

Communities Fund Evaluation

Executive Summary

Easy read version

August 2023

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Introduction



In 2020 the Scottish Government made a plan for mental health issues caused by Covid-19.



Part of this was a new Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults (the Fund). This started in 2021.



The aim of the Fund was to reduce social isolation, loneliness and mental health inequalities.



The Scottish Government asked for an evaluation of the Fund.



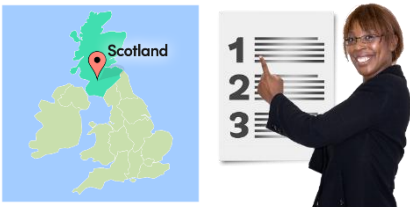
This report says what the evaluation found out.

How the evaluation was done



Information was collected in different ways. This included online surveys and one-to-one interviews.

What we found out - How the Fund was delivered



The rules for giving funding were flexible. This meant Local Partnership Groups could decide what was important in their area.



Local Partnership Groups are key people and organisations that work together in the local area.



They deliver the Fund to make sure that community-based organisations get the support they need.

Managing the Fund



The Local Partnership Groups got a grant to help them manage the fund in their area. Part of this was used to help organisations apply for the Fund.



By Year 2 of the Fund all Local Partnership Groups had people with lived experience. They were involved in making decisions.

Helping community organisations



Local Partnership Groups helped community organisations to apply for the Fund and other funding.



They also helped organisations deliver services that would support people's mental health and wellbeing.

Better ways to deliver and manage the fund



Local Partnership Groups and funded projects said the application process could be simpler.



They said it would help if they got information earlier and had more time to apply.

Summary



The evaluation showed that the Fund has worked well to meet local needs. It has done well to involve organisations and people with lived experience.

What we found out - Impact of the Fund



The Fund helped local people and community organisations. New support was given to help people with mental health and wellbeing.

Reach of the Fund



In Year 1 of the Fund there was 1842 projects. They supported around 300,000 people across Scotland.

Local community support for mental health and wellbeing



The projects worked to support people's mental health and wellbeing. This included:



Making connections – The projects gave people a safe space in their community. They put them in touch with other kinds of support.



Giving support and self-help – The projects gave people access to mental health and wellbeing workers. They supported people to better mental health.

Outcomes for people with mental health and wellbeing issues



Many of the projects involved people with lived experience. This had a positive impact on people's mental health and wellbeing.



The projects helped people feel less isolated. People were more physically active and learned new skills. This made them feel happier about their lives.

Impact of the Fund on local organisations



The Fund helped local organisations employ more staff and do more work.



The Fund helped them to understand local needs by working with people with lived experience.



Organisations worked together more and made new links.

Impact of the Fund on Local Partnership Groups



Local Partnership Groups said that working with the Fund gave them better links with local organisations and the community.

Summary



The Fund supported lots of people in local communities to have better mental health and wellbeing.



It also made better links between organisations who give funding and those who deliver support.

What could be done better?



Not all Partnerships worked in the same way. It would be better if there were clear rules.



They should share information about what works well. Have more learning and working together between Local Partnership Groups.



The issues of some groups have been made worse by the pandemic. More work should be done to reach these people, in areas like suicide prevention.

Conclusions



The Fund has done a good job of supporting mental health and wellbeing in local communities.



Local Partnership Groups could learn more and share more information about what works best.



Keep working with people with lived experience in planning and organising the Fund.



Keep working to reach target groups and find areas where the most support is needed.



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This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83521-186-1 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, August 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1328182 (08/23)

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