in co-design

# The Legacy in practice

The sector continues to work together addressing challenges in our communities

● Cost of Living Crisis

● Winter Pressures

● Food Insecurity & Poverty

● Fuel Energy & Housing

● Money & Debt

● Skills & Employment