

Wiltshire Community Foundation Covid-19 Response Report



Wiltshire
Community
Foundation

Foreword

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have impacted everyone's lives. Loved ones have been lost, loneliness and isolation have increased, domestic violence has soared, jobs have been cut and education stunted.

No one has been unscathed, but some communities have undoubtedly suffered more than others. A wide range of evidence shows that deprived communities are being disproportionately affected in terms of exposure to the virus and the economic and social impacts arising from the pandemic as well as the measures introduced to contain it.

The issues faced by people in Wiltshire and Swindon mirror those affecting people nationally and globally. Research has highlighted Swindon is among the 40% of local authorities with the highest level of vulnerability. While Warminster, Melksham, Salisbury and Corsham are identified as more vulnerable to the impacts of Covid-19 than the regional and national averages.

Since launching the Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Appeal in March 2020, we have raised over £1.2 million. New funding has been secured via partnerships with UK Community Foundations, the National Emergencies Trust and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. We have received donations from the sale of the Deepest Wiltshire book, funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and grants from charitable trusts, including The Underwood Trust and Zurich Community Trust. Local businesses including Wessex Water, SGN, Thames Water and Nationwide, via its Oakfield development, have given generously as well as hundreds of individuals, many of whom donated multiple times. We have been humbled and inspired by the generosity of our supporters. Thank you all so much!

By working in partnership with the local voluntary sector and local authorities, we have been able to direct these funds to the areas of greatest need, supporting the most vulnerable in our communities. By 31 December 2020, we had awarded £1,157,648 to 265 community projects, helping a total of 154,829 local people.

Each project illustrates that despite the sadness, anxiety and uncertainty, there has been an inspirational uprising of community support. We have seen new community groups emerge, responding to local need and working alongside well-established groups who have shown great resilience, innovation and flexibility in order to deliver their services.

We hope this report gives you an insight into our response to the Covid-19 pandemic, its impact on people and communities in Wiltshire and Swindon and the multitude of community groups and organisations that have been working so hard to support them.

As the pandemic continues to take its toll, our support for our local charities and groups is needed more than ever. In a recent survey^[1] focussed on the impact of Covid-19 in Wiltshire, 62% of charities and community groups reported declining income due to cancelled fundraising events and loss of retail sales. That is why our Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Appeal will continue throughout 2021 and as a Foundation, we have committed to investing £10 million in local communities by 2025. This support will not only enable our voluntary and charity sector to respond to the ongoing crisis but build back stronger than ever.

We can only do this with your continued support.



Vicky Hickey
Joint Chief Executive



Fiona Oliver
Joint Chief Executive

Our Covid-19 response

Philanthropy

On March 23 2020 Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced widespread lockdown measures to the nation. Three days before this, acknowledging the vital role the voluntary and community sector would play in supporting people through this crisis, we launched the Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Appeal.

The appeal was generously supported by businesses, trusts, organisations and individuals who had previously donated to the Foundation. Funds were also raised from the general public following widespread media coverage of the appeal across print, broadcast and digital media.

Additional funding came from the National Emergencies Trust Appeal (NET), who chose the UK network of Community Foundations as its partner to deliver emergency funding to local communities due to our unparalleled reach and knowledge of grassroots charities and groups.

By the end of December 2020 over £1.2 million had been raised to support our Covid-19 response.

Grant-making

Alongside our work to raise funds quickly, we acknowledged that the speed of distributing that money to the charities and groups delivering emergency services for vulnerable people was crucial. We streamlined our grant-making processes, reducing the burden on applicants by asking them to complete a simple survey. Each applicant was then contacted to discuss their applications in more detail with an experienced grant assessor. Grant decisions were made overnight by a group of trustees and we introduced daily payment runs to ensure grants got to where they were needed as soon as possible.

In distributing our funding we had three objectives:

- Ensuring charities and groups could respond to the immediate and increasing emergency need caused by the pandemic
- Ensuring charities and groups could adapt to enable them to deliver their services remotely as well as safely once they were able to reopen
- Ensuring the sustainability of the voluntary and charity sector following the significant loss of income due to fundraising and income-generating services being curtailed

20 March

Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Appeal launched

23 March

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announces lockdown

24 March

Coronavirus Response and Recovery Grants Programme established

30 March

First grants awarded

Our response timeline

Our response in numbers

As of 31 December 2020, our Coronavirus Response and Recovery Grants programme has distributed £1,157,648 in grants to charities and voluntary groups across Wiltshire and Swindon.

Our grants provided:

-  Emergency food, essential items and assistance for vulnerable people
-  Support for isolated, disabled, vulnerable and older people to stay connected
-  Advice and support for vulnerable or disadvantaged young people
-  Counselling and support for those with mental health issues or serious and long-term illness
-  Support and advice for people in financial hardship and challenging circumstances

£1,157,648

Total amount awarded

154,829

Total number of beneficiaries

265 **199**

Total number of grants

Number of different groups funded

Category of primary beneficiary	Number of projects	Number of beneficiaries
Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME)	14	3,484
Children & Young People	56	28,298
Families	10	3,091
Older people	37	22,998
People with disabilities	31	6,123
People with health issues	19	23,096
People living in poverty or facing disadvantage	69	57,276
People with mental health issues	23	9,236
Victims of domestic abuse	6	1,227

Grants awarded by area



Wider support for the voluntary and community sector

In addition to financial grants, we have worked to ensure the voluntary and community sector still has access to training and advice as well as networking events to continue to share resources, ideas and best practice throughout lockdown.

Our one-to-one advice sessions have focussed on funding and governance, particularly for the new Covid-19 support groups many of whom have not had experience in this area previously. We established a dedicated Coronavirus Support section on our website. Updated weekly, it features details of local and national advice and resources as well as signposting to other funding opportunities currently available. This information is regularly disseminated through our social media channels and monthly e-newsletter.

Our training courses and workshops have been adapted and moved online. In response to a questionnaire sent out to our grant recipients new workshops have been added. These include motivating a remote workforce as well as monthly Meet the Funder sessions with organisations including Lloyds Bank, National Lottery Community Fund and Wiltshire Council Area Boards. In partnership with Wiltshire Council’s Public Health Team and Wiltshire Village Halls Association, we ran a well-attended session on re-starting community groups and activities safely as well as sharing resources from it on our website.

To respond to the increased awareness of the impact of Covid-19 on people’s loneliness and isolation, we adapted our Loneliness Uncovered programme to deliver online networking sessions. Over the last few months, around 100 charities and community groups have participated in our ‘Connecting People during Covid’ workshops to share, learn and network. Recognising the growing appetite for opportunities to share experiences, in July we convened a group of voluntary sector youth organisations from across Wiltshire and Swindon to understand the impacts of Covid-19 on young people. Six months on, the now regular Youth Work Network is a valued source of peer support, networking and learning.

As the increasing impact of the pandemic became apparent, new collaborative ways of working have been forged and existing relationships between the voluntary sector, local authorities, health and police partners have been strengthened. Uniquely placed, our input and ‘live’ insight, from the array of groups starting new activities or innovating and adapting, means we are able to provide invaluable real-time information to help shape partnership activities and local responses.

“Wiltshire Community Foundation has enabled Wiltshire Council to better understand the impact of the pandemic on the youth sector in Wiltshire. In addition to providing insight directly to the council, WCF has been able to comprehensively capture impacts faced by a variety of youth focused community organisations via its informal youth network. This insight has been invaluable to Wiltshire Council and the network has proven an effective method of capturing the views of community youth organisations quickly and efficiently.”

Jess Gibbons, Director Communities and Neighbourhoods

Strategically, as the voluntary sector partner on Wiltshire’s Coordinating Recovery Group Partnership, our Research and Engagement Manager is integral to county-wide debate, highlighting the breadth and diversity of our local community and voluntary sector groups and organisation’s responses, but also the challenges and potential threats to sustainability. By supporting these networks, in addition to enabling and strengthening voluntary sector connections and collaborations, we are a valued independent advocate using our insights to speak up, spark debate and raise the profile of live issues throughout the pandemic.

Emergency response

Urgent food, essential items and assistance for vulnerable people

Due to the pandemic, many people have needed to shield or isolate and as a result have been unable to leave their homes to access food, medicines and activities to support their physical and mental well-being. Across Wiltshire and Swindon volunteer groups quickly formed to offer a range of support to their communities. Groups including Devizes Covid19 Support, Warminster Action Group, RWB COVID-19 Mutual Aid Group and Wilton COVID19 Community Response Volunteers, all received funding from our Coronavirus Response programme.

Pewsey Community Coronavirus Assistance

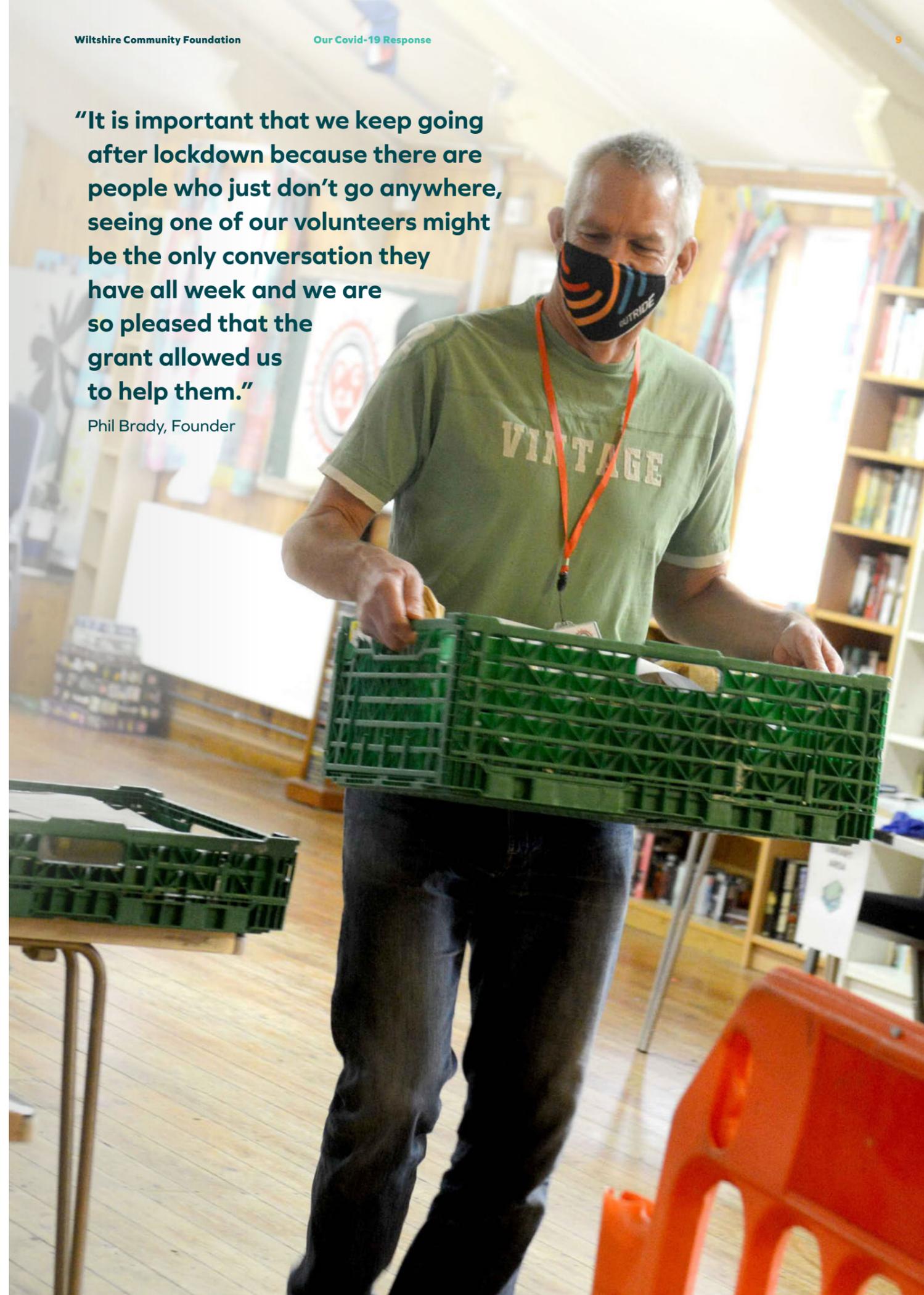
Pewsey Community Coronavirus Assistance Founder Phil Brady decided he needed to help the community at the start of the first lockdown. "I designed a flyer with my mobile number, and straight away after it went out I began getting so many calls, it was unbelievable. Once we set up a proper call centre, we organised a foodbank, started delivering hot food, collecting prescriptions, and doing shopping for all our 350 VIPs - we called them Vulnerable Isolated Persons. The grant was invaluable in helping us to get up and running."

As the lockdown continued, and the depth and experience of volunteers increased, the group has been able to offer more services. It capitalised on the skills of furloughed advice workers to set up its own advice line, organised phone buddies, launched toy and book libraries and even a community market and café in between lockdowns.

"We've had a fantastic response from people who have become volunteers, they have all kinds of different experience and ages, from 21 to over 70," said Phil. "It is important that we keep going after lockdown because there are people who just don't go anywhere, seeing one of our volunteers might be the only conversation they have all week and we are so pleased that the grant allowed us to help them."

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Phil Brady, Founder



Loneliness and isolation

Support for isolated, disabled, vulnerable and older people to stay connected

When older and vulnerable people were asked to shield, and clubs and organisations ceased meetings, many were left at risk of isolation, loneliness and increased mental health issues. Funding from the Coronavirus Response programme has enabled groups and organisations to adapt their services and activities to ensure that those most in need still received vital care and support. Among those funded through the programme are Alzheimer's Support, Age Friendly Melksham, Care Home Volunteers and Bourne Valley Day Centre.

Arts Together

Arts Together received a grant to adapt its services and run remote and online classes as well as establish a phone befriending group for its 70 members.

Arts Together Manager Karolyne Fudge-Malik said: "Most of our members are in their eighties and nineties and a lot of them have come to us through mental health teams and they are the ones who are really suffering. We have set up telephone networks and pen pals and volunteers and the members themselves phone each other but we have a list of those who are particularly vulnerable and we keep an eye on them all the time.

"Our weekly postal projects have been a valuable lifeline for members who are alone. One member said of the postal projects: "I sat in my chair and didn't move for two days. I felt so fed up I just didn't move. Then I realised I couldn't go on like this. My Arts Together pack arrived and it literally saved my life. It gave me something to do. I spent the whole day working on my project. I feel so much better.

"The companionship provided by the group and the regular contact, either by Zoom or by phone, is making a huge difference to our members who are at home with little or no company. Knowing that somebody cares is really powerful, which is why we are so grateful for the grant."

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Arts Together Member



Young people

Advice and support for vulnerable or disadvantaged young people

Children and young people across the UK have had their lives turned upside down by the pandemic. Almost every young person has had to adjust to dramatic changes in their education or employment, routine and home life. Youth groups and organisations have provided a vital lifeline to many young people across Wiltshire and Swindon struggling with anxiety, stress, loneliness and a loss of routine. Wiltshire Youth for Christ, Shine Pinehurst, Melksham Air Cadets, The Rise Trust and Trowbridge Futures are just a few of the groups that have been supported by the Coronavirus Response programme.

The Youth Adventure Trust

The Youth Adventure Trust received a grant to establish one-to-one zoom mentoring sessions and organise activity days. The Trust works with a range of young people including those from difficult family backgrounds, those struggling with poor mental health also young carers looking after relatives suffering illness.

Louise Balaam, the Trust's Director of Fundraising, said: "The grant has helped us because we were really aware that, for our young people, their safety nets have just completely gone. There is nobody in school keeping an eye on them, mental health services have a huge waiting list and social services aren't able to go into the homes in the same way that they were."

The grant will also help them set up activity sessions when Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. In normal times it runs residential activity weeks, which are often the only times away the young people have.

"We are so grateful for the grant because these activity days will help get these young people back outdoors. We want to get them participating in group activities and have some positive social interactions away from school. We want them to continue their journey with us because we know what an impact we are making on their lives and we feel like they need us more than ever right now."

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Louise Balaam, Director of Fundraising



Physical and mental health

Counselling and support for those with mental health issues or serious and long-term illness

People's mental health and emotional well-being have been hugely impacted during the pandemic. This has led to an increased number of people turning to charitable and voluntary organisations for help. We funded a range of different groups providing vital support to people of all ages including Wiltshire Treehouse, Help Counselling Services and Swindon Samaritans.

We Hear You (WHY)

WHY received a grant from the Coronavirus Response Fund after it lost £90,000 in fundraising revenue over the last year. The grant means its team of 19 councillors have been able to continue their free service that specialises in bereavement and life-threatening illness and expand the number of people they support.

WHY Fundraising Manager Ruth Knagg said: "We were really worried that we would have to start reducing the service just at the point when people are starting to suffer even more. Our counsellors are dealing regularly with families who have lost loved ones to Covid-19 but are unable to grieve in the normal way. They are in the terrible position of being unable to be with their loved ones when they die as well as the trauma of having to choose who can attend their funeral. It is not the normal process of grief at all and it has been enormously impactful.

"We have also seen an increase in cancer patients suffering from anxiety because their treatment has been postponed. People just feel desperately low. I answered the phone to an elderly lady who had only been out of her house a couple of times since last March and she said 'what's the point of getting my coronavirus jab? I'm already old and I've wasted a year'. It was really sad to hear, there's a sense of losing the quality time that you've got left because of having to shield.

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Ruth Knagg, Fundraising Manager



Disadvantaged individuals and families

Support and advice for people in financial hardship and challenging circumstances

Disadvantaged communities are being disproportionately affected by the economic and social impacts arising from the pandemic as well as the measures introduced to contain it. People who were already struggling to cope pre-Covid have found themselves pushed deeper into poverty, while redundancies and furlough have left others struggling to make ends meet. Through the Coronavirus Response programme we have funded a range of organisations offering practical support as well as debt advice and counselling including Swindon and Wiltshire Citizens Advice, Trowbridge Debt Advice Service, Heals and Julian House.

The Harbour Project

The Harbour Project in Swindon helps 200 asylum seekers and 300 refugees. A grant from the Coronavirus Response programme enabled them to purchase and deliver food parcels, support people remotely as well as continue their in-person advice sessions safely.

Many of the people it helps rely on visits to its drop-in centre for help with food, companionship and reassurance. Among the visitors there are 47 different nationalities, including Iran, Eritrea, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.

CEO Claire Garrett said: "As an asylum seeker people are entitled to £39.60 a week and are forbidden from work. In normal times the Harbour is open every day and we provide coffee, tea and biscuits, sometimes toast in the morning and once or twice a week a hot meal. But when the Harbour was closed because of the coronavirus people couldn't come in for help."

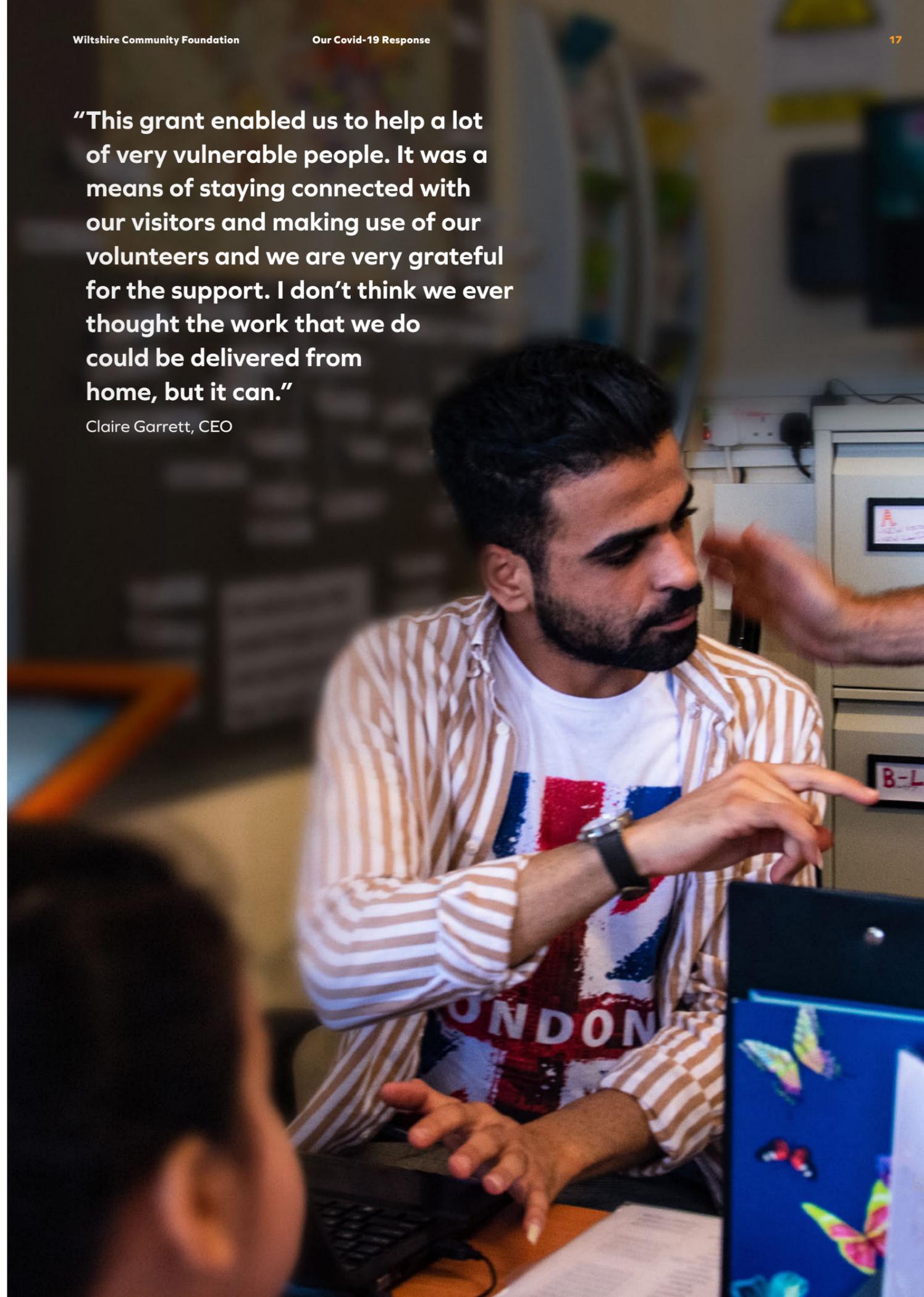
"At least two thirds of them are single and many are living in shared houses, possibly even in a shared bedroom, so there was a lot of nervousness for them. They already have the trauma of whatever has happened in their country of origin, the journey here and waiting for leave to remain. They were very frightened by the virus and asking us 'am I going to die?'."

"This grant enabled us to help a lot of very vulnerable people. It was a means of staying connected with our visitors and making use of our volunteers and we are very grateful for the support. I don't think we ever thought the work that we do could be delivered from home, but it can."

"You can still support people remotely. We could never have planned for this, particularly with the language challenges of lots of our people, but we did find a way."

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Claire Garrett, CEO



Looking forward

The voluntary sector has undoubtedly gone above and beyond throughout the crisis and it is impossible to imagine our communities without their presence. But, we are reaching a point where emergency funding will cease and the sustainability of groups and charities across Wiltshire and Swindon is now in question.

This comes at a time when we are hearing that the need for their services is greater than ever. When the furlough scheme and other government financial support packages end many more individuals and families are going to be experiencing significant economic hardship. It is also predicted that the deepening crisis in people's mental health, as a result of the pandemic, will continue to grow long after lockdown has ended. And these are just two of the areas where our voluntary and charity sector play a crucial role in supporting our communities.

What we have heard:

84%
INCREASE

in the number of people in Wiltshire claiming Universal Credit. Wiltshire Citizens Advice

600%
INCREASE

in the number of people in Wiltshire requesting advice on redundancy. Wiltshire Citizens Advice

50%
INCREASE

in the use of foodbanks. Devizes and District Foodbank

50%
INCREASE

in demand for mental health services. IPSUM Swindon

80%
REDUCTION

in the number of volunteers. Community First

62%
OF CHARITIES

in Wiltshire have seen a reduction in their income levels.^[iii]

Call to action

There is much speculation about the type of recovery we can expect economically as we move beyond the immediate crisis. At a recent forum we hosted with the Bank of England's Chief Economist, Andy Haldane, a rapid 'V' shaped economic recovery was forecast. Representatives from the voluntary sector signalled that the recovery of communities and the voluntary sector will be much slower and will require significant investment.

The survival of the voluntary sector and its ability to respond to people in need is a priority as without these groups recovery in our communities will be impossible.

Wiltshire Community Foundation, along with many of our colleagues in the sector, has sent a public message to the government highlighting that charities urgently need an Emergency Support Fund so they can provide the vital services that are desperately needed at community level. The sector as a whole faces a £10bn gap between the amount of income it expects to have and the demand on services.^[iii]

Whilst we call for further funding for the voluntary sector, we have committed to investing £10 million in local communities by 2025. Your support will be invaluable to us in achieving this commitment.

If you would like to find out about our Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Appeal or learn more about our philanthropy services please call our Philanthropy Team on **01380 729284 or visit our website **www.wiltshirecf.org.uk** for details.**

Wiltshire Community Foundation

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