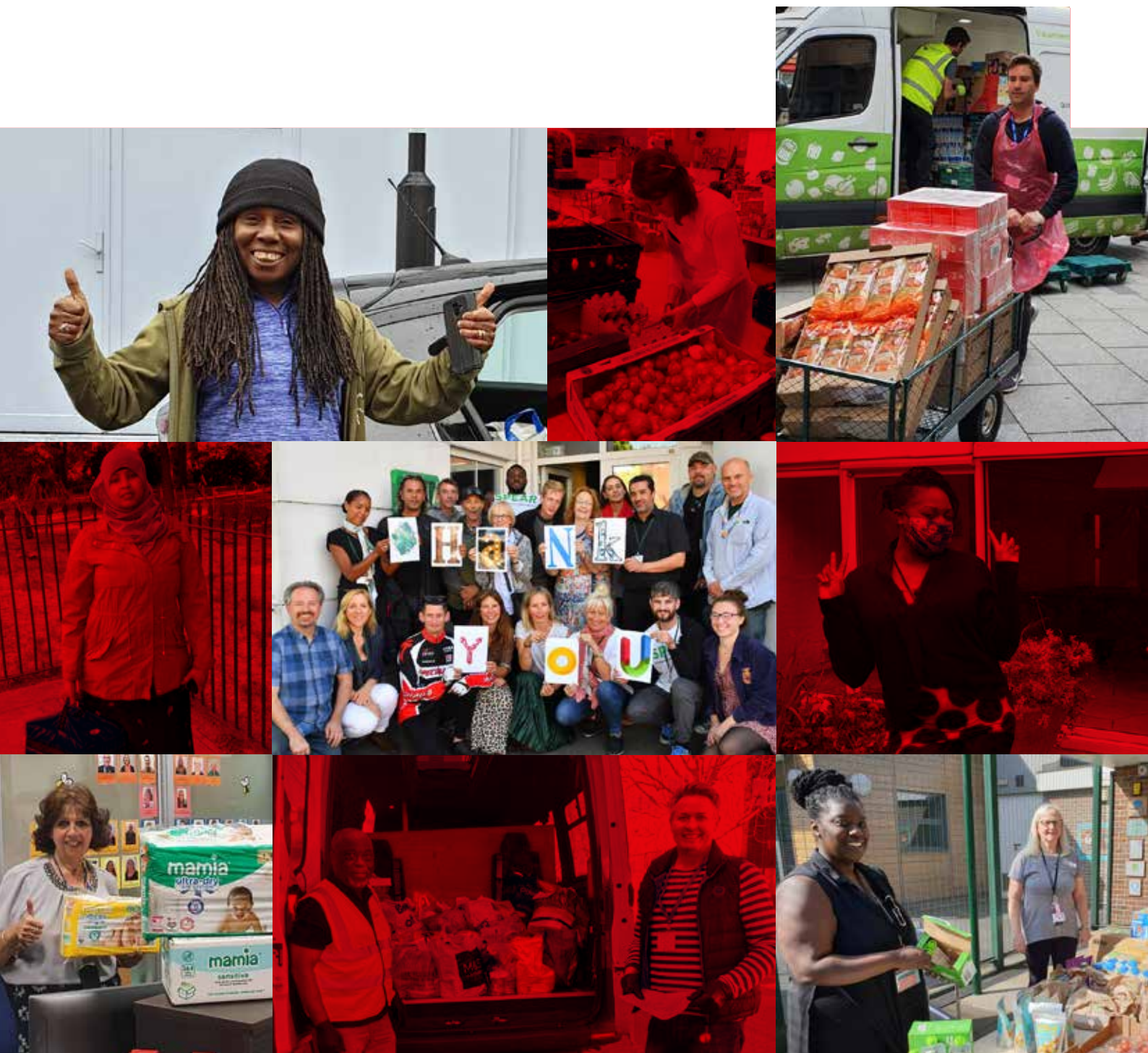


Collaboration in the Capital: Lessons from the pandemic

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The impact of COVID-19 in London

Over the last two years, COVID-19 has completely transformed communities, organisations and our way of life. Even now, as we reflect on all that we have achieved, and adjust to the new normal, the everyday impact of the pandemic endures.

Through this report, we want to explore the immense challenges being overcome by grassroots organisations in London. We will celebrate their tenacity in supporting their communities, and responding with speed and agility.

We will also address how we, as a funder, have grown over the last two years, including what we have learned and how we have adapted our ways of working for the future. As this report will showcase, despite the challenges of the pandemic, the positives we can draw from it are a valuable learning opportunity, for instance, the last two years saw unparalleled collaboration.

"We remain permanently exhausted but proud"

RefugeeYouth
Recipient of COVID-19 funding



Navigating new challenges in the Capital

Cast your mind back to March 2020. While the effects of COVID-19 were mirrored across the UK, London was hit earlier and harder by the virus in terms of mortality rates and business activity. The effects of the pandemic also compounded existing inequalities in the Capital, leaving deprived Londoners some of the most exposed and vulnerable in the country.

In our unique position as a community foundation for London, we witnessed this impact first hand. By 27 March 2020, 71 charitable organisations had contacted us from across all London boroughs. Within these groups, the primary concerns were young people and children, older people, young women and girls, Black and minoritised ethnic communities, disabled people, refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, and homelessness.

Of those organisations contacting us during the initial few weeks of lockdown, a third had to pause their services, another third had to change the way they delivered their service (usually moving online), while some had to cancel or suspend their services altogether. Skyrocketing demand was incompatible with limited staff and resources; they were forced to quickly adapt to new ways of working with beneficiaries, while also pivoting to operate as food banks or navigating logistical challenges around obtaining resources, equipment and food.

Thanks to your generous donations, despite all of this, the organisations we support have continued to provide vital, often lifechanging services to their beneficiaries.



The philanthropic response

In the UK charity sector in general, across 174 grantmakers, a total of £2.4 billion was raised for COVID-19 relief and recovery grants. Of those, most were £10,000 or less and went to small and medium-sized charities with an income of £100,000 to £1 million¹. In London, over £57 million was distributed in 3,300 grants through the London Community Response Fund, a ground-breaking funder collaboration which channeled the Capital's COVID-19 funding through one online application portal. Of the funds raised through this initiative, over 85% was awarded to Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic (BAME), LGBT+, Deaf and Disabled or women-led organisations.

Since the crisis unfolded, we as The London Community Foundation have deployed a total of £13.4 million in COVID-19 response funds to London's grassroots and small charities through combined contributions from individuals, companies, foundations, the public sector and the National Emergencies Trust.

Our donors spring into action

This incredible feat would not have been possible without the trust and flexibility of our donors, and the collaborative approach we adopted with funders from across the Capital and the country.

We manage funds on behalf of a variety of individuals, companies, local councils, public sector organisations, housing associations and

foundations. We strive to provide our donors with insights, advice and flexibility to enable them to give effectively to London's grassroots. This trusting relationship we have nurtured over many years formed the foundation of our COVID-19 response. Particularly throughout those first few months of the pandemic, we quickly mobilised to help our donors find a speedy and efficient way to give to the communities that needed their funds most. As a philanthropic service for London, we are immensely proud of and grateful for the flexibility bestowed upon us by our donor partners, who helped us quickly target funds where we saw the most need. We worked closely with them to divert scheduled or existing funding, repurposing over £6 million in total.

"Pivoting our giving to The London Community Foundation not only made it easier for charities to apply for funding through one central portal, it enabled us as a funder to respond swiftly and ensure grants were reaching those most in need in our local community of Merton and Wandsworth."

Paige Murphy
Head of the Wimbledon Foundation

"Supporting communities in the places we help to make and manage was at the forefront of our COVID-19 response. By working with the London Community Foundation we were fortunate to be able to financially help grassroots organisations to keep going, do what they do best and help their communities through the crisis."

Kate Nottidge
Director of Social Impact, Grosvenor



From March 2020, new and existing partners leapt into action. **Grosvenor** was the first of our donors at the digital door, requesting we immediately draw down from their existing endowment fund to repurpose and redeploy a total donation of £250,000. This generosity and quick-thinking kickstarted and corner-stoned our COVID-19 response.

Similarly, **Wimbledon Foundation** diverted the £85,000 contributions they had originally donated for their Wimbledon Foundation Community Fund to support the communities of Merton and Wandsworth. They further bolstered our COVID-19 response through significant donations of £100,000 and £65,000 specifically for those struggling with the effects of COVID-19. These pots of funding, which were pivotal to our COVID-19 response, were hinged entirely on our successful established relationships with these donors, both of whom were grateful for an open dialogue and close collaboration. Together, we could pause their normal giving and quickly pivot to COVID-19, while still ensuring their funding reached the grassroots.

We also generated new sources of funding thanks to our existing connections with the **Citi Foundation** and **Morgan Stanley**, who gave exceptional donations of £306,000 and £380,000 respectively. As two different donors each with their own priorities for themes and geographies, we provided value in targeting this funding to particular boroughs and themes, namely young

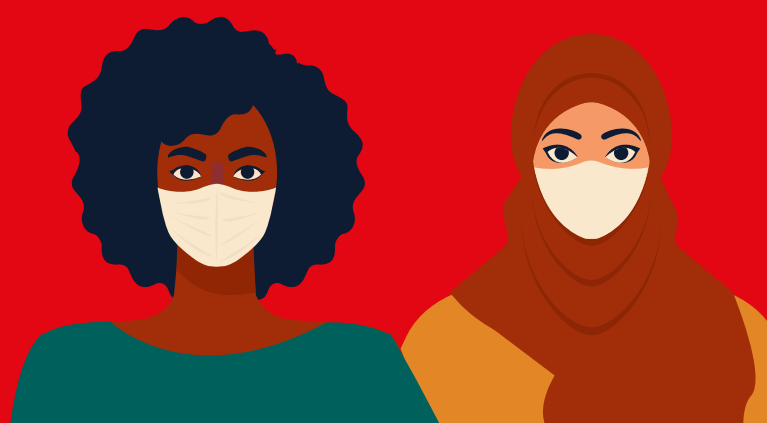
people and Black and minoritised ethnic communities. Our established, trusting relationship made The London Community Foundation their first choice of partner, a stirring reminder of the power of community and connection in times of need.

Thanks to generous donors like these, we were able to pool, segregate, and target funds by geography where necessary. The result was a unique and collaborative way to achieve impact: a COVID-19 response taking urgent funding straight to the heart of the community.

We were able to rapidly divert over £516,000 of existing and scheduled funds, awarding 1,019 grants to London's civil society, supporting Black and minoritised ethnic communities, domestic violence and abuse services, and providing emergency food.

Flexible giving through a community foundation

We know that, for many donors, starting their giving journey is often the hardest thing to do, and that a community foundation like ours may not be on their radar in a crisis. Yet, community foundations can be the closest link to the most vital local services; charities working on the ground in communities have the deepest understanding of the challenges facing at-risk groups and are best placed to alleviate those problems at speed. Our model and local expertise removes some of the challenges donors face when first navigating the London charity sector, helping them find these impactful charities and give quickly, in a simple, straightforward manner.



"As part of Morgan Stanley's global COVID-19 relief response, we partnered with The London Community Foundation to give quickly and effectively to London's underserved communities and help those who were most affected by the pandemic."

Emma Tamblinson
Executive Director, Morgan Stanley

The power of collaboration

**NATIONAL
EMERGENCIES
TRUST**



As part of our COVID-19 response, launched in March 2020, we teamed up with fellow funders on two additional collaborative funds: the National Emergencies Trust, managed by UK Community Foundations, and the London Coronavirus Response hosted by London Funders – one central portal co-ordinating funding efforts for 67 key partners in London.

The London Coronavirus Response portal acted as an easy access point for organisations seeking urgent funds. All emergency funds coming to or managed by The London Community Foundation were allocated through this portal. The London Community Foundation was the only pan-London fundraising foundation on the portal and our contribution represented 24% of the total COVID-19 funds committed.

We first used the fund to focus on supporting the urgent needs of organisations (food and essentials) and later continued to respond as organisations were forced to adapt their service delivery. Throughout, funders like us retained control over the funds we were managing through the portal and could select applications against themes, projects and London boroughs. Organisations from across the Capital and the country were also able to share due diligence information to accelerate decision-making. Investment is now moving from crisis response to building towards the recovery and renewal of civil society.

Later in this report, we will explore what these learnings represent for the funding environment and collaborative funding.

"Our open collaboration with The London Community Foundation helped maximise the impact of funding distributed at a time of crisis. We ensured community groups could focus on their vital work rather than filling in multiple forms, and resources could flow intelligently across the city."

James Banks
Chief Executive, London Funders



Our response for London

As a community foundation, we recognise the complexity of giving in London even during 'normal times'.

Our reach is unparalleled for donors seeking local organisations in their communities. Far from being big-name charities, throughout COVID-19, over 90% of The London Community Foundation's COVID-19 response funds were committed to organisations with an income of less than £1 million. It was these smaller grassroots organisations that responded with agility and speed from the offset.

Overall, through our COVID-19 response, we mobilised over £13.4 million of essential funds to the Capital's grassroots charities and community groups, supporting an estimated 1.1 million Londoners.

Working life during the emergency

Daily rotas of grant assessments; evening grants panels; revised electronic finance and governance processes with daily – sometimes twice daily – payment runs.

All this, plus revised electronic procedures for successful grantees to ensure we could balance our due diligence, governance requirements and speed of grant processing with their virtual working and scale of need they were meeting. Every grant application was a sobering reminder of the long-term fallout of this global pandemic, particularly for those people and places already struggling. But it was also a story of community strength.



4.2 was the average number of days between receiving an application and awarding a grant for the first month of lockdown



"The least we could do was strive to meet as many requests for funding as possible thanks to the generosity of our donors, many of whom substantially increased their grant budgets, whilst our team worked remotely from kitchen tables to bedroom desks to assess the applications and facilitate the twice weekly decision-making panels."

Richard Horsnell
Grant Programmes Lead, The London Community Foundation

Key themes emerge

Our COVID-19 response focused on key priority areas developed from knowledge shared from the frontline and data from London's boroughs. Priority areas for our funding included: food, people at risk, homelessness, advice, domestic violence and abuse, children and young people.

Throughout the pandemic, applications to these categories told a story of how the crisis was unfolding for London's communities: lockdowns and their impact on domestic abuse; children's vulnerability with interrupted education and the inability to socialise and grow together; furlough and the desperate need for advice and guidance.

Through our expertise and reach, the 10 London boroughs with the highest percentage of children in poverty received 48% of the funding. We targeted over 45% funds to BAME communities in London and, in the 10 boroughs with the highest percentage BAME population, funds committed to support BAME beneficiaries increases to 55%. Almost 21% funds have been directed towards domestic abuse support and, finally, 31% of funds committed were for food and other emergency supplies.

£13.4m
distributed in
COVID-19
funding through
1,019 grants



How the community responded

For the organisations we funded, COVID-19 was a period of intense strain on their services. The response of the charitable organisations working under extreme pressure was humbling and inspiring in equal measure.

Despite all the challenges, as demand for these vital services increased, so did charitable organisations' determination to build positives from the situation in the form of increased collaboration and shared learning, long-term adaptation to new ways of working, and reaching new audiences through digital inclusion.



Voices from the frontline

Sistah Space

Sistah Space received £4,300 of COVID-19 funding. This helped them meet increased demand for food, hygiene and toiletries to support African and Caribbean heritage women and girls affected by domestic and sexual abuse in Hackney.

As the only African Caribbean heritage organisation of its kind in London, Sistah Space is keenly in tune with the particular needs of African heritage communities, particularly migrants, who have been disproportionately affected by the impact of the pandemic.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, they were able to distinguish between what the mainstream deems essential and what their service users required; in their vital food packages, they provided culturally relevant food, hygiene products and personal items specific to black skin and hair types such as Shea butter, black soap, and African and Caribbean cuisine.



45% of funds went to Black and minoritised ethnic communities in London

21% funds were directed towards domestic abuse support

"It has lifted morale among our service users who finally feel part of the community that they have felt excluded from. Our clients were delightfully surprised and extremely grateful when we purchased specific African and Caribbean foods.

Thank you for listening and supporting us to support our community in the way WE know they want to be supported. Our essentials included culturally specific foods & products. You have gone to the heart of the community and heard us ALL."

Sistah Space

Voices from the frontline

RefugeeYouth

RefugeeYouth received £10,683 of COVID-19 funding to develop a new online wellbeing programme, increase one-to-one support, engage with external facilitators and community partner organisations, and expand the capacity of their staff.

RefugeeYouth is a Croydon-based charity dedicated to improving the lives of young refugees. They focus on increasing emotional wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence, and reducing isolation. Facing perpetual stigma, countless barriers to support and further reduced access to services, these young people, here without their families, were some of the most severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

"We ensured everyone had someone to talk to, especially important for those living alone, provided a genuine 'place to go' and remain connected, to be comfortable sharing fears whilst encouraging them to also focus on hope for the future."

RefugeeYouth

"This is the best time of my week for me."

RefugeeYouth beneficiary

48% of our COVID-19 funding went to the 10 London boroughs with highest % of children in poverty

Voices from the frontline

The Smile Brigade

The Smile Brigade received £5,000 in COVID-19 funding to provide a free meal delivery service and toiletries to vulnerable and at-risk residents within Hammersmith & Fulham and surrounding areas.

The COVID-19 funding they were allocated through The London Community Foundation allowed them to extend their service from one day a week to four – tripling the number of meals they were able to cook and distribute to vulnerable residents who may have been housebound due to age, ill health or self-isolation. Less than a week after launching their COVID-19 free meal delivery service, they were averaging 400 meals per day – with their chefs cooking and distributing 560 meals to 120 households on Friday 27 March.



32% of our COVID-19 grants went to food



Learnings

What community organisations need now

The pandemic served to reinforce what we, as a community foundation, already knew: the frontline community organisations we fund have a trusting relationship with the community; in a crisis, they are the first place that people in need will turn to. Support for these organisations is proven to get right to the heart of the community and should be strengthened as much as possible.

One of the means of support we have identified is funding for organisations' core costs. The impact of our funding can be much greater if we help organisations to strengthen themselves as well as deliver services. Funding core costs means meeting a wide variety of needs, from staff costs or training, to rent, to buying new computers or starting a new

project. Core funding provides these organisations with the flexibility and resources to plan, innovate, improve, and provide breathing space to think, as well as security for the future. In short, we can have a greater impact if we provide flexible funding, which allows organisations to spend in a way that is best for them. We are already beginning to see the benefits in the form of strengthened organisational resilience. That is why we are committed to making the case for core costs with new donors, and to supporting an element of contribution towards core costs in all our grants. This will be particularly crucial as we see energy bills and the cost of living rise. Just like in other sectors, charities are facing incredible economic pressures to deliver services and simply break even.

Our second greatest take-away is the need for greater flexibility for grantees. In March 2020, we signed up to the London Funders Funder Statement of Commitments, which outlined a series



of commitments to transparency, openness, and adaptability. A year later, we joined the #FlexibleFunders campaign, run by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) and London Funders, to build on this commitment to the sector and adopt even more open and trusting practices in support of London's grassroots organisations. We will continue to review our grantmaking, and our advice and support to donors, to ensure we can provide London's grassroots organisations with the flexible support they need.



"When COVID-19 hit, Citi's efforts were focused on how to mitigate the impact for the clients we serve, the communities we support, and our people. We were acutely aware of the disproportionate effect of the pandemic across London and engaged our long-standing partner, The London Community Foundation, to develop a plan of support.

The London Community Foundation's strength comes from their comprehensive understanding of small and medium-sized organisations in London that are often the lifeblood of their community. This coupled with the speed in which they deployed funding meant we were able to support those at risk of being further marginalised by the pandemic."

Rachael Barber
Head of Community Development, Citi EMEA

What the pandemic has meant for us

Aside from the pandemic presenting persistent challenges, there has been positive progress. For example, we demonstrated how funders can work differently for the greater benefit of grantees and the communities they serve.

As an organisation it is our duty to be alert and we take our responsibility as a philanthropic service for donors seriously – but never is this more relevant than in times of crisis. During the pandemic, despite the speed and flexibility of our grantmaking, we were able to balance this with the risk of fraud. We worked collaboratively with fellow funders to share knowledge and best practice, and manage risk effectively.

The pandemic also accelerated the digitalisation of our grantmaking processes. From the need to act with greater urgency, better, more streamlined processes were born. We learned to collaborate with other funders like never before, sharing knowledge across the Capital and the country. We also appreciated the true value of collaborative funding to tackle an urgent issue.

Finally, the pandemic was a moment for us to reflect and learn through an equity, diversity and inclusion lens. The immediate negative impact of COVID-19 restrictions on marginalised communities became abundantly clear through our monitoring reports and those initial calls. As a result, at least 48% of the funding we committed went towards organisations led by and for marginalised groups, including women, BAME, LGBTQ+, Deaf and Disabled people. We acknowledge our position of privilege as a philanthropy organisation, and are working to recognise, address and prioritise these groups through our funding and, most importantly, endeavour to influence our partners and donors to give equitably as we move forward.

Though our COVID-19 response may have provided vital funding and support in a time of need, there are, unfortunately, still issues and deficiencies that

existed before the pandemic and which will continue or become exacerbated beyond it. Our monitoring reports show that many of the organisations we work with recognise the need for continued or increased service provision: violence against women and girls is still increasing, even as the country moves further from lockdown, and food banks have become an essential service due to unemployment or financial instability. Grassroots community groups will be key to supporting their communities' social and financial inclusion particularly as the cost-of-living crisis looms. We are endeavouring to monitor how organisations continue to adapt to the changing circumstances and how we can support them in this period of recovery with continued trust, openness, flexibility and support.

We are eternally grateful to our donors, community partners and team for the commitment, flexibility, and consideration they have so kindly shown to Londoners over the last two years. While the pandemic may have shaken the world, we are more determined than ever to find the positives so that we can continue to help London thrive.

"In such unprecedented tough times which particularly strike the disabled population, your grant is already supporting our special needs users in their critical hour of need. The London Community Foundation will be symbolic as a beacon of hope. We will always recognise your kindness and care to our learning disabled young people."

Ability North London
Recipient of COVID-19 funding



"As a philanthropic service and funder, COVID-19 challenged our practices on all fronts. There remains a sense of 'not going back', striving to test ourselves on how and where we work, how we prioritise what is absolutely essential, how we get closer to our grantees and donors and, ultimately, bring them closer together."

Kate Markey
Chief Executive, The London Community Foundation

Our donors

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ALLEN & OVERY

Bloomberg



Morgan Stanley



ROBEY
WARSHAW



The Three Guineas Trust



Glossary

We respect and uphold our community partners' identity by mirroring the preferred terminology used in their communications in our case studies.



To find out more about The London Community Foundation's work with donors and London's communities, contact us using the details below.

The London Community Foundation

Unit 1.04, Piano House
9 Brighton Terrace
London
SW9 8DJ

londoncf.org.uk
enquiries@londoncf.org.uk
020 7582 5117
Twitter: @London_cf

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