

Evaluation of the One Oldham Fund Summary Report

December 2023



Introduction & Context

The Oldham Partnership shares a collective vision '*to make Oldham a place of ambition*'. Oldham Borough Metropolitan Council (OMBC) and its partners are committed to a co-operative future for Oldham where '*everyone does their bit and everybody benefits*'.

A thriving and sustainable Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector is essential to the delivery of the ambition set out in the Oldham Plan and Locality Plan. Thinking differently about investment into the sector is a key component of this, and through the council's Thriving Communities work prior to the Covid19 pandemic, it has considered the role of a strategic VCFSE investment fund for Oldham as a vehicle for transforming the approach.

The investment was set up by OMBC and funded by OMBC by pooling existing funding sources between October 2021 and March 2023. In November 2021, Action Together launched the grants programme under the brand 'One Oldham Fund'. Initial investment totalled just over £1m with the majority of this coming from the Covid Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).

Additional funding has been made available through the One Oldham Fund framework, including Supporting Families funding, Cost of Living funds and Public Health Recovery Communities Funds.

The evaluation has focussed specifically on the impact of projects funded through the COMF investment but has also evaluated the impact of the One Oldham Fund as a method and framework for administering and delivering funding across the borough.

The aim of this evaluation is to demonstrate the overall impact of the investment into the VCFSE via the One Oldham Fund, including:

- The extent to which it delivered on the strategic priorities for investment.
- The extent to which the principles for investment are embedded in the approach and impact on the delivery of the priorities.
- The extent to which it delivers value for money in terms of fiscal, social and economic return on investment for the Oldham system.

The delivery and management of the One Oldham Fund was provided by Action Together who delivered the full process from promotion, through application, award, monitoring and project closure.

Introduction & Context

Strategic Objectives

1. Driving Equality

- Enabling those adversely impacted by COVID-19 to access the help they need.
- Reducing inequality and building resilience across Oldham's communities.
- Reducing poverty and helping people get back on their feet.

2. Promoting Health and Wellbeing and Supporting the Most Vulnerable

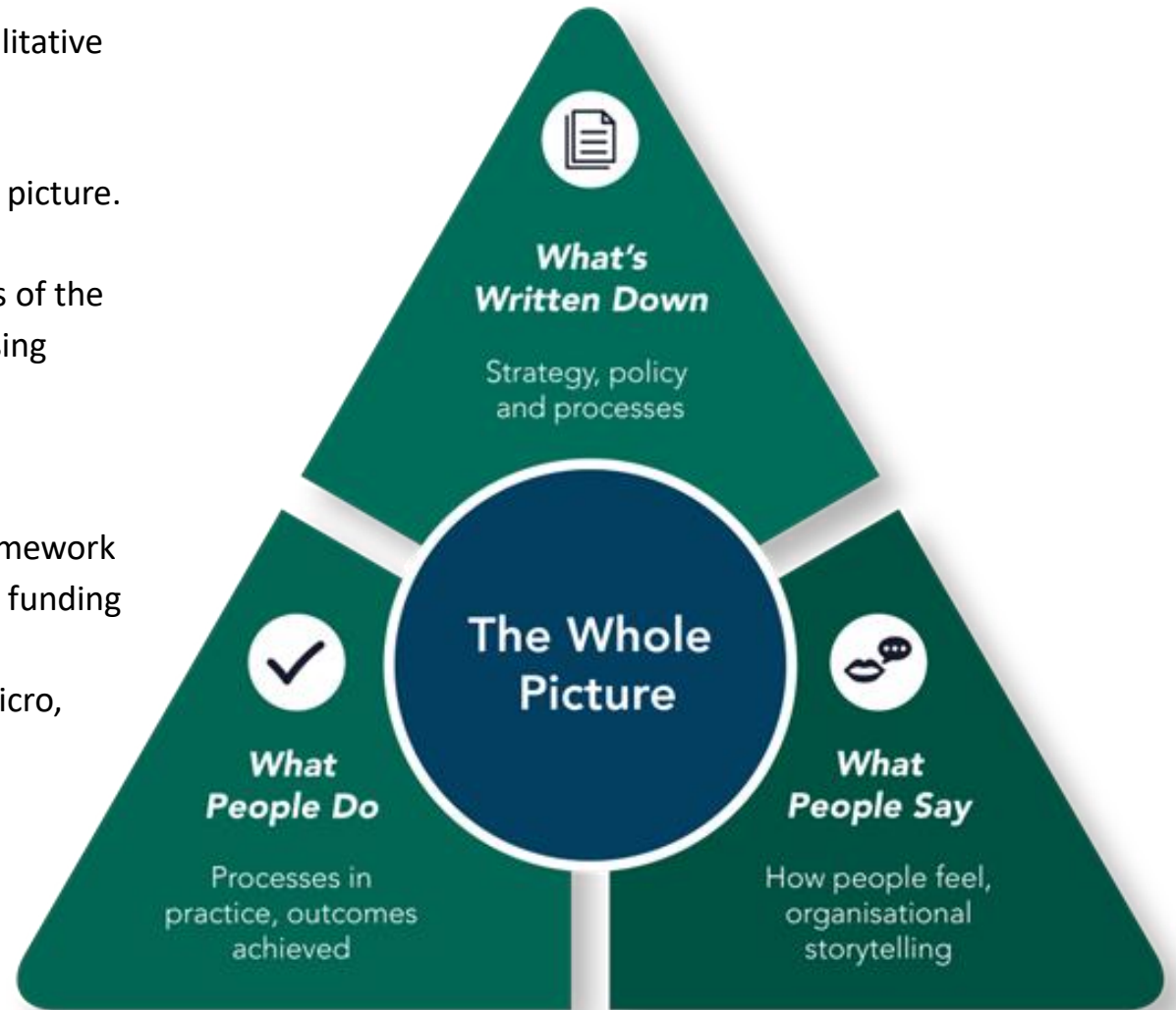
- Continue to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Oldham.
- Work with residents and communities to improve health and wellbeing, preventing illness and premature death.
- Safeguard and supporting our most vulnerable residents.

Principles for Investment

1. Investing in the capacity of existing Oldham VCFSE groups and organisations to develop their resilience and ensure their sustainability.
2. Being responsive and reactive with investment where there are urgent funding issues for vital community anchor organisations.
3. Investment framework is embedded in the place-based working approach and grantees are connected into the VCFSE place-based networks and equalities networks.
4. Grantees are supported with 'wrap-around' community development and organisational development support at place level.

Methodology

- Mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data across primary and secondary sources.
- Three angles to ensure the evaluation assessed the whole picture.
- Balancing ‘what the data says’ with real world experiences of the people managing the fund, delivering projects, and accessing services.
- Focus on:
 - A. evaluating the impact of the One Oldham Fund framework as a model for administering and distributing grant funding for communities and;
 - B. assessing the impact of projects funded through micro, small and medium grants as part of COMF funding.



Evaluation Findings

Theme 1: Joint working and collaboration

The Fund has enabled development workers to work more closely with groups in our districts. We have tapped into groups we didn't previously work with

The fund has enabled AT to work at a more strategic level and have an oversight of the sector

Place based joint working has been a bit limited. We can all do more in this space

From a council perspective, we didn't do enough to share with stakeholders what we were doing

From a strategic viewpoint, having the fund as a ready-made vehicle has helped us deliver our objectives

What went well...

- Improved relationships between Action Together and the VCFSE sector
- Community development workers have a greater oversight on groups operating within their locality
- Created a vehicle for allocating funding with benefit of Action Together's insight and intelligence

What more can we do...

- Improve join up between place-based working between Action Together and OMBC community development teams
- Promote the fund more widely to internal OMBC stakeholders

Theme 2: Process management and accessibility

What went well...

- The application process has simplified access to funding for community groups, in particular newly established groups who were accessing funding for the first time
- Expectations were clear and support was available to groups during application and delivery
- Funds distributed to successful projects quickly

What more can we do...

- Work with groups who are making repeat applications to move onto larger external funding programmes

I love that it's very different to mainstream funding – the application is simple and there is a quick turnaround

Council processes often slow things down so AT managing the fund meant the money got to groups more quickly

The panel and decision-making approach has worked really well

The fund is convenient for groups as they can apply more than once. We haven't done enough to help them move to other funding streams

We need to do more to make sure we direct investment towards outcomes and need to see this as part of system working

Evaluation Findings

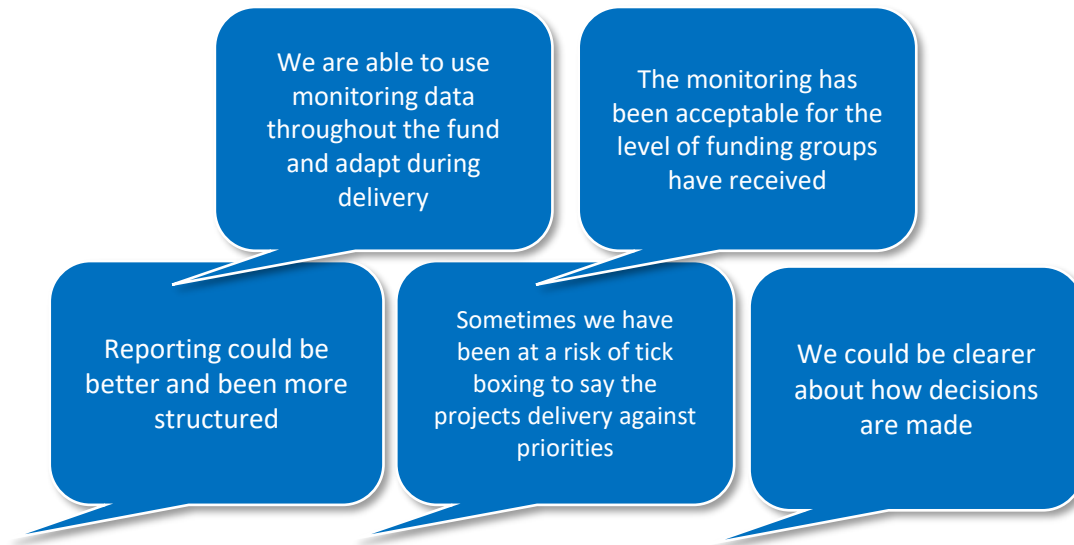
Theme 3: Monitoring and use of data

What went well...

- Monitoring was proportionate to the size of the grants

What more can we do...

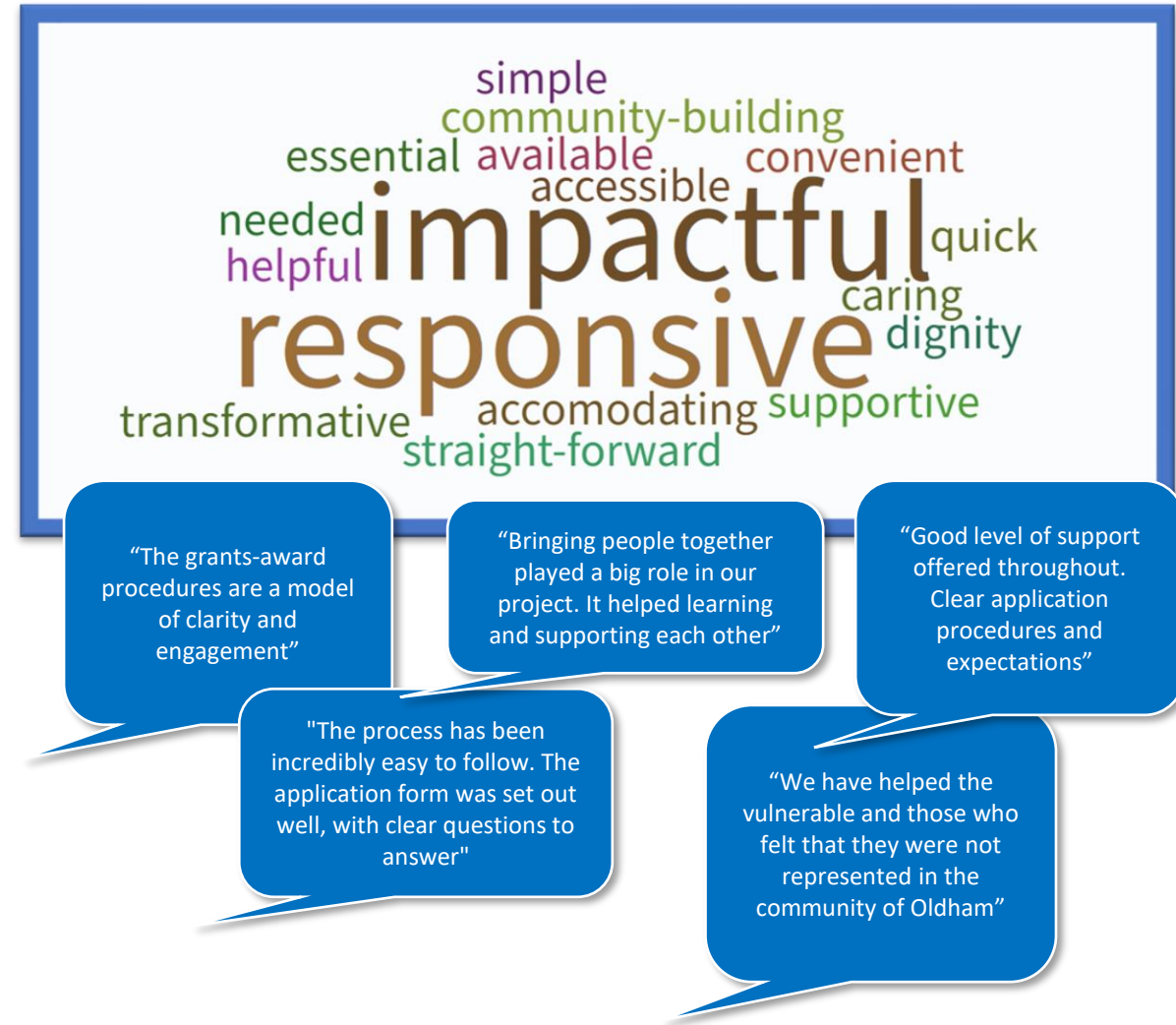
- Monitoring could be more structured – there is a risk it becomes a ‘tick box’ exercise
- The decision-making process could have been clearer, to help groups understand monitoring requirements



Project Lead Feedback

What went well...

- Overwhelmingly positive feedback from project leads about their experiences accessing the One Oldham Fund



Evaluation Findings

Spend Analysis - Districts

2021-22

District	Amount Requested	Amount Awarded (% of total)
Multi-District	£554,200 (69.6%)	£313,295 (66.4%)
Central	£80,148 (10.1%)	£55,524 (11.7%)
North	£11,344 (1.4%)	£10,944 (2.4%)
East	£78,019 (9.8%)	£ 40,430 (8.7%)
South	£31,427 (3.9%)	£ 21,427 (4.5%)
West	£41,191(5.2%)	£ 29,823 (6.3%)
Total	£796,329 (100%)	£471,443 (100%)

*multi-districts refer to projects that were delivered in more than one district

- Majority of projects delivered across more than one district (66.4% in 21/22 and 49.9% in 22/23).
- North and South districts are the lowest funded districts, linked to having fewer funding requests from these areas
- Spend and allocation of funds has been well distributed to areas that are known to be in greatest need (E.g. Central District)

2022-23

District	Amount Requested	Amount Awarded
Multi-District	£835,261 (65.9%)	£295,939 (49.9%)
Central	£189,385 (15%)	£97,281 (16.5%)
North	£12,520 (1.0%)	£12,506 (2.1%)
East	£125,330 (9.9%)	£116,162 (19.6%)
South	£14,800 (1.2%)	£12,400 (2.1%)
West	£88,444 (7.0%)	£57,999 (9.8%)
Total	£1,265,740 (100%)	£592,287 (100%)

Evaluation Findings

Spend Analysis – Demographics

Ethnicity	One Oldham Fund Projects (%)	Oldham Census Data 2021 (%)	% Variance
White	29	68	-39
Black	19	3	+16
Asian	35	25	+10
Mixed / Multiple	14	3	-11
Other	3	1	+2

- Analysis was completed to show the number of projects that reported beneficiaries of each ethnicity.
- Combining this data with spend data, we are able to identify a **focus on underrepresented groups** in the most deprived areas

Age Group	One Oldham Fund Projects (%)	Oldham Census Data 2021 (%)	% Variance
0 to 4	7.2	6.6	+0.6
5 to 12	12.4	16.1	+12.2
13 to 18	15.9		
19 to 25	17.9	11.1	+6.8
26 to 50	19.5	32.2	-12.7
51 to 64	14.7	18.1	-3.4
65+	12.4	15.9	-3.5

- Analysis was completed of project beneficiaries by age group
- Broadly even distribution of grants across the age groups
- However, relative to population size **younger age groups benefited more than working age or older people**

Spend Analysis – Themes

Creating a breakdown of inputs by project themes also provides insight to the areas in which the fund has supported. Where projects have delivered against more than one theme, these are counted in each theme to provide overall impact areas.

Theme	Number of projects delivered against
Mental Health	65
Physical Health	55
Wellbeing	111
Learning Disabilities	6
Language Assistance	10
Skills Gained / Developed	21

Wellbeing, Mental Health and Physical Health were the largest themes for investment from the fund.

Evaluation Findings

Project Outputs – Return on Investment

- The Fund delivered a series of tangible benefits to participants of projects – outputs have been identified based on available data
- It is difficult to apply economic benefits to these outputs, however proxies can be applied in some cases (see box)

Output	Amount
Number of interactions	Estimated 20,373
Number of buildings refurbished or improved	23
Green spaces improved	6
Jobs or Qualifications secured	8
Volunteer posts filled	7

Green Space

Fields in Trust research undertaken in 2018 evidenced an economic impact of access to green space to be £34.2bn to the entire adult population, the individual financial benefit of £30.24 per person. If just 5% of the population of Oldham benefit from these improvements, One Oldham Fund investments could have had a proxy value of just over **£355,000**.

Jobs, qualifications and volunteers

Output data on jobs, qualifications and volunteer numbers is expected to have been underreported. However, based solely on the numbers reported and using Social Value Portal proxy values the financial impact of jobs, qualifications and volunteer posts is estimated to be approximately **£135,000**.

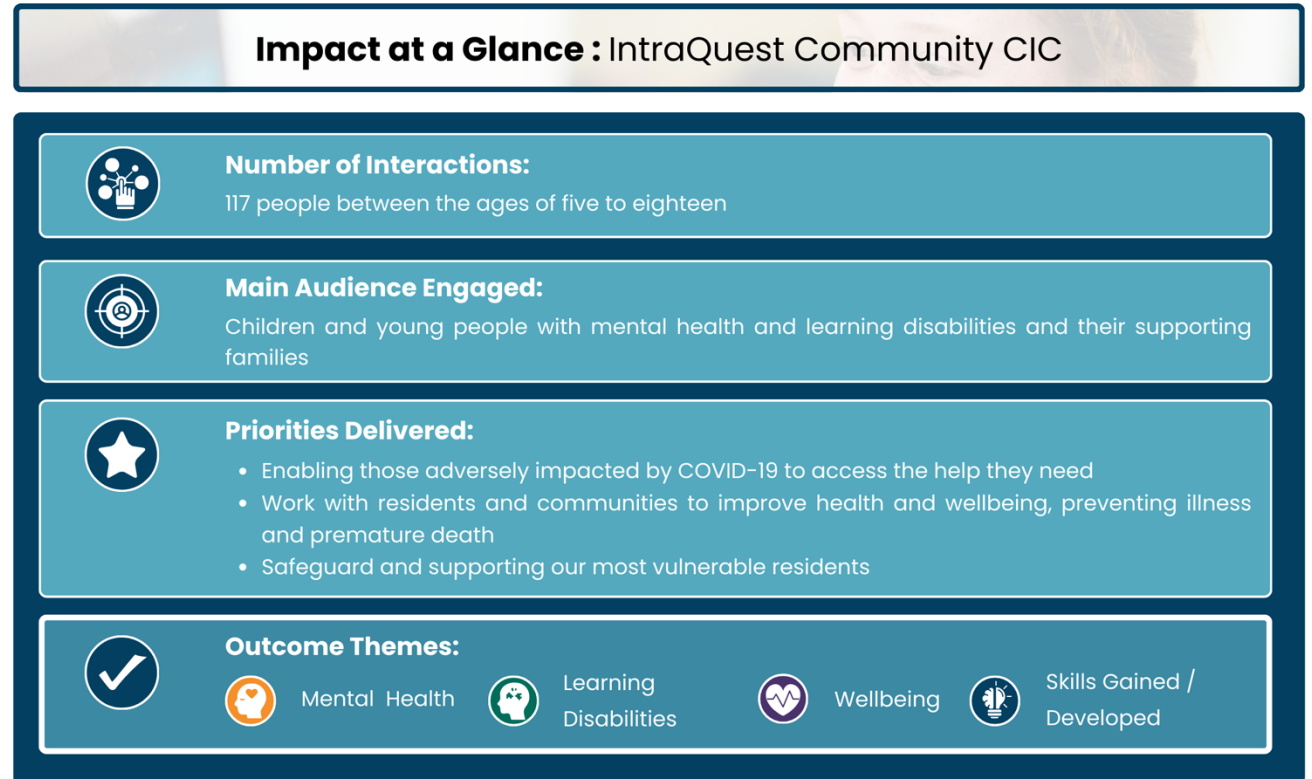
Interactions with residents

These figures do not include the impact on the approximately **20,000 interactions** with participants across One Oldham Fund projects. Economic benefits for individuals participating are well recognised.

Evaluation Findings

Case Studies – IntraQuest Community CIC

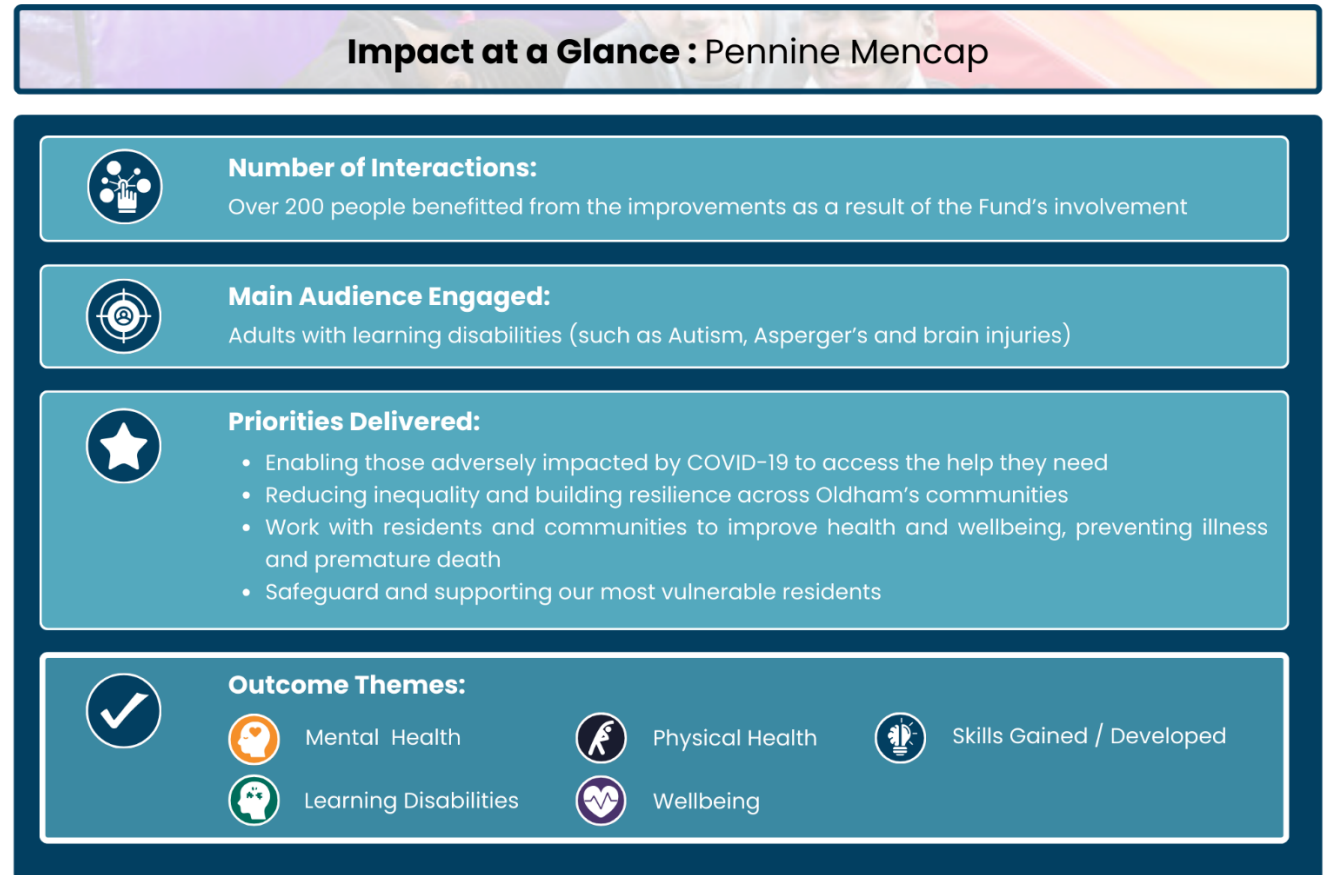
- Learning and wellbeing organisation that provides counselling and mental health support
- **£9,200 grant**
- Purchased iPads that assisted and encouraged digital psychotherapy for neurodiverse children
- Training to help the staff use the new technology improving the quality of service provision
- The new tech helped **117 people** between the ages of five to eighteen to improve their psychotherapy treatment
- Improved effectiveness and efficiency of the service
- Reinforced the importance of utilising technology in the mental health space
- Helped staff think more innovatively about new ways of working
- Makes IntraQuest a more attractive place for many families to bring their children to receive modern treatment



Evaluation Findings

Case Studies – Pennine Mencap

- Charitable organisation that focuses on providing opportunities for adults with learning disabilities, Autism, Asperger's, brain injuries etc.
- Provide fun and stimulating activities for participants, such as gym sessions, dancercise, cooking classes and book clubs
- Participants create, achieve, and express themselves through exploring and developing new skills which can be then implemented into their everyday lives
- **£35,000 grant total**
- Made vital improvements and repairs to their building which is used as a hub for these activities
- **Over 200 people benefitted**
- Ensure that people in the area can receive the help and support they need to improve their ability to carry out important everyday activities like; re-claiming disablement allowances, benefits applications, and accessing discreet food banks.
- This **improves social skills, confidence and quality of life**

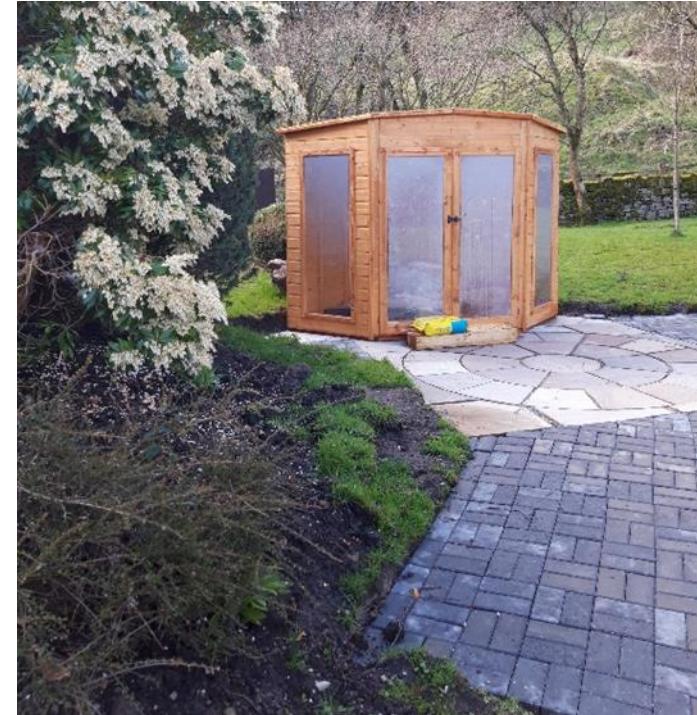


Evaluation Findings

Case Studies – Holland Close Residents Association

Impact at a Glance : Holland Close Residents Association

- Number of Interactions:**
Approximately 25 residents and their families benefited from the Fund
- Main Audience Engaged:**
Elderly residents at Holland Close to combat loneliness and social isolation
- Priorities Delivered:**
 - Enabling those adversely impacted by COVID-19 to access the help they need
 - Work with residents and communities to improve health and wellbeing, preventing illness and premature death
 - Safeguard and supporting our most vulnerable residents
- Outcome Themes:**
 -  Mental Health
 -  Physical Health
 -  Wellbeing







- **£10,000 grant**
- New digital equipment to combat with loneliness and social isolation e.g. Alexa, tablets, and Smart TVs (c.£3,000)
- Equipment helped residents to communicate with each other and family members, participate in activities, and increase overall engagement and combat loneliness and isolation
- c.£7,000 was spent on the improvement of the outdoor pathway and the construction of a summerhouse (see picture)
- **25 residents and their families benefitted** from the funding.

Evaluation Findings

Case Studies – The Flowhesion Foundation

Impact at a Glance : The Flowhesion Foundation

- Number of Interactions:**
Approximately 70 BAMER women benefitted from the Fund
- Main Audience Engaged:**
BAMER women in the Oldham area
- Priorities Delivered:**
 - Enabling those adversely impacted by COVID-19 to access the help they need
 - Reducing inequality and building resilience across Oldham’s communities
 - Work with residents and communities to improve health and wellbeing, preventing illness and premature death
- Outcome Themes:**
 -  Mental Health
 -  Physical Health
 -  Wellbeing
 -  Skills Gained / Developed

- A foundation that offers innovative inclusion projects for the local community
- **£8,600 grant**
- Two programmes designed to help BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee) women
- *The Mind, Body and Soul Programme* ran a variety of sessions to teach participants the skills to manage low level stress and anxiety. These techniques included breathing exercises, finger exercises and pressure points.
- *The Umeed Counselling Service* provided sessions to help women who had suffered from anxiety, stress and loneliness as a result of the Covid pandemic.
- Bi-lingual to ensure that every participant was made to feel welcomed and included in the sessions
- **70 BAMER women benefitted**

Evaluation Findings

Case Studies – Oak Community Development

- Information, advice, and training through their 'Coffee and Connect' and 'Learn and Connect' activities
- Weekly physical and well-being activities, which included exercise sessions, Yoga, Zumba, walking groups, and various other sports activities and games
- Support for mental health, social isolation, and loneliness was offered through activities like workshops, social events
- One-on-one befriending and wellbeing support
- Raising awareness of Covid19 vaccination and provided clinic support
- Supported individuals affected by Covid-19 in re-engaging, obtaining support for their symptoms, and regaining confidence
- Recruited, trained, and supported volunteers to participate in planning, organizing, and assisting with these activities
- This resulted in increased social connectedness, friendships and networks, reduced health inequalities, better understanding about health, motivation to live healthier lifestyles.

Thank you for these get fit and connect sessions the shock of lockdown had really left me feeling down, I don't know what is going to happen and coming in today and just focussing on my exercise and chat about what is happening is really helpful.

The session delivered were really informative and worker has really done a great job in organising the sessions.

I have neglected my health, and it has made me think that I haven't had a smear test for over 6 year or more

- **91.9% of participants felt better connected with others**
- **78.6% of participants improved physical wellbeing**
- **92.5% improved emotional and mental wellbeing**
- **93.1% said they had engaged in a new activity**
- **92.8% stated that they had improved their knowledge and awareness**

Evaluation Findings

Case Study Snapshots

Henshaw's Society for Blind People

Provided a range of sight loss services for both visually impaired and non-visually impaired children. This led to children feeling more confident, making more social connections and learning skills that would make them more independent.

All Nations Charitable Trust

Relaxation space and food and hygiene bags were provided to vulnerable families and covid tests were distributed to those who needed them.

Air Athletics Cheer & Dance Academy

Provided cheer classes and enabled them to attend the National Cheerleading Championships for the first time. The group also sent four candidates on a BGU Level 1 Qualification course

Yuvanis

Delivered mental health and wellbeing courses for young people who suffer from social anxiety and isolation. Participants volunteered and organised and delivered other projects. This enhanced their employability through learning organisational skills, leadership and teamwork

All Nations Charitable Trust

Relaxation space and food and hygiene bags were provided to vulnerable families and covid tests were distributed to those who needed them.

Skills 4 All

Arts and crafts sessions that utilised children's love of technology to provide communication skills to interact with children they otherwise wouldn't have.

Conclusions

1. The One Oldham Fund was well received by the VCFSE sector in Oldham

Qualitative data and feedback provided by project leads in the monitoring data demonstrates the positive impact the One Oldham Fund model has had on community groups. This positive reception reflects an eagerness to continue to enhance the presence of place-based grant funding in the VCSFE sector in Oldham.

2. There is an appetite for collaboration between organisations in Oldham

Qualitative data collected at the project leads workshop highlighted the desire for organisations to collaborate further. Projects that operate in similar areas would benefit from launching a joint project where both areas of expertise are complemented by each other. There is an interest for collaboration between groups through joint applications for larger grants as part of any future grant funding model.

3. Action Together played a vital role in OOF's success due to the support and guidance given to projects throughout the fund

Throughout the Fund's duration, Action Together played a pivotal role in providing support and guidance to organisations and their projects. Their involvement contributed to the Fund's efficient management, and they ensured that the application, monitoring, and reporting processes remained proportionate to the size for grants.

4. The Fund facilitated projects to realise the majority of the Strategic Priorities

The One Oldham Fund has not only made substantial progress toward realising its Strategic Priorities but has, for the most part, successfully achieved them. To better demonstrate how priorities have been achieved the monitoring process must ensure all data fields are completed by project leads so there is not missing data. Data collection over a longer period of time will also more greatly evidence the impact against priorities.

5. The One Oldham Fund is a sustainable framework for the VCFSE system in Oldham

The One Oldham Fund has been proved to be a sustainable and viable framework for management and distribution of funding to the VCFSE system in Oldham. Its ability to engage residents, promote collaboration, support projects, and comprehensive management of the fund, render it a valuable tool for the enhancement of the VCSFE system in Oldham. The model has been effective for all stakeholder groups, but the key challenge of ongoing financial resource remains, and innovative solutions are required to overcome this challenge.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the management of Fund

1. Develop an evaluation toolkit for project leads to complete so that similar grant funding programmes capture consistent data from every project and to help projects capture data effectively. This toolkit would differ depending on size of grant.
2. Ensure data collection is consistent and fields can be measurable. The evaluation has identified areas such as age brackets and delivery against strategic priorities where this could be completed to a more granular level.
3. Continue to use the One Oldham Fund model and framework for rollout and management of grant funding in the borough.

Recommendations for the strategic approach of the Fund

4. Create closer alignment with Oldham Council's corporate goals and objectives. This would establish a clear link between what the Council and the Fund are trying to achieve. If partner investment is anticipated as the solution to financial sustainability, system priorities and objectives should be agreed so that desired outputs and outcomes for future funding is clear.

5. Ensure objectives for the Fund follow the SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). This is so that more can be done to measure the data provided by projects and align to targets.
6. Ensure that there is better promotion and internal awareness of the fund so that services can signpost VCFSE groups or utilise the Fund as a method of delivering grant funding for their service.

Recommendations for the sustainability of the Fund

7. Engage with Elected Members as community leaders to better understand local need and funding requirements.
8. Create opportunities to share decision making opportunities with community leaders to capitalise on the key theme of collaboration within the community.
9. Agree longer term grant funding allocation within OMBC and work with partners to grow the One Oldham Fund as a 'one stop shop' for grant funding within the borough. This could include utilising Members budgets, utilising social value commitments through public sector contracting, pooling with partners across the borough, seeking business investment.



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