



The Urgent Response Fund – Coronavirus Impact Report for March 2020 until February 2021

Introduction

In March 2020 we knew that Coronavirus (COVID-19) would have a significant impact on the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector across the Lancaster district. For nearly 50 years, supporting the sector and our communities has been a core feature of our organisation, and one which our team care deeply about. Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic is at its core a human tragedy, we wanted to do more by working with our communities, the VCFSE sector and our partners to deliver help where it is most needed.

This report describes how the Lancaster District Urgent Response Fund provided funds at speed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and made a positive impact on the sector and in our communities. Our numbers – in terms of people helped, grants awarded, and support given – we hope will speak for themselves. But we would add a measure of caution when looking at this as an indicator of how we have helped, because numbers are not in themselves enough to truly measure the impact on people's lives.

While I hope you agree that it is reassuring to know our work is helping so many, we also know that there is so much that needs to be done. We plan to continue to gather evidence, have conversations with communities, VCFSE organisations and our partners, and create campaigns to ensure that we continue to respond to ever-growing needs, and reimagine a better future for everyone. A future that offers people the help they need, when they need it, eventually removing the need for charities like ours.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank all our partners, funders, the VCFSE leaders who answered the survey and every generous organisation and member of the public who helped our communities respond to the pandemic.

Yak Patel

Chief Officer, Lancaster District Community & Voluntary Solutions

About the Urgent Response Fund

The Urgent Response Fund - Coronavirus is a small grants fund for charities and community groups in need of resources to effectively deliver projects and activities which support the basic health and wellbeing needs of vulnerable* members of the community in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lancaster District Community & Voluntary Solutions (LDCVS), working in partnership with NHS Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group, Francis C Scott Charitable Trust, Eric Wright Charitable Trust, NFU Mutual, West End Morecambe, Westminster Foundation and Lancaster City Council launched the fund on Friday 20th March 2020 with a public appeal. After just two weeks over £25,000 had been raised and the application process opened, ensuring organisations received funds as quickly as possible.

By the end of February 2021, 45 projects had been funded, with awards totalling over £42,000.

Large and small donors have contributed to the fund throughout the year, enabling continuous availability of grants and ensuring that applicants can continue to respond appropriately as the needs of their beneficiaries change.

From March 2021, The Urgent Response Fund now considers applications that support vulnerable people and communities to re-engage with activities and services and adapt to the gradual lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown.



A running total of public donations to the fund, generously given by the people of Lancaster, can be found online at www.totalgiving.co.uk/appeal/coronavirus

** For this scheme, our definition of 'vulnerable person' will be used in all decision making: 'An individual who is not able to respond and adapt to the impacts of the pandemic like the majority of people, due to their health, social circumstances or economic position'.*

Supporters

With the help of large and small organisations and individuals, we have been able to successfully fund projects across the Lancaster district.

Between March 2020 and February 2021, the Urgent Response Fund raised £15,120 online from the general public through our Total Giving page from 285 donors, and £65,000 offline including significant contributions from businesses, trusts and foundations.

Thanks to the continuing generosity of donors, the URF retains a healthy balance that will support communities as lockdown lifts.

Our key supporters are:



Operating the Urgent Response Fund

Organisations and groups can apply for grants of up to £1000 to help effectively deliver projects and activities which support the basic health and wellbeing needs of vulnerable members of the community in response to the coronavirus pandemic. From March 2021 the criteria were extended to include support to vulnerable people and communities to re-engage with activities and services, and adapt to the gradual lifting of lockdown.

Applications are made online at www.lancastercvs.org.uk/funding/coronavirus/ where the full guidance can also be found. Support for applicants who have questions or need help in completing the online form is provided by Lancaster District CVS staff.

There is a deadline at the end of each month, and the Panel meets approximately a week later to discuss the applications and agree on which should be funded and to what level. The panel is made up of one representative each from Lancaster District CVS and Morecambe Bay Health Trust (MBHT), alongside one officer and two elected members from Lancaster City Council. Successful applicants are notified, and the funds transferred to them within two weeks of the monthly deadline. Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback and support from Lancaster District CVS to find other potential sources of funding or to reapply.

Evaluation forms are sent out with the offer letter, with a request that they are completed when the project is concluded, or 6 months after the grant is awarded, whichever is sooner.

The aim is always to find ways to support groups and organisations who are working hard at the grassroots level to help local people.

More information and application guidance is available online at:
www.lancastercvs.org.uk/funding/coronavirus/

URF impact snapshot (March 2020 to February 2021)

£42,261

Funds allocated

45

Grants approved

£939

Average grant value

£232,997

Total cost of projects (including URF contribution)

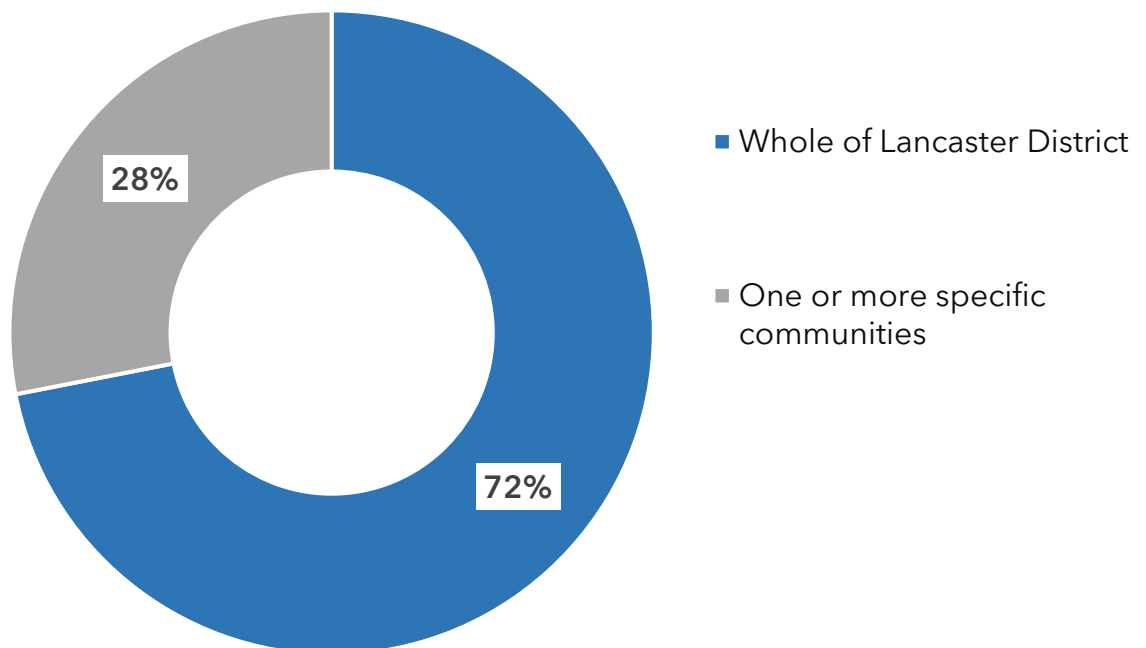


Some URF projects focused on specific communities, while others covered the entire Lancaster District

The majority of Urgent Response Fund recipients implemented projects that covered the entire Lancaster District, while others used local knowledge and reach to focus on specific communities or neighbourhoods.

In many cases, the ability of voluntary organisations and groups to execute projects that reach across the district is heavily reliant on available internal resources such as manpower, vehicles to mobilize activities, and office spaces.

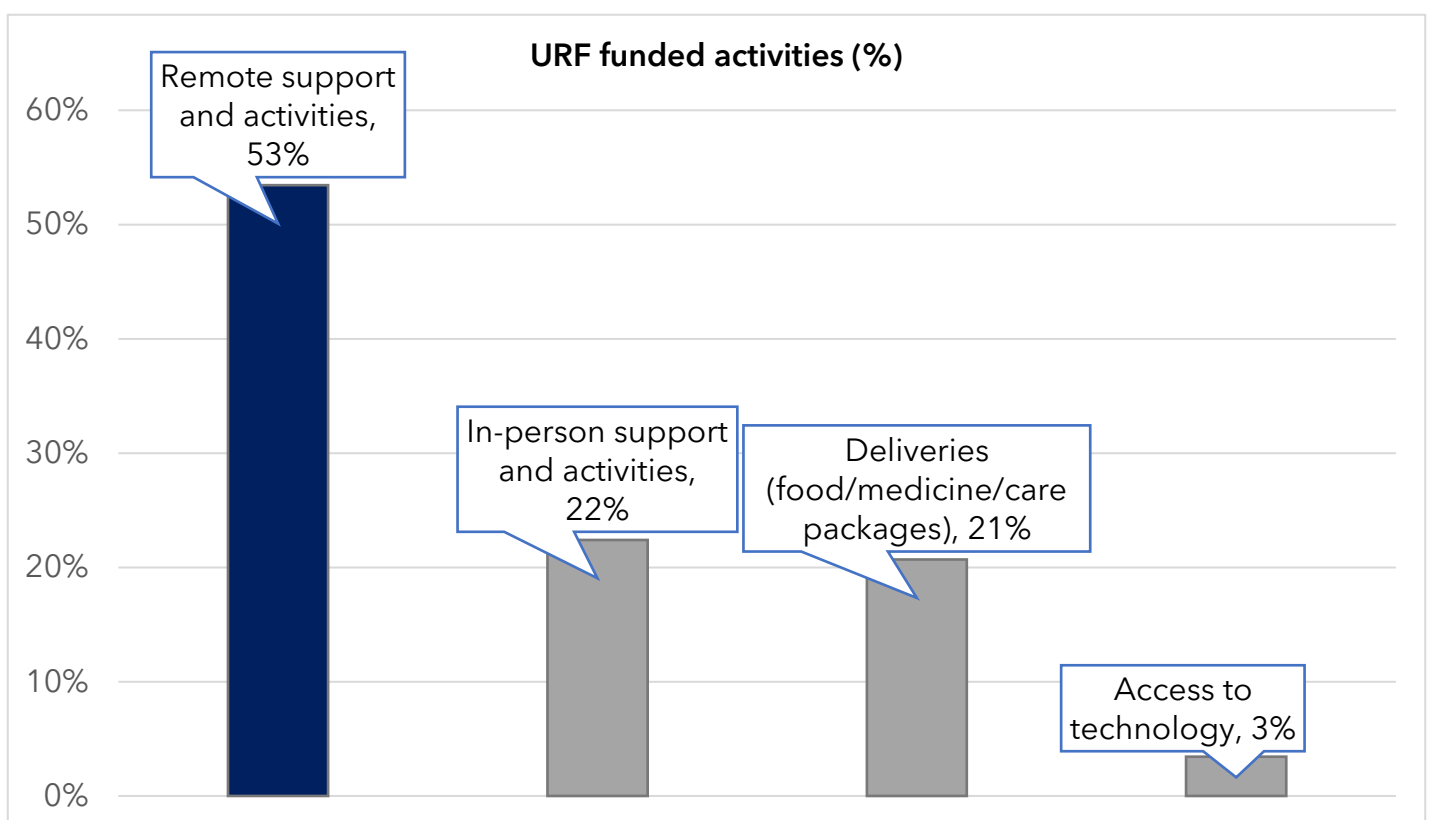
Geographic reach of URF projects by % of applicants



The majority of grants enabled remote support activities

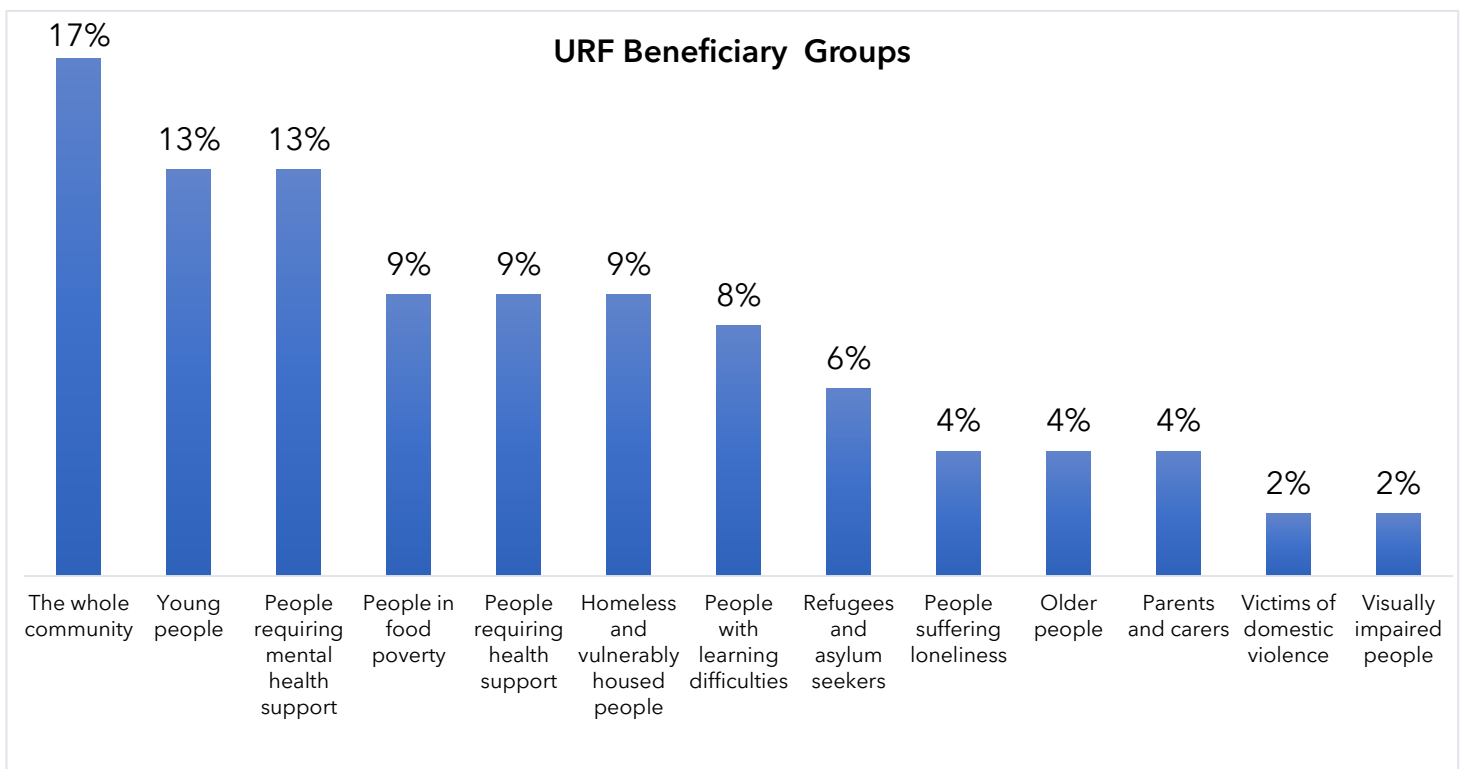
Funded projects provided communities with remote assistance such as one-to-one support, remote classes, and other learning activities, with a particular focus on mental health, individuals with learning difficulties, and people with specific physical needs.

Grants also supported organisations making deliveries of food, medicine and other types of care packages, as well as groups seeking COVID-secure ways to create in-person support opportunities.



URF reached communities with various needs

Beneficiaries of the Urgent Response Fund were able to use their expertise and local knowledge to access communities, identify groups with particular needs, and provide appropriate support.



Project case studies

Mental Health Connect project by Making Space



Making Space is a charity that supports adults with health or social care needs, including those with complex mental health needs, learning disabilities, living with dementia, as well as older people and carers in the Lancaster district.

The Mental Health Connect project by Making Space delivered online one-to-one sessions and wellbeing zoom group sessions for people with mental health problems who have not been able to access face-to-face support and group sessions during the pandemic. Funding from the URF was used to appoint a health coach for one-to-one support sessions for 50 people. These sessions improved the general well-being of attendees, increased their ability to self-care, and taught self-management techniques.

One of the beneficiaries learned new skills and tools from the online sessions:

"For the first time in years, I accessed the one-to-one sessions and finally opened up.... Simple goal setting and action plans has helped and makes you feel amazing after feeling like you've achieved nothing for so long, being able to return to the sessions and say you've completed your action plan is a great feeling..."

**Beneficiary of Mental Health Connect*

As lockdown rules ease, there is a growing need for people to continually access digital mental health support combined with outdoor activities during the transitional period. Making Spaces aims to maintain support services to help communities that require these support services.

** For confidentiality reasons, the name of the beneficiary has not been provided.*

Summer Splash for Young People

The Summer Splash partnership project provided children and young people living across the Lancaster District a programme of fun summer activities balanced with emotional and mental support for the whole family and the wider community.

After months of lockdown, the project provided children and young people (CYP) with opportunities to have a good time and re-connect with their friends and their communities. For many CYP and their families, their health and mental wellbeing had been affected and many had anxieties around returning to school in September.

The Summer Splash project offered many children & young people the opportunity to overcome their anxieties through conversation with youth workers and by engaging in a range of activities. From sports to cooking, arts and crafts, beach parties, dance, music and much more, the combination of activities and support helped young people with their welfare.

“We saw a massive change in the young people, and we feel that all young people came out positive and ready for their new term wherever that was going to be.”

Yak Patel (Project Coordinator)

The summer program was resource-intensive and required volunteers who could work with children and young people. Due to COVID-19 and for accessibility, activities were moved to community settings closer to CYPs rather than travelling to sites. To enable safe practices and to meet the needs of the high number of young people per session, some sessions were split.

The summer splash helped families to cope with the demands of home-schooling and lockdown by providing free activities, 4 days per week for 4 weeks across disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In summary, approximately 78% of beneficiaries were from disadvantaged backgrounds and a total of 143 young people attended with their families.

The Urgent Response Fund - The Future

The URF has been a huge success story. Very quickly after the pandemic lockdown restrictions started in March 2020, funders and donors were marshalled to set up the fund; with criteria and an application process designed to be supportive and flexible for our local VCFSE sector as they moved mountains to offer support in incredibly difficult circumstances. We are enormously grateful to the funders and donors who have given so generously.

The partnership between Lancaster District CVS, Lancaster City Council and Morecambe Bay Health Trust has also been positive. Representatives from each meet at least monthly and sometimes more frequently to review and select applications. We have developed a shared perspective on the work of community activists, volunteers and paid staff across our district.

As you have read in this report, between March 2020 and February 2021, 45 grants have been awarded to support organisations and groups to undertake a range of activities and projects and we are proud of the part we have played in facilitating the enormous efforts made to support communities.

Now as restrictions continue to ease and we dare to hope of a return to something like normal, we are beginning to look ahead, thinking about what more we can do to support those organisations and groups.

Never has there been a more important time to invest in communities. By distributing grants and sharing advice, acting as a catalyst for positive change, we can help to deal with the immediate aftermath of the pandemic - to enable organisations to restore services and adapt their premises, to provide emergency interventions within communities, or to purchase items which go directly to beneficiaries.

We now look to developing a Recovery Fund that supports Lancaster's VCFSE groups and their service users in dealing with the consequences of the pandemic as they emerge from the experience of the last eighteen months. It is our intention to continue to provide funding which strengthens organisations and communities, building resilience which enables them to sustain themselves and respond to local needs.

We are interested to speak with funders and supporters about how they can support this fund. If interested, email yakpatel@lancastercvs.org.uk or telephone (01524) 555900.

Our fundraising continues via the Bay Foundation

We will continue to fundraise, support, and advocate for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector and our communities, and work in partnership to provide assistance not only now, but in the long-term. The Bay Foundation is our financial support model for the Lancaster district's charities and community groups, working to build capacity, equip the community, connect organisations, assist people, and champion critical issues.

Find out more at www.lancastercvs.org.uk/bay-foundation

Projects funded March 2020 - February 2021

Applicant	Project Name	Allocations	Project info and beneficiaries
ACE	Ace 10-10 Lines	£1,000	Phone, email and video mental health support for young people
Adullam Programme	Mental Health Support	£1,000	Remote and COVID-secure in-person support and activities for people with poor mental health
Barton Road Centre	Two Soups on Tour	£500	Providing soup and social interaction for people living alone
Barton Road Centre	COVID-19 Response	£1,000	Coordinating contact with centre users and vulnerable people, and ensuring hard to reach people receive information about the pandemic
Bay Buddies	Feeling Better Through Reflexology	£1,000	COVID-secure reflexology sessions for brain injury survivors
C.H.A.T.S Parent Support Group	C.H.A.T.S Parent Support Group	£1,000	Peer support and training for mental health issues for parents and carers
Cancer Care North Lancashire and South Cumbria	Community Support Helpline	£1,000	Information helpline and delivery service for food and medicine for people affected by cancer
Christ Church, Lancaster	Christ Church Evening Drop-In	£450	Provision of COVID-secure drop-in for homeless and vulnerably housed people
East Meets West	East Meets West	£1,000	Medical support, transport, remote support for female asylum seekers and refugees
Escape2Make	Penpal Project	£500	Facilitate conversation and companionship between the old and young
Friends of Morecambe Bay	Morecambe Bay Foodclub	£500	Support food club activities for families experiencing food poverty
Galloway's Society for the Blind	Spring in your Step	£975	Providing care packages for the visually impaired
Global Link (Lancaster)	Computers for Asylum Seekers	£1,000	Providing laptops for refugees and asylum seekers
Gregson Community Association	Lend a Hand	£1,000	Food delivery and provision of remote activities for all
Halton Community Association	Supporting Early Stages of Parenthood - Proof of Concept	£1,000	Providing COVID-secure activities for new parents
Headway Lancaster & Morecambe Bay	Virtual Buddies	£1,000 £500	Supporting brain injury survivors in isolation and encouraging exercise
Home-Start Morecambe & Lancaster	Home-Start Morecambe & Lancaster	£500	Developing and extending support group to victims of domestic abuse
Lancaster & District Homeless Action Service	Lancaster & District Homeless Action Service	£1,000	Developing and delivering support plans for homeless and vulnerably housed people
Lancaster and Morecambe District Churches Debt Centre	COVID Support	£1000	Maintaining capacity for financial advice and increasing capacity for foodbank referrals for people in financial difficulty
Lancaster Area Search & Rescue	Capability Resilience Project	£1000	Maintaining search and rescue capability and increasing capacity for food and medicine delivery for all
Lancaster District Community & Voluntary Solutions	Summer Splash	£3,000	Remote and in-person play and learning activities for children, young people, and people with special educational needs
Let's Befriends	Let's Befriends	£1,000 £1,000	Befriending and support for homeless and vulnerably housed people

Applicant	Project Name	Allocations	Project info and beneficiaries
Making Space	Mental Health Connect	£1,000	Remote support for people with poor mental health
Marsh Community Centre	COVID-19	750	Producing pre-cooked meals for people experiencing food poverty
Marsh Community Centre	Marsh Community Centre	£300	Delivering food and activity parcels for young people and adults experiencing food poverty
More Music	Reaching Out	£750	Engaging young people, older people, and people with learning disabilities with music activities remotely
Neuro Drop-in Centre	Getting Through Together	£1,000	Delivering shopping and medicine, organising virtual events, and contacting service users for people affected by neurological illness
Parish of Heysham St Peter with St James and St Andrew	Pastoral Care Team	£500	Enabling use of technology, remote outreach to the vulnerable, and providing facilities to charitable groups
People First Independent Advocacy	Devices for Keeping People Connected	£150	Providing remote support from trained facilitators and peers to people with learning difficulties and autism
Positive Futures	Outreach Social Hub	£1,328	Providing one-to-one support and running classes and talks remotely for people with poor mental health
Positive Futures	Come Back Safely	£1,142	Providing remote support and making premises COVID-secure for people with poor mental health, learning difficulties, and the socially isolated
Positive Futures	Keeping in Touch	£1,000	Distributing physical activity packs for people with poor mental health
Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support Lancaster	Digital Support for Asylum Seekers	£1,000	Providing talk/data top-ups
SAFE	SAFE	£1,000	Remote contact with service users and provision of individual and group activities
St. Thomas Church	The Ark Food Provision	£750	Producing and delivering pre-cooked meals and food parcels
Stanleys Community Centre	Nutrition & Wellbeing Support	£1,000	Food delivery and wellbeing coaching
Stanleys Community Centre	Opening up Stanleys	£896	Adaptation of facilities and purchase of PPE to become COVID-secure
Steps to Mindfulness/Lancashire Mind	Steps to Mindfulness	£250	Walking routes and mindfulness practices as leaflets and downloads
Tara Project	Tara Centre Befriending Support	£1,320	Remote and COVID-secure in-person support
The Cornerstone	The Cornerstone	£1,000	Adaptation of café/meeting area to become COVID-secure
The Olive Branch	Pastoral C19	£2,000	Increasing food parcel capacity
West End Impact	Food Deliveries & Mental Health Support	£1,000	Producing pre-cooked meals and providing mental health support
Wise Up Workshops	Keeping Our Community Connected	£1,200	Providing one-to-one mental health support and family events remotely



With thanks to

NHS Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group,
Francis C Scott Charitable Trust,
Eric Wright Charitable Trust,
NFU Mutual,
West End Morecambe,
Westminster Foundation,
Lancaster City Council,
**and every organisation and individual who helped
our communities respond to the pandemic.**

Lancaster District Community & Voluntary Solutions

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