



# COVID-19 Our Story So Far

Our response to the Coronavirus  
pandemic in 2020





**Josephine McCartney,**  
Kent Community Foundation  
Chief Executive



“ Nobody could have predicted the speed and scale of the challenges COVID-19 would pose...”

Nobody could have predicted the speed and scale of the challenges COVID-19 would pose for the charitable sector and communities across Kent and Medway.

We have seen unprecedented levels of demand under extraordinary circumstances, which charitable organisations could not have foreseen or prepared for. The Pandemic has hit everybody hard and individuals who would never have thought themselves at risk or in need of support before found themselves in a vulnerable position with only the sector to rely on.

Despite the significant, and sometimes overwhelming, impact of COVID-19, it has been remarkable and reassuring to see many charitable organisations across the county demonstrate great strength, determination and resilience in their continued efforts to support local communities.

We are proud of the role we have played so far in helping those charities and local groups, and in turn, local people who are in real need.

We have reached the end of 2020, but we are far from recovery yet. What is encouraging however, is knowing that charitable organisations throughout Kent and Medway are finding new ways to deliver services, sharing their experiences, and continually fund the energy to keep driving forward for a better future for everyone in the county. This report highlights just some of these remarkable organisations and the work they do.



As of **December 2020**, Kent Community Foundation distributed over

**£4m**



to charitable organisations across Kent and Medway.

# Responding to initial impact



Kent Community Foundation (KCF) has been at the forefront of the philanthropic response to COVID-19 in Kent and Medway.

As well as supporting existing grantees, our focus has been on providing funding to help the voluntary sector to respond to the county's immediate needs, **to adapt and to survive.**

As one of the largest grant-makers for Kent and Medway, the team at Kent Community Foundation knew that the voluntary sector would look to us for support and we knew that **we had to act fast.**

On the day the first lockdown commenced in **March 2020**, we launched our **Coronavirus Emergency Fund** which was generously supported by existing Kent Community Foundation fund-holders.



**Natalie Smith**, Kent Community Foundation Director of Grants and Impact: "Thanks to strong relationships with our network of small charities, we were able to hear directly from those who were on the front-line about what was happening within communities, where the greatest areas of need were and quickly put actions in place to help."

**By April**, with the addition of further donations and funds from National Emergencies Trust (NET), we had distributed **over half a million pounds** in grants from our COVID-19 Fund alone, while still distributing funding from our 'usual' funds at the same time.

**In May**, 370 charitable organisations took our survey to tell us about the impact of COVID-19 and how we could help - they told us that core funding was the key to helping them to recover and survive.

The sector spoke and we listened: From June, **Resilience Grants** became part of our COVID-19 Fund, offering grants of up to £20,000, and **Coronavirus Emergency Bridging Loans** of up to £60,000 were launched to support the many experiencing significant interruption to their operations and income.

As well as our existing fund-holders who were quick to offer funding, we're very pleased that much-needed support for organisations and individuals has also been provided by a number of organisations, including **Kent County Council, Medway Council, Wards estate agents, DCMS and Co-Op.**

Thank you to all of our supporters who have responded so generously to this emergency.



**Find out more  
about where we are  
now and how we will  
support the sector in 2021  
and beyond at the end of  
this report.**

**[www.kentcf.org.uk](http://www.kentcf.org.uk)**



# Examples of organisations we have supported

Kent Community Foundation has distributed over £4m in more than 1300 grants to organisations and individuals including 338 families through our hardship funds

**What follows are some fantastic stories of organisations we have funded since March**



## Walderslade Together CIC Medway

### **Awarded £7,400**

Walderslade Together CIC is a group of individuals and volunteers who have been supporting elderly and vulnerable residents within the Walderslade community, particularly those who do not have friends or family nearby to help.

Funding from the COVID-19 Fund in April 2020 contributed towards the ongoing services provided by the group. As well as offering food packages and the collection of shopping, the team conducted welfare checks and group chats through social media to combat loneliness and isolation and keep the community spirit alive during lockdown.

**[facebook.com/pg/waldersladowtogether](https://facebook.com/pg/waldersladowtogether)**



## Fareshare Kent CIC

County-wide

### Awarded £2,000


After receiving an initial grant from The Albert Burns Children's Charitable Trust in March to immediately respond to those struggling families with young children, Fareshare were awarded a further £8,000 to help distribute essential food parcels to families in the county.

Ian Townsend-Blazier, FareShare Kent, said, "During these challenging times we have seen an increase in demand for our Family Food Bank service. In order to meet this demand we have developed new working models with existing partners and joined up with new organisations such as social services, schools, colleges, community food hubs, etc. to reach more communities in need, to help feed the most vulnerable across Kent."

<http://faresharekent.org.uk>



**By April 2020, Kent Community Foundation had already distributed almost two years' funding to organisations helping to feed those most vulnerable across the county.**



**Martin Ward**, Chair of Trustees, Canterbury Food Bank who were awarded £7,000 from the COVID-19 Fund in April 2020, says, "There is no doubt the pandemic has tested the mettle of the food bank. In the first fortnight of the crisis, Canterbury Food Bank spent four times more on food than it had done in the previous three years.

Without the generosity of donations we would have not only been unable to purchase food to keep the warehouse shelves stocked, but we would have also struggled to keep the van on the road and to pay for extra staff hours."



## **Romney Marsh Day Centre**

### **Romney Marsh**

#### **Awarded £15,000**

This year the Romney Marsh Day Centre has transformed into Romney Marsh Community Support Hub and extended support outside of their usual cohort of older people, to anybody in the community who has been shielding or isolated due to COVID-19.

Romney Marsh Day Centre have been a fantastic example of how to adapt during testing times and have reorganised their staff and services to support local people.

The new Community Support Hub will remain in place until the end of March 2021, by which time the team will be implementing new services reaching older, isolated people in their own homes. This includes helping them to get online and supporting with home-based wellbeing activities, such as tutored chair-based exercise.

Funding has also been used to support the pilot of another project to help older people to use technology to help them feel less socially isolated. Two “Grandpads”, which are specifically designed for older people who are unfamiliar with technology, will be lent to service users to help them socialise online.

**[rmdc.org.uk](http://rmdc.org.uk)**



**Romney Marsh Day Centre** have been a fantastic example of how to adapt during testing times and reorganised their staff and services to support local people.





## Oasis

Margate and Dover

### Awarded £4,000

The stats on domestic violence during lockdown has been shocking and saddening. Demand for support from domestic abuse charities soared.

After being awarded funding from the Albert Burns Children's Charity Trust Fund in March 2020 to deal with immediate needs, additional COVID funding was granted thanks to NET, to allow Oasis to expand their support for young people due to an increased number of referrals.

Mentoring support is provided by a team member, who helps them build resilience, cope with their experiences, understand healthy relationships and gain tools to cope with the complexities of adult life. Beneficiaries are offered frequent sessions to work on issues and the impact of these.

[oasisdaservice.org](https://oasisdaservice.org)

**7%**



The **259,324** offences are a 7% rise on the same period last year, and an 18% increase from two years ago.

## Time for the Homeless

### Medway

#### Awarded £3,400

After reaching “breaking point” with levels of demand during lockdown, the charity received a grant to support the continued soup kitchen provision, open 4 nights a week, along with food parcels for those without a home.

The team were also given PPE to keep both themselves and their beneficiaries safe from Coronavirus.

[timeforthehomeless.co.uk](http://timeforthehomeless.co.uk)

## Emmaus

### Dover

#### Awarded £10,000

Emmaus Dover provides accommodation and work opportunities for those who have experienced homelessness. As well as workshops and services, including gardening, furniture restoration and house clearing, the charity also provides accommodation for up to 27 people.

Like many other homeless organisations, the Coronavirus pandemic had a huge effect, and the charity saw a rise in the need for accommodation at a time while their income has been severely affected after their shops had to close in the first lockdown.

COVID-19 funding helped to fill some of the income shortfall from the closure of their shops and the lack of fundraising opportunities.

[emmaus.org.uk](http://emmaus.org.uk)





## Canterbury Umbrella

Canterbury and surrounding areas

### Awarded £4,140

Canterbury Umbrella is a not-for-profit community centre supporting those with mental health needs. They received emergency funding to employ an experienced telephone and email support worker to provide one-to-one support members, especially those who are older and without internet access.

The support worker was assigned to reach those most vulnerable as a priority for keeping in touch, as well as a point of contact for others to access support to adapt goals and activities they already had in place through the group's wellbeing programme. The remote support worker also offered guidance on other services for those in greatest need to reduce crises due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and social isolation.

**[canterburyumbrella.co.uk](http://canterburyumbrella.co.uk)**

The organisation has been extremely active through social media to reach as many people as possible and offer **mental health support** at a time of exceptional need.





## **Citizens Advice Bureau North and West Kent, including Tonbridge, Sevenoaks, Swanley, Dartford and Gravesham**

### **Awarded £5,000**

With a dramatic rise in demand for services at a time when organisations had to adapt to remote working full-time, Citizens Advice Bureau North and West Kent required funding to increase capacity to operate remotely and support more vulnerable people in serious need.

To meet the need, funding was used to help set up an expanded email advice service as well as increasing the existing telephone advice service [Adviceline]

The result of this was more people receiving essential advice and practical support with minimal delay and fewer people experiencing urgent financial crisis, longer-term debt issues or at risk of homelessness due to lack of appropriate advice.

Not only this but the service also helped to reduced confusion and anxiety amongst Kent communities, particularly those who are vulnerable and socially isolated.

**[citizensadvice.org.uk/local/north-west-kent](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/local/north-west-kent)**

Our network provides advice in **2,500** locations across England and Wales.

We have over **21,500** volunteers supporting the delivery of our work alongside **7,000** paid staff.



## Hardship Grant

### The Saunders Family

#### **Awarded a Hardship Grant, offered to families with children who have complex needs**

The Saunders family were just one of over 338 families throughout Kent and Medway that have been awarded a grant from Kent Community Foundation's Hardship Funds.

Four-year-old Clarence Saunders has been diagnosed with autism and suffers from Chiari Malformation, which has hugely affected his mobility over the last three years.

Emily Saunders, Clarence's Mum, said "Travel for our family has always been a struggle with a basic buggy that provided no specialist support and was unsuitable for Clarence's physical development, including the ability to isolate himself during meltdowns."

During stressful times over the lockdown period, with changes to family life and routine, access to outside space was more important than ever and the Saunders family received funding to buy a special needs buggy for Clarence.

During stressful times over the lockdown period, with changes to family life and routine, **access to outside space** was more important than ever...







## The Autism Apprentice CIC Swale

### **Awarded £2,000**

The Autism Apprentice supports families with children who are autistic. The duo who run the community interest company offer individual support for those with autistic children looking for guidance and information on a range of areas, from schooling and employment to benefits and strategies for home support. Having a child with autism and additional needs is daunting and challenging at any time but during this period of great uncertainty, where routine is disrupted, access to services on hold and already lengthy wait times for support are extended further, it can cause a huge amount of stress and concern for the entire family. Funding was used to ensure the team could continue to offer support virtually through video calls with individual families.

**[autismapprentice.co.uk](https://autismapprentice.co.uk)**



## Beyond the Page Thanet

### Awarded £12,000

Beyond the Page supports women seeking English language tuition and community integration. They include women in, and rehoused from, refuges, those with poor mental health, learning difficulties, asylum seekers and those with no first language literacy and minimal spoken English.

Funding was used to help cover key salaries and running costs for an expanded service to reach those in minority ethnic families in Thanet – an area which has experienced some of the highest COVID rates in the UK. Part of their aim was to help those within the BAME community, especially with limited language skills, to help people to protect themselves against the virus, whilst also alleviating fears.

The charity set up a Chatrooms programme, where people could access help and support from the organisation and others, reducing social isolation and maintaining contact for many who do not have family or a support system locally. For those living in 'digital poverty' further support and equipment was provided to remove barriers to accessing help and information.

**[beyondthepage.org.uk](https://beyondthepage.org.uk)**



**“Women's Voices  
Together,  
Building Strong  
Communities”**

# Comments and notes



“

"Thank you for the incredible speed with which you are responding to the needs of Kent's most vulnerable people at this difficult time."

**Oasis Domestic Abuse**

”

"The services we provide are a **lifeline** for our beneficiaries, so it really is crucial that during these times that we are still able to be there for our community – this funding means we can do that."

**Dover smART**

"We have always been **hard-working** people. We were just a normal middle-class family until my husband lost his job because of the pandemic. – "Rent, water bill, council tax - they just piled up. I was wondering how we would cope.– "Thank you for standing by our side when times get hard."

**Family in receipt of Hardship Grant**

"This is an incredibly challenging time, and this funding means we can provide a critical service for those in our community who are at most risk. Our core goal is to **reduce social isolation** and we work with so many vulnerable people in the community who have no other support.

We're very grateful for vital funding received and to Kent Community Foundation for enabling us to **quickly respond** to the increased need for our services."

**Walderslade Together CIC**

"This funding gives us a boost and space to concentrate on our beneficiaries. Many families in Dover need our **support** now more than ever, so it's a relief to know we can continue to support them in any way we can, such as issuing food bank vouchers, delivering food parcels and gas and electric cards. Thank you!"

**HomeStart Dover**



"We are so **grateful** as a family for this help. It will make all the difference as we have been struggling financially. It will mean we can be sure we have food for the children."

#### **Family in receipt of Hardship Grant**

"We are a small charity but the work we are doing is **essential**, and at this difficult time we are being inundated with requests for help from vulnerable families that are so worried about their children and their mental wellbeing as carers. This grant will take the weight off our shoulders so we can continue to concentrate our time on **training and supporting families.**"

**Hypo Hounds**





# Beyond 2020

Nobody knows for certain what the future will hold for charitable organisations in 2021 and beyond. With many still unable to **raise funds** through major events or retail, there will undoubtedly be casualties.

For some organisations, **confidence of survival** is low – in November our survey showed that 1 in 10 felt 50% or less confident of being in operation by March 2021. This is not a surprise. Despite the vast amount of emergency money that has been given to the sector it still falls well short of what is actually needed. Our financial survey carried out in September reported that the sector would be **27% down** on income this financial year (that's £135m shortfall in the sector in Kent and Medway).

There is however, **hope and resolve** with many who have galvanised themselves after the initial impact of COVID-19. This is clearly seen in the stories within this impact report. In addition to funding, the focus for Kent Community Foundation has turned to how we can support the sector as they reframe thinking and adapt in these unfamiliar times. There is no doubt that there





are voluntary organisations who already have, or will find, new ways of delivering services: those who do will no doubt find themselves in the strongest position for **survival** into 2021 and beyond.

As a key part of the sector, we want to ensure lines of communication are open across the county and best practices shared, so we will be facilitating **new learning workshops** throughout 2021. We have seen first-hand that those most resourceful have even found better ways of working than before the Pandemic and made themselves more readily available to support more people than before.

The Foundation will also **continue to work** with other funders to champion core funding support for grassroots organisations who have proved themselves invaluable during this time of crisis, with the ability to respond fast thanks to their knowledge of what's going on 'on the ground'. We are **extremely proud to support** these charitable organisations and will continue to help them to **not just survive but thrive** for a better future for everyone in Kent and Medway.



**In November 2020, 53% said that their number of beneficiaries had increased since the first national lockdown in March 2020.**



Statistics from Kent Community Foundation's surveys of the charitable sector in Kent and Medway in May 2020 and November 2020.



**01303 817 500**  
**[www.kentcf.org.uk](http://www.kentcf.org.uk)**

Kent Community Foundation,  
Evegate Park Barn, Evegate Business Park, Ashford, TN25 6SX

Charity No: 1084361 | Company No: 4088589



/KentCommunity



@KentCommunity



Kent Community Foundation (KCF) - UK

**Thank you so much to all those who have supported Kent Community Foundation in 2020 and have given generously to our COVID funds.**

There is no doubt that it has been an extremely challenging and extraordinary year. Your tremendous ongoing support is greatly appreciated and will continue to make a difference to local communities across Kent and Medway.