

Evaluation of the Youth Covid- 19 Support Fund

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Executive summary

The Youth Covid-19 Support Fund

The Youth COVID-19 Support Fund (YCSF) was set up by Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to provide grant funding to youth organisations during winter 2020/2021, to help the youth sector sustain provision during the pandemic and aid recovery. The fund was set up and delivered in conjunction with grant delivery partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The aims of the fund were: (a) to support youth organisations that were struggling financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic; (b) improve the financial stability of organisations to ensure that they remained viable and continued to operate.

A mixed-method design was used to provide independent monitoring and evaluation of the YCSF. The evaluation combined analysis of financial and administrative monitoring data with qualitative research with organisations receiving and delivering the fund. A detailed methodology can be found in chapter 2.

(1) Who applied for the Fund?

A total of 1,171 organisations applied for the fund - most applicants were charities registered with the charity commission (45.9 percent) or excepted charities¹ (20.2 percent). Not for profit organisations made up 10 percent of applicants and community interest companies made up 7.4 percent. The remaining 16.6 percent of organisations identified as 'other'.

Size of applicants based on income varied considerably, but most were small or micro organisations - few applicants had a turnover of more than £1m, with just 0.6 percent of applicants identifying as 'Major' (£10m+) and 2.2 percent of identifying as 'Large' (£1m to £10m). Medium sized organisations (£100k - £1m) made up 17.6 percent of all applicants. Most applicants identified as 'Small' (£10k - £100k), or 'micro' (less than £10k), making up 34.9 percent and 44.7 percent of all applicants, respectively.

Type of service provision among applicants showed wide variation. Over half of applicants provided services to young people 1-2 days per week - type of services were not mutually exclusive. Those provided were detached (13.4 percent), mobile provision (11.6 percent), one-to-one provision (25.4 percent), open access youth work (52.9 percent), targeted youth work (47.9 percent), outdoor learning (35.6 percent), outreach (18.7 percent) and other (24.5 percent). Most applicants provided services to young people 1-2 days a week (55.8 percent) or daily (16 percent). The remaining applicants provided services to young people 3-6 days a week (25.1 percent) or less than once per week (3.1 percent).

(2) Who was the fund provided to and what was its reach?

Of the 1,171 organisations that applied for the fund, 555 were successful, and 616 were unsuccessful.

A total of £12,571,730 in funds were granted to the successful organisations. The smallest award was £16, while the largest was £3,600,000. The median payment

¹ Excepted charities are exempt from charity registration, and include church, school, Scout and Guide groups.

was £642 (the midpoint of all grants if arranged by size)². The distribution of payments was heavily skewed to many small grants and a few very large ones.

Successful applicants particularly included: micro organisations with an annual income less than £10,000; those with no other similar services nearby; and organisations providing intensive support to fewer and younger children.

Meanwhile London, the North West and the East of England were slightly under-represented among successful applicants.

Of successful applicants, 57.7 percent were only partially open at the time of application, and a further 16.8 percent were not open at all due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(3) How far and in what ways did the fund meet its objectives?

The fund reduced concerns among grantees about full or partial closure over the coming year - most grantees reported that the fund had helped them either 'a great deal' (51.2 percent) or 'quite a bit' (36 percent). It reduced grantees' concerns about full or partial closure in three, six and twelve-months' time.

It covered the key costs that it was designed to, and some other costs as well – grantees said that the fund was most helpful by covering core costs they would have struggled to pay otherwise. This enabled service delivery to continue during the pandemic or to resume earlier.

Experienced staff were retained, which meant organisations were able to keep services and activities running – the fund helped grantees avoid redundancies, retain experienced and skilled staff, and cover short-falls in staffing costs. More importantly for the sector, it helped avoid furloughing staff who were essential for service delivery. This included paid staff who were sometimes the only ones delivering the service, and staff who managed or coordinated volunteers, without whom a service could not run.

The fund helped with the cost of adapting to the measures to control COVID-19 – it helped with the costs of adapting physical environments to make them COVID-secure or moving to online delivery.

Financial sustainability of the sector was improved considerably, especially in the short-term – grantees said that services/ activities were no longer at risk of closure. Organisations did not have to use their reserves, which meant they were in a stronger financial position going forward and did not use money earmarked for future developments. The funds also helped fill a financial gap where income was reduced due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In the medium to longer-term the fund gave financial stability that allowed organisations to seek other funding elsewhere – those who were optimistic about the future said the fund put them in better financial position, offered the opportunity to 'reset', and enabled them to get back up and running so they could apply for other funding.

Around one in five still grantees still had concerns about ability to continue in three or six months – for these organisations the award did not cover their full deficit or was lower than the amount for which they applied. They also emphasised the continuing uncertainty about the pandemic and its effects on service delivery and some forms of fundraising.

² Median rather than mean payment figure is given because Major and Large awards skewed the value of the average payment giving a potentially misleading impression of the size of most payments.

(4) What worked well or less well with the Fund?

Grantees were appreciative of the funding in supporting and sustaining the youth sector – as shown above, overwhelmingly, grantees were appreciative of the YCSF and the use they were able to make of their awards. They also said that despite problems with the administration of the fund, DCMS, PwC, UK Youth, and national offices of uniformed services had worked together to address them.

Criticisms of the fund focused on difficulties associated with application to the fund and its administration – criticisms were directed at issues related to: confusion about **eligibility criteria** which some felt showed poor understanding of the youth and voluntary sectors and charitable status; the application process using **too much accountancy vocabulary**, and being **too long and complex relative to the size of smaller awards**; the way in which late announcement and payment of awards generated undue stress and anxiety. Some solutions were developed by PwC themselves as part of the application process. Other support and improvements were developed with sector partners.

(5) What were the perceived impacts for young people and others?

Grantees said the fund helped maintain access to support and safe spaces for young people. It provided uninterrupted services and allowed young people to continue to have fun in the unusual and difficult circumstances of the pandemic. The fund also helped alleviate pressures on parents by making sure young people were looked after and entertained. Organisations also said staff were less anxious or more motivated once the funding was received. Introduction

1.1 Background

In March 2020 the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, and a rise in the number of infections and people becoming seriously ill, meant the United Kingdom entered its first national lockdown. The measures put in place to control the virus seriously affected the ability of the voluntary and youth sectors to deliver in-person services to young people. Even before the pandemic, increasing numbers of young people reported feeling a lack of control in their lives³. They were concerned about their futures, particularly regarding employment and financial stability⁴. The global pandemic and economic repercussions have likely exacerbated these fears, as well as raising more immediate challenges of isolation and disruption to young people's schooling and social and family lives. COVID-19 pandemic has already been shown to have had a major impact on young people's mental health⁵.

The pandemic has also impacted the youth sector⁶, and this is on top of significant cuts to the sector. This sector is crucial in supporting young people and to help in reducing societal problems such as youth violence, poor mental health and crime. Recognising that the sector – and particularly the financial and operational viability of smaller youth

³ Princes Trust (2017) [Social media putting 'overwhelming pressure' on young people](#)

⁴ Youth Employment UK (2019) [Youth Voice Census 2019](#)

⁵ Pierce *et al* (2020) [Mental health before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: a longitudinal probability sample survey of the UK population](#) The Lancet Psychiatry 7(10): 883-892.

⁶ Pro Bono Economics (2020) [November 15-20 Covid Charity Tracker Survey results](#)

organisations – has been at serious risk during this crisis, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) established the Youth COVID-19 Support Fund.

1.2 The Youth COVID-19 Support Fund (YCSF)

The YCSF was set up to provide grant funding to youth organisations during winter, 2020/21 to help the youth sector sustain their provision during the pandemic, and aid recovery. The fund was set up and delivered in conjunction with grant delivery partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The overall aim of the YCSF was to enable youth organisations to continue operating in the short-term and to preserve the ecosystem of the sector in coming years. The main objectives of the Fund were to:

- Support youth organisations that were struggling financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Improve organisations' financial stability to ensure that they remained viable and continue operating.

The Fund was particularly focused on smaller, grassroots organisations that were greatly impacted by the pandemic.

Funding was available for a period of six months between November 2020 and March 2021 and was awarded retrospectively. Funding was available to cover eligible expenses incurred during this period that had not been funded by another source. The total value of the YCSF was £16.5 million.

The YCSF was open to local youth clubs, uniformed youth groups, and national youth and umbrella organisations. Grant sizes were capped depending on the type of organisation. For an overview of eligibility criteria and grant size caps see Figure 1

The YCSF offered grants to cover the following eligible costs:

- Essential business expenditure, such as staff salaries, and fixed/operational costs:
 - Rent
 - Utility costs
 - Insurances
 - Facility or equipment hire
 - Core staffing costs (including casual workers) that could not be covered elsewhere by other government funds (e.g. Furlough)
- Equipment (which is not capitalised) to ensure compliance with public health requirements
- Supporting the retention of specialist skills and expertise.

In practice, the grant amount was determined by calculating the deficit rather than calculating the costs for specific expenses.

Figure 1 Eligibility criteria		
Type of youth organisation	Local youth club OR uniformed youth group	National youth and umbrella organisation
Description of organisation	<p>Defined as a place where young people, from within the locality, can meet and participate in a variety of youth work activities.</p> <p>The young people who benefit are aged between 5 and 19 years old, or in the case of individuals with special educational needs up to 25 years old.</p>	<p>Defined as an organisation which works across, or in a region of, England to support organisations in the youth sector.</p> <p>Evidence of organisation's status as an umbrella body was assessed through reference to the organisation's constitution or mission statement.</p>
Grant size caps	<p>Lower of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £250k, 25% of annual expenditure per the most recent annual accounts, or total evidenced deficit from November 2020 – March 2021. <p>The award value was based on the relative financial need across all successful applications.</p>	<p>Lower of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £2m, 25% of annual expenditure per the most recent annual accounts, or total evidenced deficit from November 2020 – March 2021. <p>The award value was based on the relative financial need across all successful applications.</p>
Registration status	<p>Any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A registered Charity; An Excepted Charity that is a local youth group; or A not for profit organisation or Community Interest Company, registered with the relevant regulator. 	<p>Any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A registered Charity; An Excepted Charity that is a local youth group; or A not for profit organisation or Community Interest Company, registered with the relevant regulator.

1.3 Research Questions

DCMS commissioned NatCen Social Research (NatCen) as an independent research organisation to monitor and evaluate the fund. The evaluation aimed to explore the following research questions:

1. Who applied for the fund?
2. Who was the fund provided to and what was its reach?
3. How far and in what ways did the fund meet its objectives?
4. What worked well / less well with the fund?
5. What were the perceived impacts for organisations and young people (if any)?

The findings sections in Chapter 3 specifically address each of these questions.

2 Methods

Our evaluation followed a mixed-method design to provide independent monitoring and evaluation of the YCSF. The evaluation combined analysis of financial and administrative monitoring data with qualitative research with organisations receiving and delivering the Fund. This enabled us to gain a holistic understanding of the successes and challenges of the Fund and the extent to which it achieved its intended outcomes. The evaluation framework in Figure 2 shows how each of our methods addressed the five research questions set out in section 1.3. We explain each method in detail below.

Figure 2: Evaluation framework

Research question	Analysis of application data	Analysis of follow-up monitoring data	Grant delivery partner interviews	Grantee focus groups	Case study interviews
1. Who applied for the Fund?	*				
2. Who was the Fund provided to and what was its reach?	*				
3. How far and in what ways did the Fund meet its objectives?		*	*	*	*
4. What worked well/less well with the Fund?		*	*	*	*
5. What were the perceived impacts for young people (if any)?				*	

2.1 Ethics approval and GDPR

The NatCen Research Ethics Committee, which adheres to Government Social Research standards, reviewed and approved the evaluation in February 2021 ahead of recruitment and data collection.

Application and end line monitoring data: As part of the application process, applicants were informed that their information, including confidential data, would be processed by an independent evaluator to monitor and evaluate the YCSF. Applicants then signed a consent form to agree to this.

Participation in interviews and focus groups: Care was taken to ensure participants did not feel pressured or obliged to take part. Participation was voluntary, and participants could opt out of specific discussions or the research entirely. Participants were given clear information about the topic and content of the focus groups and interviews before taking part.

NatCen was the data processor for the purposes of the evaluation. The lawful basis for processing data was ‘public task’. We published a privacy notice and circulated it to all concerned parties. All data will be deleted after project completion.

2.2 Application and follow-up monitoring data

We analysed quantitative data collected by the grant delivery partner to understand who applied to the YCSF, who the fund reached and the extent to which it achieved its

objectives regarding supporting organisations' financial and operational viability. We also analysed quantitative feedback on the Fund from grantees.

2.2.1 Data gathering

The grant delivery partner, PwC, provided NatCen with the data collected from applicants to the Fund during the application process with their knowledge and consent. The data was shared securely via DCMS. The application data included background information on the organisation (e.g. staffing, nature of services, reach and target groups, location) and the impacts of COVID-19 on their service provision and finances.

Together with DCMS, PwC and NatCen designed a follow-up monitoring questionnaire. The questionnaire included repeat questions from the application form to track changes (e.g. on staffing, service provision and finances). It also included additional questions about grantees' experience of the Fund. The questionnaire was then used to collect monitoring data from grantees only at the end of the grant period in May 2021.

2.2.2 Achieved sample sizes

Table 1 below summarises the achieved sample size for the application and follow-up monitoring data. The evaluation involved application data for all applicants, including those who were successful and unsuccessful. End line data and monitoring information includes successful grantees only, for which we received a 90 percent response rate.

Table 1: Achieved sample sizes – Quantitative research activities

Research activity	Achieved sample size
Application data	1,171 responses
Follow-up monitoring data	500 responses (out of 555 grantees) Response rate: 90%

2.2.3 Data management and analysis

We carried out all quantitative data analysis using Stata 16. We analysed the application and follow-up monitoring data to answer research questions 1 to 3 (see section 1.3). We used the application data to understand differences between successful and unsuccessful applicants. Follow-up monitoring data was analysed to understand the progress that grantees had made towards establishing financial sustainability despite the pandemic, and the contribution that the YCSF had to this. Our analysis looked at grantees as a cohort rather than focusing on the trajectory of individual organisations.

We did not weight the follow-up monitoring questionnaire responses to account for non-response because we achieved over 90% response rate.

2.3 Qualitative methods

We conducted qualitative fieldwork with three groups of participants: grantees, key staff members from DCMS and the grant delivery partner (PwC).

For our qualitative research with YCSF grantees, we employed a two-staged approach including focus groups to explore experiences of the fund and follow-up interviews to develop more detailed case studies of how it helped them to sustain or recover their provision.

We also conducted qualitative research with DCMS staff, and the grant delivery partner. This was in order to fully understand the way the fund was delivered and administered, to gather their perspectives on whether and how the YCSF achieved its objectives, and to explore improvements that could be incorporated into similar funds.

2.3.1 Recruitment

We invited all grantees to take part in our focus groups using an opt-in approach. To ensure diversity in our sample, we purposively selected organisations of different types, sizes, and locations. We also tried to include organisations who provided targeted support to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) young people; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) young people; and / or young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We conducted one focus group with participants from national youth and umbrella organisations, and three focus groups with participants from local youth clubs or uniformed youth groups.

Through the focus groups, we identified organisations providing positive or mostly positive examples of the YCSF achieving its objectives. We selected organisations based on their experience of the fund and tried to ensure diversity in our selection. We therefore included organisations of different types, sizes and locations. We then invited these participants to become named case studies for the YCSF and take part in a follow-up interview.

For our interviews with the DCMS and the grant delivery partner, we liaised with our contact at DCMS to identify the most appropriate staff members to take part in the interviews. All qualitative encounters were conducted remotely and lasted no more than one hour.

2.3.2 Achieved sample sizes

Table 2 summarises the achieved sample size for our qualitative research activities.

Research activity	Achieved sample size
Focus groups	4 encounters with a total of 31 youth organisations
Follow-up interviews	8 encounters with a total of 8 youth organisations
Base- and end-line interviews with DCMS and grant delivery partner	4 paired interviews (2 per organisation)

2.3.3 Focus groups with grantees

We conducted four focus groups with grantees in April 2021 to gather qualitative feedback on grantees' experiences of the fund, and to understand what worked well and what could have worked better. We developed a topic guide (see Appendix A) that we used flexibly, with open and non-leading phrasing to explore participant perspectives in detail.

The focus groups covered the following topics:

- Impact of Covid-19 on their organisations;
- Experiences of the application process to the fund;
- Experiences of the award process;
- Use and outcomes of the fund;
- Suggestions for improvements.

2.3.4 Case study interviews

We conducted case study interviews with eight organisations who had participated in the focus groups in May 2021. We explored participants' experience of the pandemic and the fund in more depth and used these interviews to create case study profiles of the organisations (for topic guide, see Appendix B). These are included throughout the report.

We spoke to participants about the following topics:

- Background and context to their organisation;
- Impact of the pandemic on their organisation;
- The fund's contribution to their organisation;
- Experiences of the fund;
- Looking to the future

2.3.5 Base- and end-line interviews with DCMS and PwC

We conducted a total of four of this type of interview. In February 2021, we conducted one interview per organisation to understand how the Fund was expected to support individual organisations and the wider sector and to identify any anticipated challenges for delivery at that point. We then interviewed the same participants (with one exception) at the end of the funding period in May 2021 to understand whether and why delivery and outcomes occurred as intended, and to draw out lessons learnt from the Fund.

2.3.6 Data management and analysis

We used the 'Framework' approach to manage the qualitative data⁷. This means we assembled an analytical framework represented as a matrix. Each row represents a case (interview or focus group) and each column a theme or issue to do with the aims

⁷ Ritchie *et al.* (2013) *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers.*

of the fund and specific objectives. Transcripts of interviews and groups are summarised in the matrix, including illustrative verbatim quotes or case illustrations as appropriate. Once all interviews and focus group discussions were charted within this matrix, patterns, themes and issues can be more easily detected and analysed to develop a coherent reporting plan. Detection is followed by synthesis of information into higher-level theme and categories, and to explore emerging topics and issues by case, and by different types of participants and organisations in the sample. This approach enabled us to examine patterns across grantees and stakeholders involved in the fund, as well as for individuals and organisations

2.3.7 Reading the report

The report draws on quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is used in Chapter 3 to explore who applied to the fund (section 3.1). It is also used in section 3.2 to explore the profile of successful applicants relative to unsuccessful ones, and therefore the reach of the fund.

Quantitative and qualitative data are used in section 3.3 to evaluate how far and in what ways the fund met its objectives. The ways in which the fund worked well and helped improve the financial situation of individual and organisations is primarily covered in this section. This is because most positive data were to do with receipt of the award, what it enabled organisations to do, and their appreciation of this.

Section 3.4 mainly deals with what worked less well. It draws on feedback about the administration of the fund and difficulties arising, although it also shows how delivery partners provided support and solutions, and provides useful suggestions for the development, administration and delivery of similar funds in future.

Case illustrations of the type of projects and services supported by the fund are given at the end of the findings sections. Permission was given for them to be named in the study.

It should be noted that the evaluation and its findings have to be seen in the context of the highly unusual circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, national lockdowns, stay or work at home instructions, and the need for government to respond quickly to an emerging crisis in health, economic and service delivery terms. A more sympathetic reading of some of the issues that occurred with the administration of the fund may need to be seen in this light.

3 Findings

3.1 Who applied for the YCSF?

A total of 1,171 organisations applied for the fund - most applicants were charities registered with the charity commission (45.9 percent) or excepted charities⁸ (20.2 percent).

Size of applicants based on income varied considerably, but most were small (£10k - £100k) or micro organisations (less than £10k), making up 34.9 percent and 44.7 percent of all applicants, respectively.

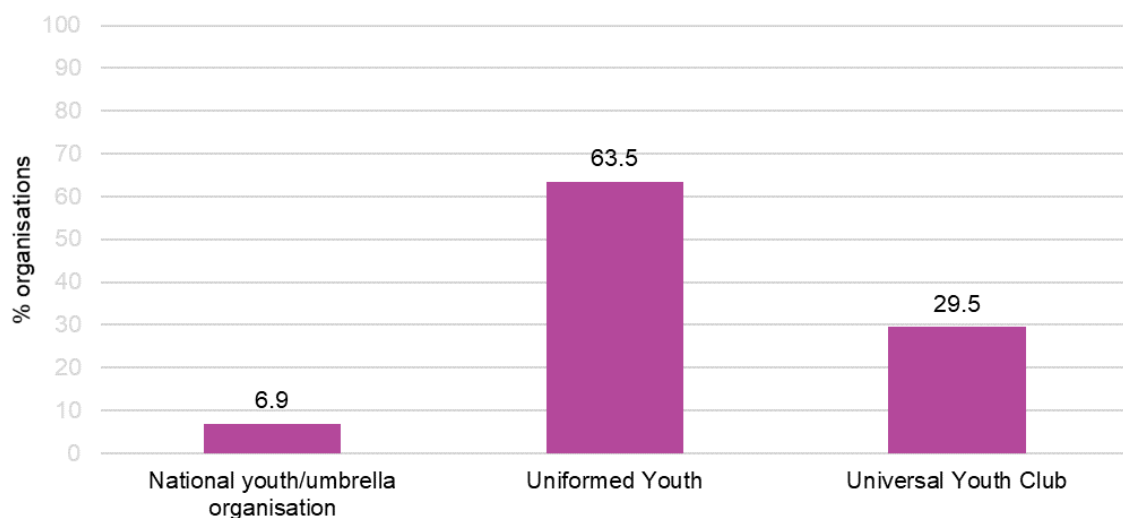
Type of service provision among applicants showed wide variation. Over half of applicants provided services to young people 1-2 days per week.

A total of 1,171 organisations applied for the fund. As part of the application process, all applicants were asked a series of questions about their organisation and service delivery. This section examines applicants' answers by type and size of organisation, and the type of services they delivered to build a picture of who applied to the fund.

3.1.1 Type of organisation

Most organisations that applied for the fund were uniformed youth organisations (63.5 percent). This compared to universal youth clubs (29.5 percent) and national youth or umbrella organisations (6.9 percent) as shown in Figure 3.

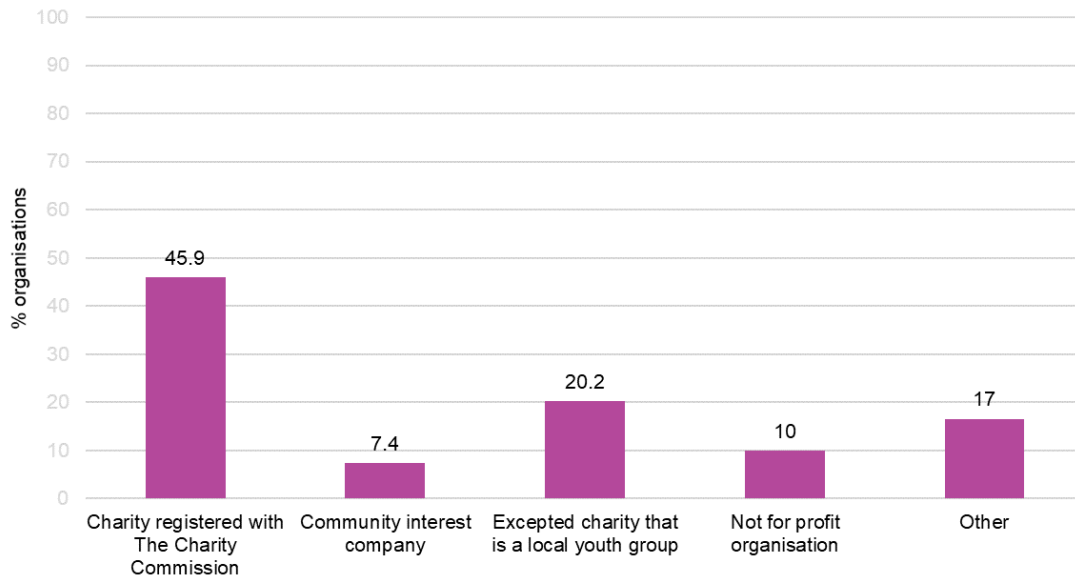
Figure 3 The percentage of applicant organisations of different types



⁸ Excepted charities are exempt from charity registration, and include church, school, Scout and Guide groups.

Most applicants were charities registered with the charity commission (45.9 percent) or excepted charities (20.2 percent). Excepted charities are exempt from charity registration, and include church, school, Scout and Guide groups. Not for profit organisations and community interest companies made up 10 percent and 7.4 percent of all applicants respectively, with the remaining 16.6 percent of organisations identifying as ‘other’⁹. See Figure 4.

Figure 4 The percentage of applicant organisations of different legal statuses



3.1.2 Size of organisation

Size by income

Applicants were asked to classify their organisation size based on income in the current accounting year. Over three-quarters of applicants were ‘small’ (£10k - £100k) or ‘micro’ (less than £10k) organisations, making up 34.9 percent and 44.7 percent of all applicants respectively. Few applicants had a turnover of more than £1m, with just 0.6 percent of applicants identifying themselves as ‘Major’ (£10m+) and 2.2 percent of applicants identifying as ‘Large’ (£1m to £10m) and (£10m+). Medium sized organisations (£100k - £1m) made up 7.6 percent of all applicants. See Figure 5.

The size of organisations and their income is important because one criterion for of funding was that larger organisation needed at least £1 million turnover. Some medium or large organisations with turnovers under £1 million believed this made them ineligible, although it was quickly clarified by the grant delivery partner to not be the case (see section 3.5.1).

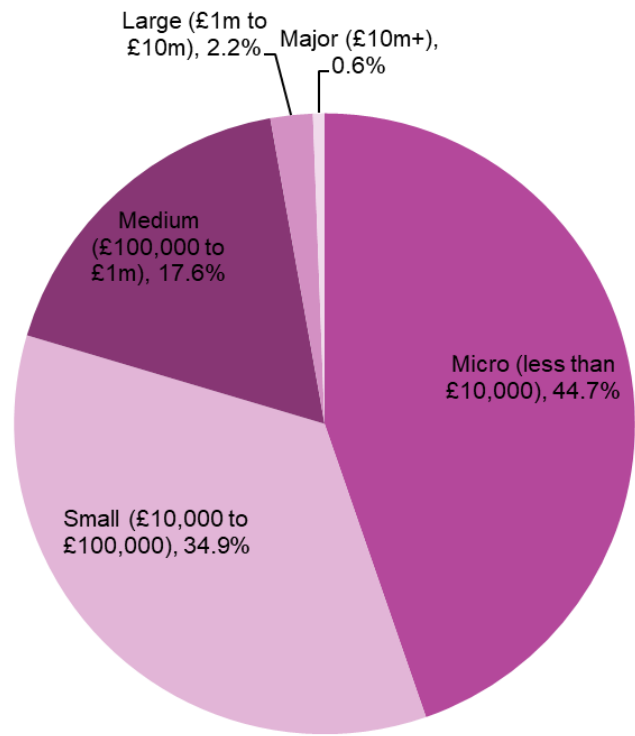
Size by number of paid staff and volunteers

Reflecting this wide range of size of organisations among applicants, the number of staff that applicant organisations had also varied considerably.

⁹ Further details on ‘other’

On average, organisations that applied to the fund had 4.5 full time staff, 4.4 part time staff, and 273.6 volunteers. This is number of volunteers was skewed by the larger organisations in the applicant pool. It is important to note that of the 1,171 total applicants, 70.7 percent had no full-time staff, and 60.5 percent had no part time staff. Micro-organisations - who made up the majority of grant recipients had 0 full time staff on average. Small and medium-sized organisations had an average of 0.6 and 4.7 full-time staff respectively. Despite applicants having large numbers of volunteers on average, over half (55.1percent) of organisations had 10 or fewer volunteers. This demonstrates the extent to which youth services delivery is dependent on widespread use of volunteers rather than paid staff.

Figure 5 Organisations with differently sized annual incomes as a percentage of total applicants



3.1.3 Service provision

Frequency of provision

Applicants were also asked a series of questions about the services they provided to young people. Most applicants provided services to young people 1-2 days a week (55.8 percent) or daily (16 percent). A remaining 25.1 percent provided services 3-6 days a week, and 3.1 percent of organisations that applied for the fund provided services less than once a week.

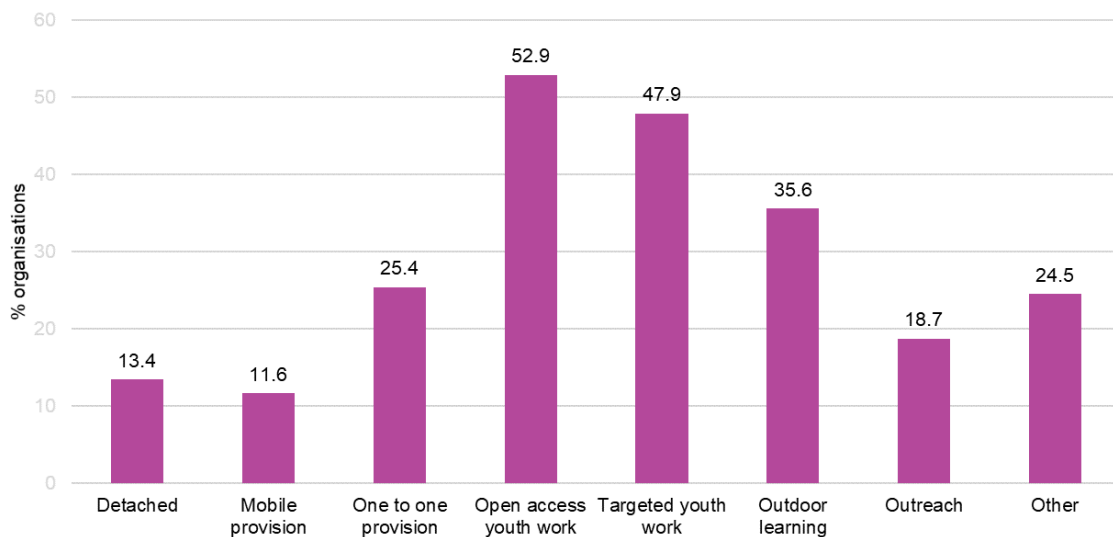
When services are provided

Organisations were also asked when they provided services. For this question, applicants were able to give more than one answer and responses were not mutually exclusive. 93.5 percent of applicants said they provided services from 5pm onwards, perhaps reflecting the number of uniform groups that often meet in the evenings after school hours. By comparison, 33.6 percent of applicants offered services during the daytime. Just 13.9 percent of respondents offered services on weekdays only, and only 12.5 percent offered services at weekends only.

Type of services provided

When asked what services the applicant organisations offered, applicants were also able to provide more than one answer (see Figure 6). Seven types of services were provided, with the most frequently cited being 'open access youth work' (52.9 percent), followed by 'targeted youth work' (47.9 percent), and 'outdoor training' (35.6 percent). The least common type of service provided was mobile provision (11.6 percent).

Figure 6 The percentage of applicant organisations with different types of service provision



Case Study 01: Switch Up Nottingham

Switch Up Nottingham, affiliated with the Nottingham School of Boxing, is a charity that supports vulnerable young people who are at risk of involvement in gangs, drugs and associated violence. It provides young people with positive alternatives to gangs through mentoring, education and physical activities. It was founded by Marcellus Baz, a local boxer and former gang member, who has been awarded for his work with Switch Up.

The Youth COVID-19 Support Fund (YCSF) covered a large deficit in Switch Up's funds, helping them support vulnerable young people during the pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 on their services

A lot of the young people Switch Up works with rely on them heavily, coming to their gym and youth centre many times a week. For them, lockdown was "dire", as almost all activities ceased, Switch Up's facilities had to close, and staff were furloughed. The project was able to move some services online, such as mentoring and fitness classes. However, many aspects of their work, such as school visits and workshops, could not continue.

Impact on finances

After the onset of the pandemic, Switch Up was at risk of drawing on reserve funds to cover staff salaries and facility costs, which could have threatened their long-term plans, including securing a new lease for a youth centre and gym. Income fell by between 25-50%, as companies withdrew sponsorship and fees for gym classes were cut off.

The difference the YCSF has made

The YCSF covered a significant deficit Switch Up was facing. This financial stability will ensure they can quickly scale up their activities and reach the people who rely on them once life starts to return to normal. This will help them recover faster from the effects of the pandemic and strengthen their activities as restrictions are eased, supporting vulnerable young people who are likely to have faced a very difficult time over lockdown.

We're in a good place. We've invested in some people, and yes, we're expanding and keen to meet the needs of people post-COVID (Switch Up Staff Member).

The project is more confident now that they will have resources to find new premises for their youth centre and gym, even if their current negotiations fall through. The Fund will also help them absorb the costs of the salaries of staff who kept working with young people over the pandemic, meaning they will not have to cut services in the long-term.

It meant we could employ them ... and not having to be furloughing more of them if we wanted to really tighten our belts ... it meant they could continue supporting young people during lockdown rather than not (Switch Up Staff Member)

Case study 02: Whitely Bay Scout Group

Whitely Bay Scout Group gives young people the opportunity to meet for fun activities, and go camping, as well as learn a range of skills. The group prides itself on its diverse membership, including several children with conditions such as ADHD or autism and ensures that everyone has the chance to join in with activities.

Impact of COVID-19 on their services

Regular face-to-face meetings and activities had to cease during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, which was upsetting for members who were heavily involved in the group. Many relied on the regular activities and meetings for fun and community and might come several times a week.

Large numbers of young people were absolutely devastated, because their life is either a Tuesday, Wednesday or a Thursday where they can have fun meeting face-to-face at a location and do things that they enjoy, plus all the weekend and other activities (Scout Group Leader).

The group did its best to adapt, and tried to move meetings online, however some families didn't have access to the internet. More successfully, the group sent families activity packs, which included nature walking or tips for hands-on games to play at home.

Impact on finances

Subscription payments from families fell dramatically. This left the group unsure how it would handle large fixed costs, such as insurance and membership fees to Scouts Headquarters. They were at risk of drawing on funds put aside for a new venue for the group.

The difference the YCSF has made

The Youth Covid-19 Support Fund covered the group's biggest outlay of the year: its membership fee to the national Scouts organisation. This fee usually absorbs two-thirds of the group's annual subscription income. However, with this income cut severely by COVID-19, the Fund helped the group make it through lockdown without sacrificing its reserves.

The Fund also helped pay for the activity packs sent to members' homes. These could provide a range of activities for a whole weekend, and were very well-received, helping families stave off boredom in lockdown.

We printed out a walk for them to go and do based on walking around the local area. So, all those printing and activities costs were met by the grant ... the young people had fun. They discovered new things They can do it as a big family. We have a complete mix of that and because we'd done it over a range of days, so we usually do a big activity long weekend, they could pick and choose the timings that worked for them and it worked very well (Scout Group Leader).

3.2 Who was the fund provided to and what was its reach?

Of the 1,171 organisations that applied for the fund, 555 were successful, and 616 were unsuccessful.

A total of £12,571,730 in funds were granted to the successful organisations.

The smallest award was £16, while the largest was £3,600,000. The median payment was £642 (the midpoint of all grants if arranged by size)¹⁰.

The distribution of payments was heavily skewed to many small grants and a few very large ones. Those with no other similar services nearby and organisations providing intensive support to fewer and younger children were also more likely to be successful.

Of successful applicants, 57.7 percent were only partially open at the time of application, and a further 16.8 percent were not open at all due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This section addresses the question, 'Who was the fund provided to and what was its reach? It does so by examining the percentage of successful grantees against characteristics and comparing them to against the equivalent percentage of applicants with the same characteristics.

3.2.1 Value of awards

Number of successful applicants

- **Of the 1,171 organisations that applied, 555 were successful, and 616 were unsuccessful.**

Financial value of awards

- **A total of £12,571,730 in funds were granted to the successful organisations.**
- **The smallest awarded payment was £16, and the largest was £3,600,000.**
- **The median payment (the midpoint of all grants if arranged by size) was £642¹¹.**

However, there was substantial variation in grant amounts. The distribution of payments was heavily positively skewed towards smaller awards with few very large ones. To illustrate, 25 percent grants were below £277, and 75 percent were below £2,581.

¹⁰ Median rather than mean payment figure is given because Major and Large awards skewed the value of the average payment giving a potentially misleading impression of the size of most payments.

¹¹ Median rather than mean payment is given here because the small number of very large awards would have skewed the mean size of payment as to be misleading.

3.2.2 Who the fund was provided to?

Size of organisation

Figure 7 (below) shows that awards went to all the different sized organisations that applied to the fund from micro to major (as defined by their income). However, the vast majority of payments (61.6 percent) went to micro organisations with incomes of less than £10,000, compared to 44.7 percent of total applicants coming from micro organisations. These organisations were disproportionately represented among successful applicants compared small and medium sized ones. Small organisations made up 23.2 percent successful grantees, compared to 34.9 percent applicants. Medium organisations made up 11.9 percent successful grantees, but 17.6 percent applicants. Large and major organisations were few but were also marginally more successful as applicants.

Figure 7 Organisations with differently sized annual incomes as a percentage of successful grantees and total applicants



Charitable or voluntary sector status

Most successful grantees had charitable status of some kind. 36 percent of successful applicants were registered with charity commission compared 45.9 percent of all applicants. 31.2 percent of successful applicants were excepted charities, compared to 20.2 percent of all applicants. This meant that excepted charities were more successful in being made an award from the fund than those registered with the charity commission.

Both community interest companies and not-for-profit organisations were under-represented among successful applicants compared to all applicants. For example, community interest companies made up 2.3 percent of grantees, but 7.4 percent of applicants. Similarly, not for profit organisations were 7.2 percent of grantees, compared to 10 percent applicants.

Whether similar services were nearby

Organisations with no other organisations providing similar services nearby were slightly less likely to be successful at applying to the fund successfully. They made up 36.4 percent of applicants, but just 31 percent of grantees. This is a finding that may be worthy of further inspection as it seems to be counter-intuitive that funds would be denied to services that left a potential gap local service to young people. However, several other factors may be at play such as the quality of the application or size of the organisation.

3.2.3 Reach of the fund

Number of young people served by each organisation

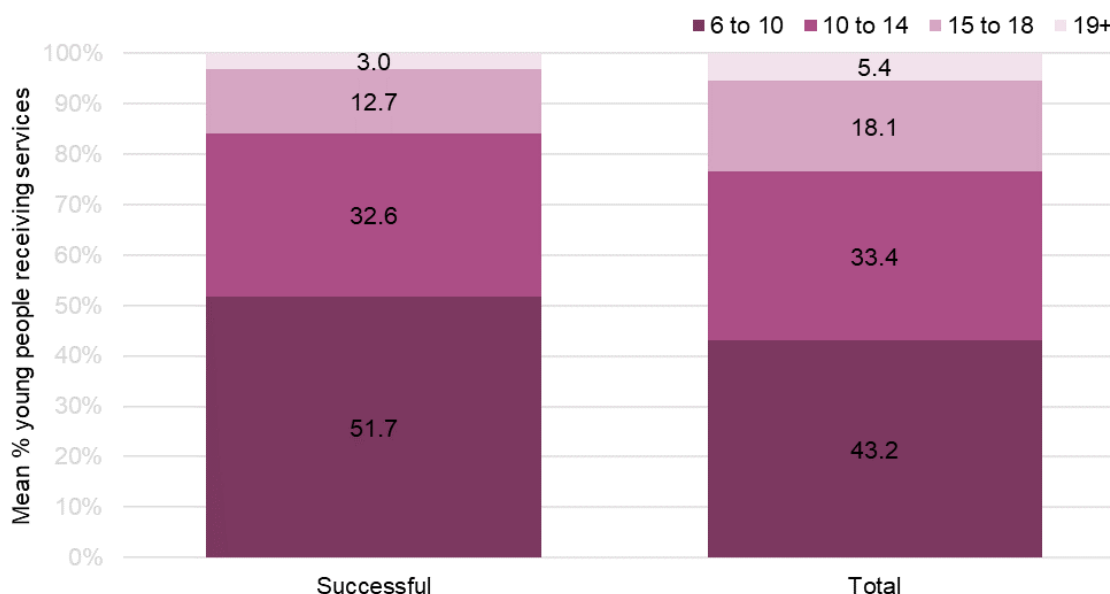
Organisations that served relatively few young people more intensively were also disproportionately successful. Applicants estimated the number of young people who used their services, prior to the impact of COVID-19. The median reported number of young people served by successful grantees was 30 people, compared to 50 for all applicants. Average (mean) numbers of young people served were much higher, but only because a small number of very large organisations that support thousands of children skewed the figures. For instance, the average number of young people worked with was 1,666 for successful applicants compared to 1,120 for all applicants. It is therefore better to draw conclusions from comparison of the median figures above in terms of number of young people served.

Age of young people served by organisations

Organisations working with younger children were more successful at applying to the fund. Each organisation reported the number of young people they served in different age bands. These were converted into percentages of the total number of young people each organisation served. On average, 51.7 percent of the young people supported by successful grantees belonged to the 6-10 age group. By comparison, 43.1 percent of the young people supported by all applicant organisations were from the same age group. The fund therefore made payments to more organisations working with the youngest age group. Figure 8 provides the full average breakdown for successful and applicant organisations, illustrating this difference¹².

¹² These findings should come with the caveat that two of the age groups (6-10 and 10-14) overlapped in the application form. It is likely that not all respondents classified 10-year-olds in the same way, and some may have been double-counted.

Figure 8 The average percentage of young people served by successful grantees and total applicants belonging to different age groups



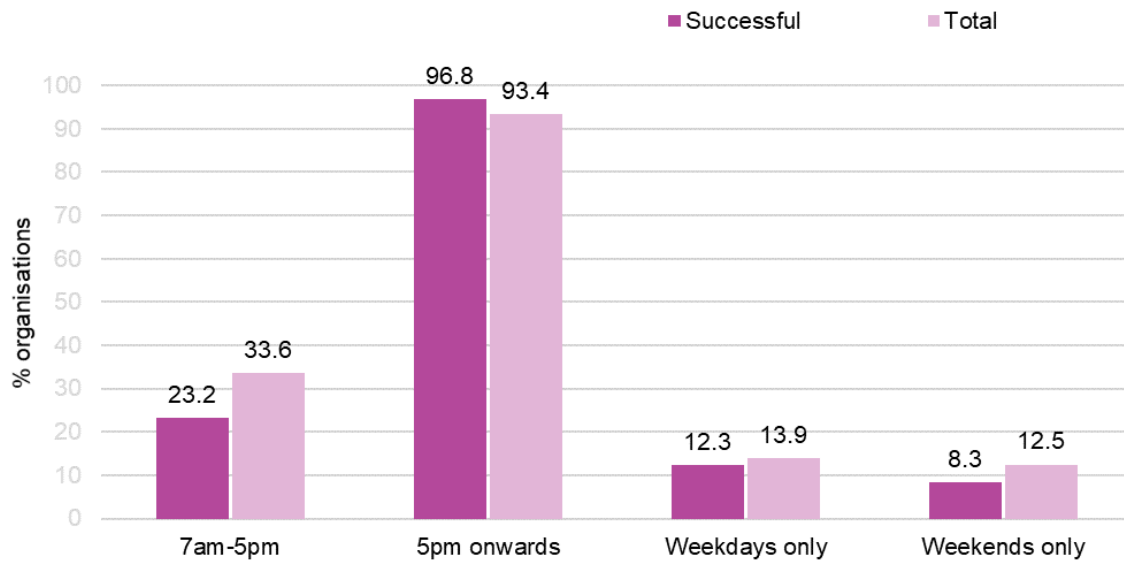
Complementing this trend, uniformed youth groups (e.g., scouts, guides), were disproportionately successful. The median uniformed youth group provided services for 28 young people, which is fewer than the figure for umbrella organisations (51), and universal youth clubs (145). Nevertheless, 76.6 percent of successful grantees were uniformed youth groups, compared to 63.5 percent of applicants.

National youth umbrella organisations and universal youth groups were less successful as proportion of organisations funded than uniformed groups. National youth umbrella organisations were 5.9 percent of successful grantees but 6.9 percent of applicants. Universal youth groups made up only 17.5 percent of grantees, but 29.5 percent of total applicants.

Timing of provision

The fund tended to provide the greatest support to organisations working with young in the evenings, one or two evenings per week. As can be seen in Figure 9, the most successful organisations were generally those which offered services in the evenings (5pm onwards); such organisations made up 96.8 percent grantees, 93.4 percent of all applicants. These organisations made up 72.3 percent successful grantees, and 55.8 percent of total applicants. This might be explained by the fact that uniformed youth groups, which typically meet in the evenings, once or twice a week, were especially successful. Organisations providing services during the day (7am-5pm) or only at either weekends or weekdays, were less successful in applying to the fund.

Figure 9 The percentage of successful grantees and total applicants providing services at different times

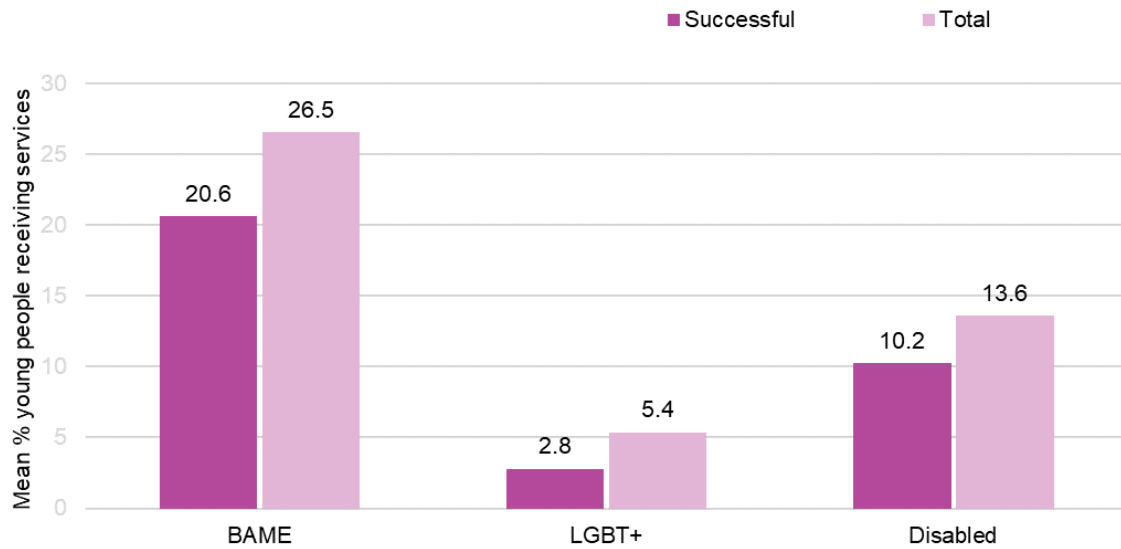


Delivery to BAME, LGBT+ and disabled young people

Applicants were asked to report how many young people who used their services were Black, Asian and, Minority Ethnic (BAME); Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans (LGBT+); and disabled. These findings reflect the organisations' judgements or best guesses about service delivery to these populations and should be interpreted with a great deal of caution. Indeed, some applicants noted that they had difficulty answering these questions. Applicants also provided these figures in both raw numbers (not reported here) and percentages, and these two measures did not always match up.

Allowing for these caveats, successful grantees, on average, reported that 20.6 percent of the young people they work with come from BAME backgrounds, which is less than the 26.5 percent average for all applicants. Successful grantees report that 2.8 percent of those they work with are LGBT, on average, compared to 5.4 percent for all applicants. Successful grantees also report working a lower percentage of disabled young people (10.2 percent) than applicants in general do (13.6 percent). This may suggest that these populations are not being as well served as they could be because a higher proportion of organisations who said they were working these groups did not receive funding. Although further, better quality data will be required to make a more definitive statement on this. See Figure 10.

Figure 10 The average percentage of young people served by successful grantees and total applicants belonging to different groups

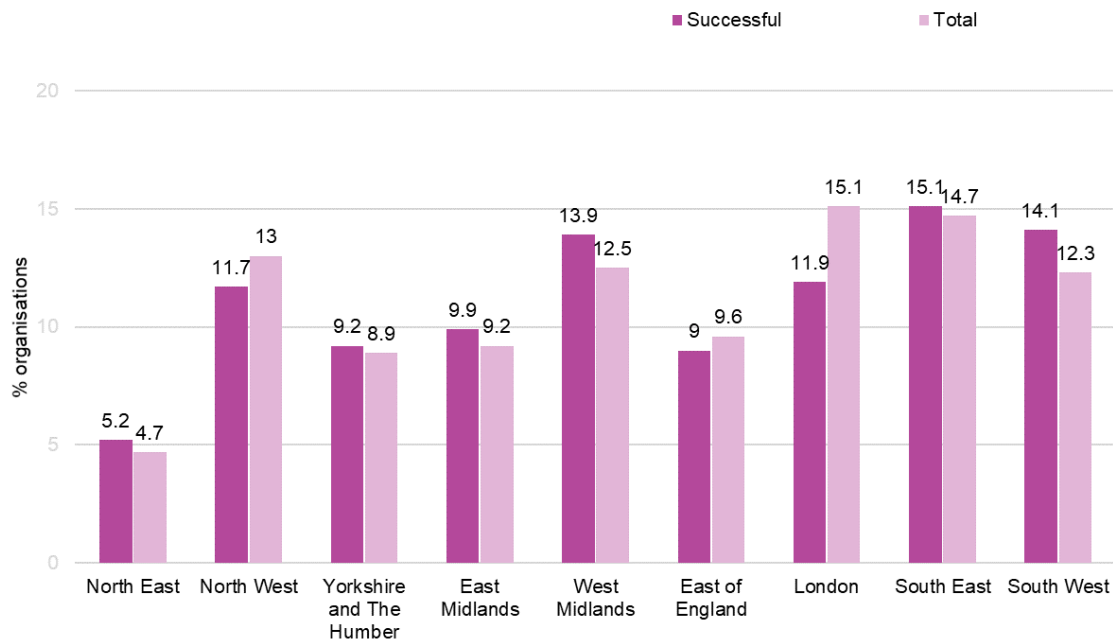


Delivery to young people by region

Figure 11 displays the distribution by region of successful grantees, compared to total applicants. Despite constituting the highest percentage of applicants at 15.1 percent, London-based organisations made up only 11.9 percent successful organisations. Elsewhere, regional trends were less pronounced. Other regions which made up a smaller percentage of grantees than they did total applicants included the North West (11.7 percent successful grantees, 13 percent total applicants) and East of England (9 percent successful, 9.6 percent total).

All other regions made up a greater proportion of grantees than they did total applicants. Most notable here is the reduced focus on London, to the advantage of other regions, such as the West Midlands and South West. These figures may give pause for thought about the applicability of the levelling up agenda, given that organisations delivering services to young people in London and East of England appear to have benefited less. Of the northern regions of England, only the organisations operating in North West did not benefit more from the fund as well as they might have.

Figure 11 The percentage of successful organisations and total applicants based in different regions of England



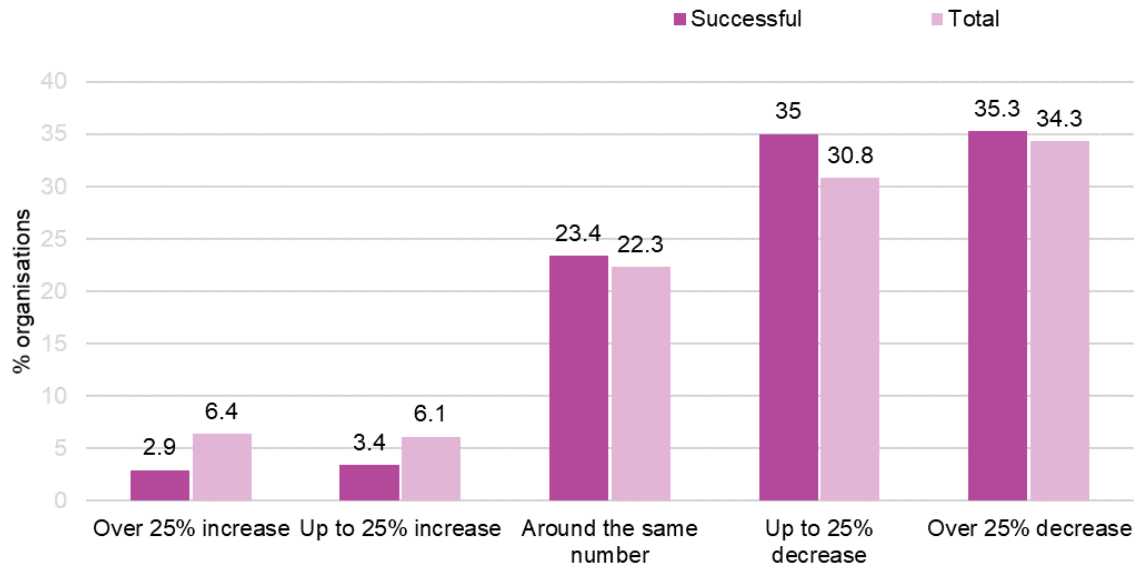
3.2.4 Addressing the impact of COVID-19

Helping closed or partially open providers re-open

Over half organisations applying to the fund, and those that were successful, were partially open at the time of application due to COVID-19 and measures to control the spread of the virus (such as lockdowns, stay at home instructions, shielding, self-isolation and social distancing). Among successful grantees, 57.7 percent were partially open and a further 16.8 percent were not currently open at the time of making their applications. Only 25.6 percent of successful applicants were fully open and providing services when they applied for the fund. For all applicants, these figures were percent, 55.3 percent, 20.9 percent, and 23.8 percent, respectively. This suggests partially open services were slightly more likely to receive funding than those that were completely closed.

Organisations were also asked whether the number of young people they worked with had decreased or increased as a result of COVID-19. Reflecting the full or partial closure of services and providers, most organisations – whether successful or unsuccessful - reported that they were working with fewer young people, and reported reduced costs related to service delivery as a result. Notably, organisations that reported working with fewer young people made up a slightly larger percentage of successful grantees than they did of total applicants (Figure 12). However, the fact that organisations who were working with reduced numbers young people were more likely to be successful, suggests the YCSF succeeded in targeting providers where financial assistance will help them reshape and rebuild delivery.

Figure 12 The percentage of successful grantees and total applicants reporting different changes in the number of young people worked with due to COVID-19



Reducing organisations’ deficits

Organisations’ deficits were a key factor in award decisions. Those with higher deficits were more likely receive grants. 64.9 percent of successful grantees reported that their income had reduced by more than 50 percent, compared to 57.6 percent of total applicants (see Figure 13). Generally, successful grantees reported larger budget deficits than other applicants.

Each applicant organisation’s surplus/deficit for the current accounting year was calculated as a percentage of their expenditures; median values are displayed in Figure 15¹³. 50 percent of successful grantees had a net deficit of -25 percent of their expenditure. This compares to a median net deficit of -12.2 percent for applicants in general. Furthermore, the majority (52.4 percent) of unsuccessful applicants did not have a deficit. The YCSF may therefore have also been able to target services and groups adversely affected financially by the pandemic. However, these differences were only marginal between applicants and successful applicants and should not be over-stated.

¹³ In practice, the grant delivery partner calculated the deficit by subtracting total annual expenditure from total annual income (including other grants) and dividing this by total annual expenditure. Negative values indicate a net deficit, while positive values indicate a net surplus. Notably, some organisations reported difficult answering the financial questions on which these calculations were based. Consequently, figures may not be entirely accurate.

Figure 13 The impact of Covid-19 on the income of successful grantees and total applicants

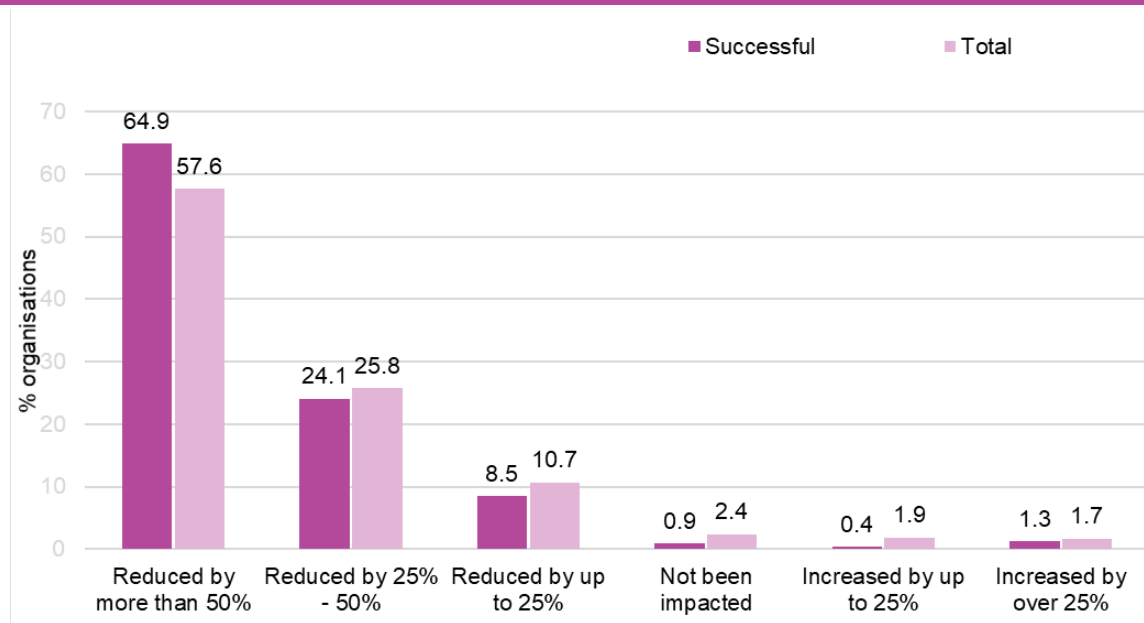


Figure 14 The impact of Covid-19 on the delivery costs of successful grantees and total applicants

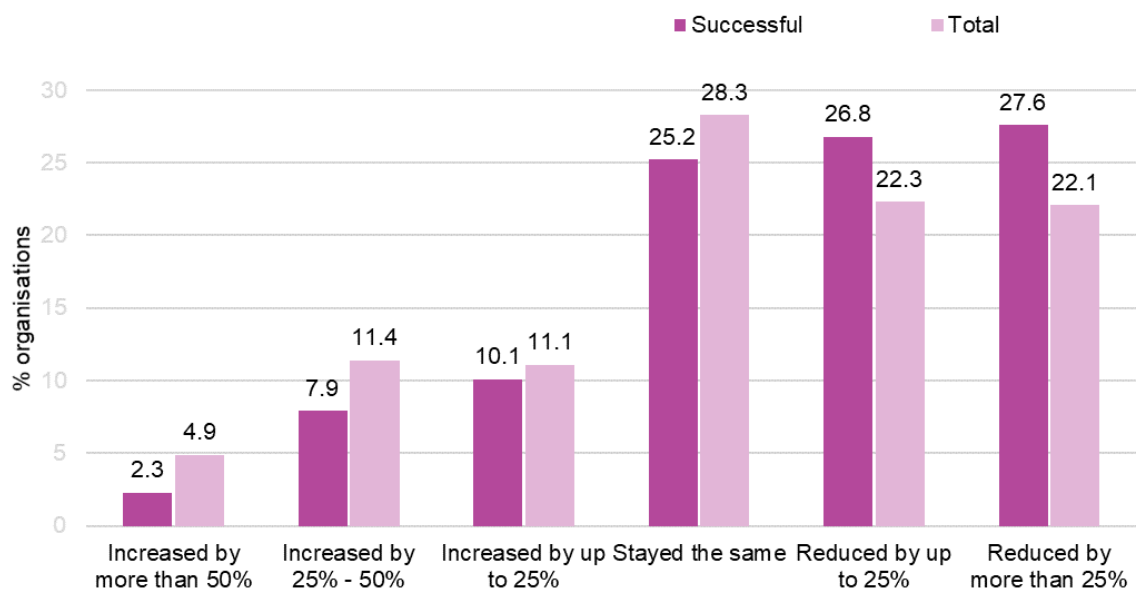
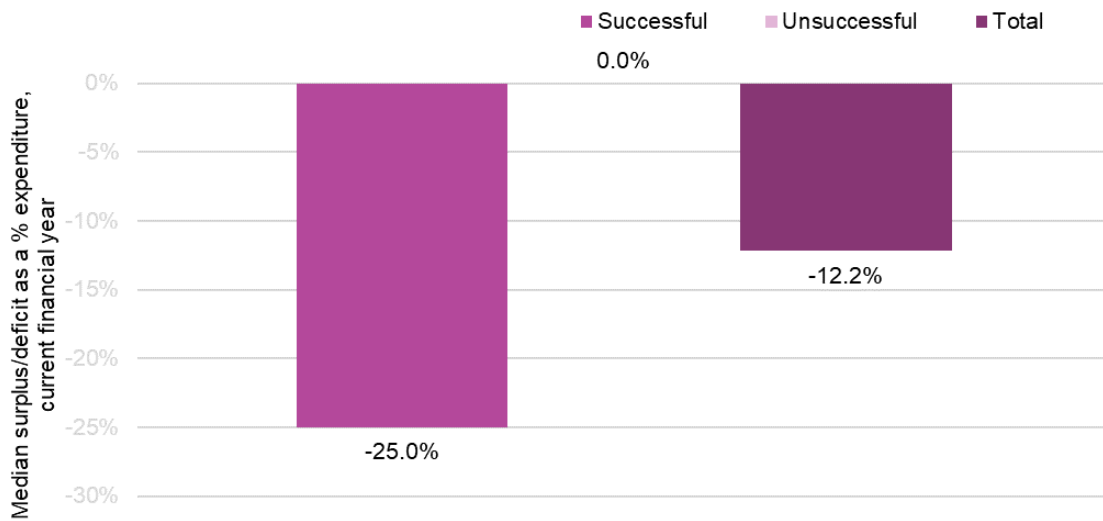


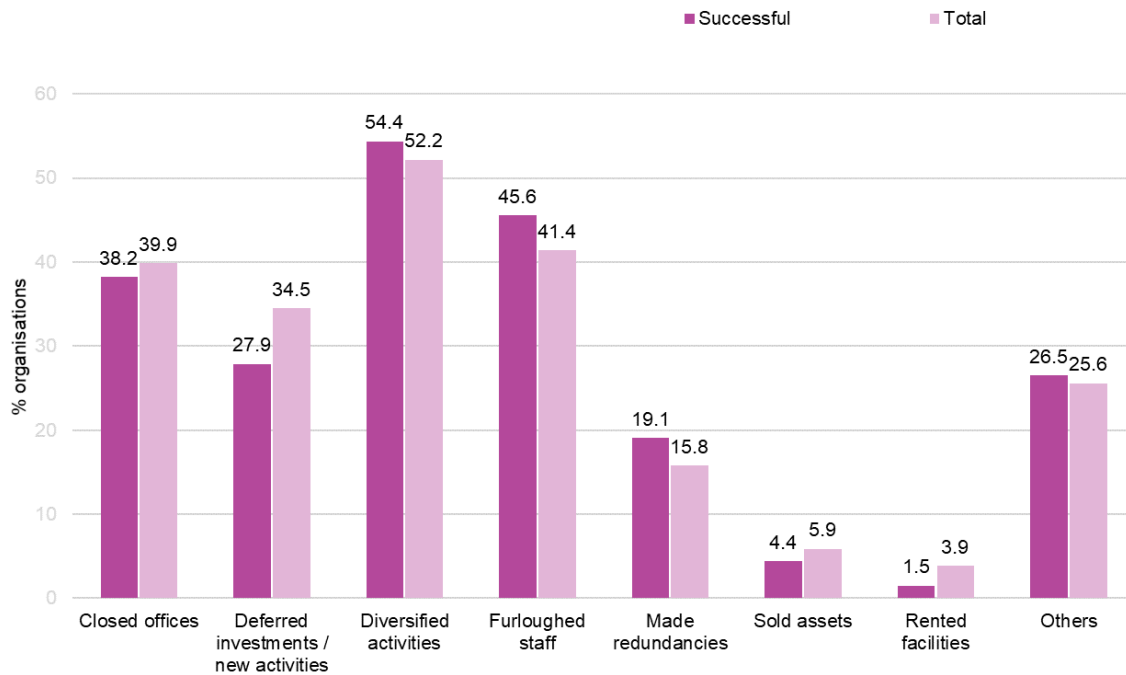
Figure 15 The median surplus/deficit of successful grantees, unsuccessful grantees, and total applicants



3.2.5 Other financial response to COVID-19

As can be seen in Figure 16, successful grantees did not differ dramatically from all applicants in terms of the measures they had taken to ensure their financial stability during the pandemic. Compared to all applicants, successful organisations were somewhat more likely to have made redundancies (19.1 percent), furloughed staff (45.6 percent), and diversified activities (54.4 percent), but were less likely to have closed offices (38.2 percent) deferred investments/new activities (27.9 percent), sold assets (4.4 percent), or rented facilities (1.5 percent). Importantly, this data pertains to measures taken *before* the grant was received.

Figure 16 The percentage of successful grantees and total applicants who took different measures to ensure financial stability



Applicants were also asked about other external grant funding they had received. A smaller proportion (30.6 percent) of successful organisations had received other grant funding compared to applicants in general (43.8 percent). Similarly, successful grantees were less likely to have received support from another government scheme (23.1 percent) than applicants in general (35.1 percent). Once again, this suggests the fund was targeted at organisations that most needed it.

Case study 03: The Sixth Sidcup Scouts Group

The Sixth Sidcup Scout Group is a busy Scout group well-established in the community. It has a mix of girls and boys, and organises many longer outdoor expeditions, such as overnight camping. It has its own Scout hut, where young people can gather for a bonfire on summer evenings. Like many Scout groups, it is an important part of its members' lives.

The group's finances were strong before the onset of COVID-19. But the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund was needed to stave off a cashflow problem after payments from parents ceased. Thanks to the Fund, they were able to cover their largest annual costs without using up reserves or charging parents more.

Impact of COVID-19 on their services

Face-to-face activities had to stop altogether. Unfortunately, many scout leaders had to reduce their involvement over the pandemic due to being key workers. The young people found themselves at home with little to do, missing an activity that had been a mainstay of their week.

They had quite a lot of time to find themselves other things to occupy them and of course another evening a week with something we considered they looked forward to ... things like cooking indoors and outdoors, first aid, other badge work which is part and parcel of how scouting identifies and recognises people's achievements were brought to a standstill (Scout Group Leader).

Impact on finances

The group decided to suspend subscription payments from parents when lockdown began. Leaders thought it was unfair to collect fees while children could not attend, and knew some parents were facing money problems of their own. Overall, the group lost about ten months of subscription fees.

This did not put the group in serious financial difficulty but did cause a cashflow problem. The biggest challenge was finding the money for their annual payment to the Scouts Association, which is one of the largest outlays the group must make.

The difference the YCSF has made

The YCSF allowed the group to fully cover its payment to the Scouts Association. The group could not have covered this in the short-term without using reserves earmarked for improving their HQ, which would have affected the activities they could offer members. Otherwise, they might have had to raise subscription fees from parents. Thanks to the fund, the group's finances are stable, and they are confident they can meet their bills without sacrificing their plans or turning to families for higher fees.

We've actually now got a couple of annual bills to pay, but we don't have a concern about those because we've now got the funds in that we needed to see us through. – Scout group leader

Case study 04: Seas Your Future

Seas Your Future, the trading name of Adventure Under Sail, provides young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to live, work and learn on a sailing ship for extended voyages. Their ship, the Pelican, is the charity's main asset. A former cargo vessel, it was fitted with sails and donated to the charity by a patron, who continues to sponsor Seas Your Future. Many of the young people they work with say the experience is life changing, and some go on to pursue nautical careers.

The whole idea of sail training is that you participate fully in sailing the ship, so they have to learn discipline, they have to learn the skills. They have to develop confidence to climbing up to the top of the rigging. They have to get used to perhaps being seasick, so it develops resilience, self-confidence, character (Seas Your Future Staff Member).

Thanks in part to the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund, the charity has continued to operate and cover its running costs. They will be able to return to normal operation swiftly as restrictions are phased out.

Impact of COVID-19 on their services

At the onset of the pandemic, almost all voyages scheduled for 2020 had to be cancelled. The charity tried to reschedule them for 2021, but with lockdown continuing, they had to cancel some of the voyages outright. Fortunately, they were able to arrange one longer voyage over the summer of 2020, and plan to do the same in 2021.

Impact on finances

Along with regular staffing costs, the ship is very expensive to maintain. The charity lost around £300,000 from having to cancel voyages. Unfortunately, they did not have large reserves to draw on, and faced serious difficulties continuing operation without additional funds.

We don't have a significant reserve. ... In the worst-case scenario, if we had not been able to identify a source ... we would've had to stop operating at some stage during this year. – Seas Your Future staff member

The difference the YCSF has made

The Youth Covid-19 Support Fund saved the charity from having to close. It covered core running costs – paying staff and maintaining the ship for the months they were unable to bring in any income. Thanks to Fund, the hundreds of young people who benefit from the skills and camaraderie learned on a Seas Your Future voyage will not miss out in years to come. With its short-term survival saved thanks to the fund, Seas Your Future is now also working to build long-term financial resilience, ensuring that future shocks do not threaten its good work.

3.3 How far and in what ways did the fund meet its objectives?

The fund reduced concerns among grantees about full or partial closure over the coming year.

It covered the key costs that it was designed to, and some other costs as well. This enabled service delivery to continue during the pandemic or to resume earlier.

Experienced staff were retained, which meant organisations were able to keep services and activities running. It also helped avoid furloughing staff who were essential for service delivery.

The fund helped with the cost of adapting to the measures to control COVID-19 (e.g. adapting physical environments to make them COVID-secure or moving to online delivery).

Financial sustainability of the sector was improved considerably, especially in the short-term. Organisations did not have to use their reserves, which meant they were in a stronger financial position going forward and did not use money earmarked for future developments.

In the medium to longer-term the fund gave financial stability that allowed organisations to seek other funding elsewhere.

Around one in five grantees still had concerns about their ability to continue in three or six months. This was because the award did not cover their full deficit or was lower than the amount for which they applied. They also emphasised the continuing uncertainty about the pandemic.

After receiving their payments in April / May 2021, successful YCSF grantees were invited to complete a follow-up survey describing their experience with regards to applying for and receiving the fund. This survey was open for responses between 7th May 2021 and 4th June 2021¹⁴. A total of 500 responses were obtained, representing a 90 percent response rate. This section details the findings of this follow-up survey, with some comparisons made with the application form data. It also draws qualitative focus groups with grantees, and information gained through case study interviews to shed further light on the extent to which the fund met its objectives in supporting the youth sector

3.3.1 Key outcomes against objectives

The objectives for the YCSF were outlined in section 1.2. In this section, we explore whether grantees and stakeholders considered the fund had:

- Increased organisations' financial stability;
- Prevented organisations from permanent closure;
- Enabled organisation to continue operating.

Participants spoke of **three key outcomes** for organisations as a result of receiving a grant from the YCSF. These outcomes matched the main objectives of the fund:

¹⁴ The initial deadline was 19th May 2021, although this was extended to allow for additional responses.

1. **Key costs covered.** The money from the grant covered key costs that organisations would have struggled to cover otherwise. This included cover for: staffing, core costs, COVID-19 related expenses, subscription fees and activity-related costs.
2. **Improved financial sustainability in the short-term.** As a result of key costs covered, participants reported that their financial situation had improved substantially, including no longer being at risk of closure and not having to tap into reserves. However, there was a group of participants who still had concerns about their organisation's sustainability in short term, and others who shared these concerns in the medium to long-term.
3. **Service delivery could continue or resume earlier.** Where financial stability improved, organisations were able to continue service delivery throughout the pandemic or reopen their services sooner. (For more detail, see 3.6).

The main objective of the fund was to improve the financial stability of youth organisations that were struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Grantees broadly considered the fund had met this objective because it enabled organisations to continue operating.

Further outcomes for organisations, young people, their parents/ carers, staff in the youth organisations and the sector are discussed in section 3.6.

3.3.2 Key costs covered

As we discussed in the introduction (see 1.1), the application guidance specified which costs were eligible for grant funding. In practice, however, the grant amount was determined by calculating the deficit rather than calculating the costs for specific expenses. Reflecting this approach, there were both participants who simply thought of the grant as covering their deficit, while others spoke of specific costs the grant had covered. Grantees used the grant to cover that were specified in the YCSF application guidance as well as costs that were not mentioned in the guidance.

Costs specified in YCSF application guidance

Participants used the grants to cover the following costs that were specified in the YCSF application guidance: staffing; core costs including overheads, rent and insurance; and Covid-19 related expenses.

Staffing costs

Staffing was one of the main costs the grant was used for. It was especially used to:

- **Avoid redundancies:** Participants reported that as a result of the grant they were able to avoid making redundancies. For example, one participant spoke about how the fund had saved six or seven jobs at their organisation. There was also a participant who was able to hire additional staff as a result of the funding.
- **Retain experienced and skilled staff:** Participants discussed the way in which the fund had enabled them to retain experienced and skilled staff. They primarily spoke about retaining frontline staff. This was because they perceived experience and skill, often developed over years, as key when providing direct support to young people:

It's been brilliant for us, because they're very experienced professional workers and they're not cheap. [The YCSF has] actually allowed me to keep them in employment, whereas I would have been considering redundancy for them. – Local youth club

- **Covering shortfalls in staffing costs:** There were also participants who used the funding to cover roles that were not fully funded. This primarily included roles supporting frontline delivery such as finance, or managerial positions. Participants reported struggling to cover costs for these roles before the YCSF because, for example, they were not covered by restricted project-based funding and other income had plummeted.

If a grant paid for certain projects, that's great, but the things that tick over the organisation... need to be paid for. [The YCSF] supported, and brilliantly so, the staff that normally [get covered] from your donations and some from your income, that we've lost completely in this last year. – National youth and umbrella organisation

- **Avoiding use of furlough:** There were also participants who reported that they no longer needed to use furlough as a result of the fund. Instead, staff were able to continue working and offering services to young people

Core costs and overheads

Organisations also used grants to cover a wide range of core costs (other than staffing). Table 3 provides an overview of these core costs that the grant was used for.

Table 3: Core costs covered by YCSF grant funding

Overheads and non-project costs

- Overhead to support frontline delivery
- Governance
- Human resources

Legal and contractual requirements

- Health & Safety checks
- Insurance
- Electrical safety work on venues
- Meeting requirements of contracts
- Census return for umbrella organisation

Venue costs

- Rent and venue hire
- Utility bills

Key equipment

- Key equipment related to specific services, for example animal feed and waste disposal

There were two key reasons why organisations struggled to cover these core costs during the winter 2020/21:

- **Reduced income** as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included reduced project-based funding. Organisations that primarily relied on project-based funding struggled to cover their overheads as the pandemic hit their other funding avenues.

-
- **Additional unexpected expenses**, for example personal protective equipment (PPE).

Covering core costs was essential for continued delivery: While organisations struggled to cover key costs, covering those costs was often essential for continued delivery. Organisations would have been unable to continue operating, for example due to legal requirements and insurance. One participant, for instance, reported that they used the grant to cover necessary electrical safety work for their venue. Without having these works completed, they would not have been able to re-open and return to the hall to deliver services. Other examples included cover for insurance and for key equipment.

COVID-19 related expenses

There were participants who used the grants to cover new expenses due to COVID-19. This included three types of costs:

- **Adapting physical environments** to make them more COVID-19 secure, for example buying PPE.
- **Adapting to online delivery**, for example buying new IT equipment and packages such as Zoom, or shared cloud services.
- **Adapting activities for remote or online delivery**, for example creating activity packs for families to complete at home.

Costs not specified in YCSF application guidance

There were also participants who used the grant to cover costs that were not explicitly mentioned in the YCSF guidance documents, but that were interpreted as covered because they contributed to their deficit. These included two main types of costs: subscription fees and activity-related costs.

Subscription fees

This was a key cost for 'uniformed' youth groups such as Girl Guiding. Uniformed youth groups are required to pay an annual membership fee to their national headquarters. Local uniformed youth groups would normally cover this fee through subscription payments from parents. Participants described that the membership fee was often the biggest expense for uniformed youth clubs and they were unable to cover the fee without payments from parents.

[The grant was] to pay for our headquarters' subscriptions, which we would not have been able to cover from other income that we should've received during the year. – Uniformed youth group

Activity-related costs

There were organisations who used the grant money to cover expenses related to activities. This included:

- **Routine delivery expenses**, including outdoor activity equipment, generic supplies or badges for uniformed youth groups.
- **Covering shortfalls in programme costs** due to fewer sign-ups and payments from parents.

3.3.3 Improved financial sustainability

Participants reported that the fund significantly improved their financial sustainability, at least in the short term. However, others still retained some concerns about sustainability, even in short term. In the long term, participants in

general were less certain about their finances and organisational future given the continued uncertainty around the pandemic.

Financial sustainability in the short term

In the short term, participants reported that the fund significantly improved their financial sustainability. There were three aspects to this:

- **No longer at risk of closure:** There was a group of organisations who would have had to consider closure, or were at risk of imminent closure, without the YCSF grant.

We were on the verge of deciding whether we'd close our centres..., so short-term it's great – National youth and umbrella organisation

All these organisations said that they were now able to continue operating as a result of receiving the grant.

[W]e were at a breaking point, and it's really helped us through, basically. – National youth and umbrella organisation

- **Did not need to dip into reserves:** Participants also spoke about no longer needing to use reserves to cover their shortfalls. This meant that their organisations:
 - **Were in a stronger financial position going forward.** There were participants who described how dipping into their reserves would have negatively impacted their service delivery and long-term planning. For example, there were participants who were considering selling some of their essential equipment before receiving the grant.

Our main asset is our [animals]. We have to keep feeding them and stuff like that ..., and the brilliant thing for this for us, is that we were going to have to almost totally wipe out our reserves and have to start thinking about rehoming our [animals] or selling them. So [the fund] stopped that.
– Local youth club
 - **Did not need to use money earmarked for future developments.** For example, another organisation had reserves earmarked for acquiring a new site and developing new resources for their young people. Without the fund, they would have had to use the money on core costs instead.
 - **Did not need to consider closure.** As a result of not having to use their reserves, organisations remained financially viable and did no longer have to consider closure (see above).
- **Filled a financial gap by reducing deficit and improving cashflow:** Not all organisations were at risk of closure before receiving the grant. However, even organisations that were not at risk of closure reported that the fund still filled a significant financial gap. These participants primarily talked about the fund covering their deficit and improving their cashflow. This included at least one participant who received a grant that covered their deficit for the entire financial year.

[T]his money's been a lifeline to us. – National youth and umbrella organisation

For example, one participant described that while they would not have had to close without the fund, they would have been “totally drained” once they reopened their services.

However, there were also participants who highlighted that they were still in a difficult financial situation and that the grant had not fully addressed all their situation. Participants' concerns fell into three categories:

- **The grant did not cover their full deficit:** There were participants who reported that the fund had not covered their full deficit and they therefore remained in a difficult financial situation. This was because the fund only covered costs incurred between November 2020 and March 2021. As a result, these participants were concerned that they might still incur a deficit by mid-2021.
- **The grant was lower than they applied for:** Where other participants reported receiving a lower grant than they applied for and continued to experience financial difficulties as a result. For example, one Uniformed Youth Group believed they were eligible for £300 of grant funding but received only £28 in total.
- **The grant did not provide any additional financial support:** Other participants described that while it was helpful that the fund covered their deficit, it did not leave them with much money to move forward.

Financial sustainability in the medium to long-term

Thinking about the medium to long-term, participants' views were mixed. There was a group of participants who felt more optimistic thanks to the grant and another group who continued to feel less certain.

Participants who were less certain about their financial sustainability in the medium to long term had the following concerns:

- **Continued uncertainty around the pandemic:** Participant highlighted that the ongoing pandemic meant that the future for their organisations continued to be uncertain and unpredictable.

Long term, who knows what's going to happen? – National youth and umbrella organisation

For example, participants were concerned that more lockdowns would cause further disruptions. Others were unsure when they might be able to return to face-to-face delivery.

- **Future of Fundraising:** Other participants were concerned that fundraising strategies they had used in the past were no longer viable because of the pandemic. For example, one organisation used to raise funds through 'bag packing' in supermarkets at Christmas. They were unsure when they would be able to fundraise in this way again.
- **Increase in membership fees:** There were Uniformed Youth Groups that were concerned about a raise in their membership fees. For example, the Scout Association had lowered their fees in 2021, and local units were expecting them to raise fees in the upcoming year as a result.

Participants who felt more optimistic about the medium to long-term spoke about the following reasons for their increased confidence:

- **YCSF grant meant organisations in a good financial position going forward:** As discussed above, there were organisations who were in a better financial situation as a result of receiving the YCSF grant. As a result, they also felt more confident about their long-term future and ability to continue operating.
- **YCSF grant offered organisations an opportunity to 're-set':** There were organisation who described the grant as an opportunity to 're-set'; it had essentially brought them back to the position they were in before the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that they were now able to consider planning long-term again.

[The Fund] reset us and got us back to February 2020. Without it we wouldn't have had a long term. – Local youth club

-
- **YCSF grant enabled organisations to apply for more funding:** There were participants who described how the fund enabled them to apply for additional funding. This was because the grant enabled them to continue delivery and evidence how they were making a difference to young people. Others described the fund as providing their organisation with much needed ‘breathing space’. It gave them the time to develop new ideas and services and subsequently apply for additional funding.

The Fund also encouraged organisations to be more pro-active about financial sustainability: There were participants who described that the process of applying for, and receiving, the grant had highlighted the need for financial planning to them. They reflected that the process prompted them do more to ensure financial sustainability in the future. For example, one organisation reported that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed their pre-existing financial vulnerabilities. As a result, the trustees were now working to create a plan to build up more substantial cash reserves.

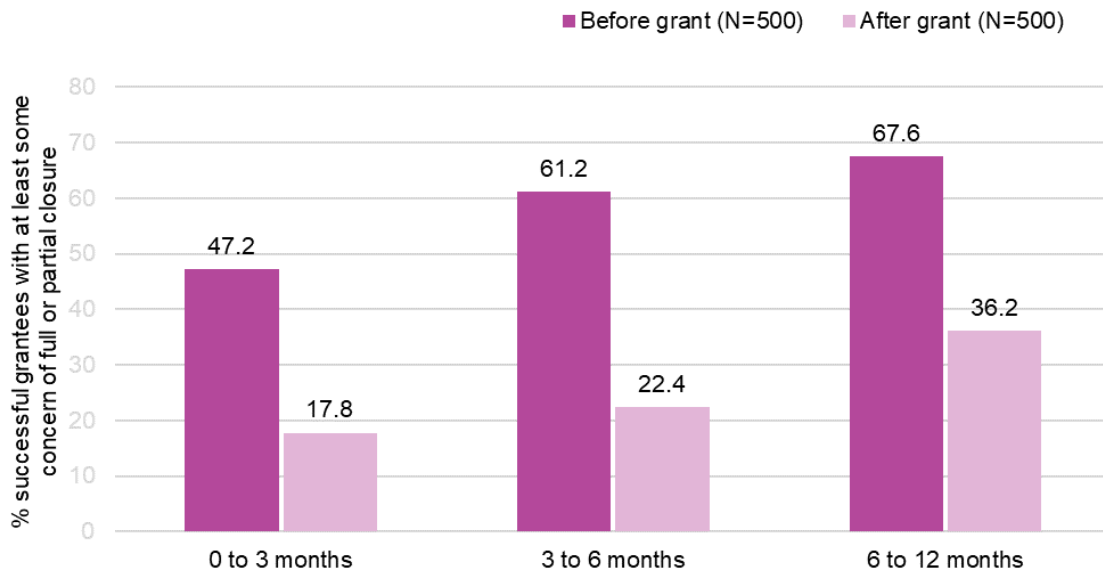
It's because the fund requires you to be sustainable I think it was good to ask that question so that you actually can put all your powers into making sure you are going to be sustainable ultimately which is about the young people going forward, so it's good for us. – Uniformed youth group

3.3.4 Confidence in ability to continue to operate

The positive picture that the fund increased organisations’ confidence to be able to continue in the short-term, but that confidence to continue was more mixed in the longer term was also reflected in the quantitative data. Figure 17 displays the percentage of grantees concerned about full and partial closure at three, six and twelve months¹⁵, before and after receiving the fund. As can be seen, the percentage of organisations reporting concerns about closure at each of these stages reduced after receiving the grant. However, although most grantees’ confidence in their ability to continue operating increased there was still about one in five organisations concerned about their ability to continue after three or six months.

¹⁵ The question in the application data and follow-up survey had four options: (1) significant risk of full closure, (2) significant risk of partial closure, (3) some risk of full or partial closure, and (4) no concerns of full or partial closure. Options 1-3 are combined here to indicate at least some concerns of full or partial closure.

Figure 17 The percentage successful grantees with at least some concerns of full or partial closure in the following 0-3, 3-6, and 6-12 months, before and after receiving the grant



It should be noted, however, that no follow-up data was collected on applicants who were unsuccessful as grantees. Since this means there is no comparison group to examine a counterfactual view, it is not possible to definitively say whether the positive changes reported were solely due to the YCSF or whether other factors (e.g. the easing of lockdown restrictions or moving some services/ activities online) may also have contributed to greater confidence in sustainability of delivery and finances. Nonetheless, participant reports were generally that the fund was useful, and specific ways this was the case are mapped out in section above and in the case examples, which are included at the end of the report.

3.3.5 Sustainability and recovery

Successful grantees were asked about the extent to which they believed the fund had helped their organisations to sustain or recover their services for young people during the pandemic. As shown in Figure 18, over 87 percent of applicants reported that the fund had helped, with 36 percent saying it had helped ‘quite a bit’ and 51.2 percent responding it had helped ‘a great deal’.

More services providers were open and providing services

The proportion of organisations open and providing services increased after funds were received (Figures 18 and 19). In their application forms, only 26.8 percent of successful grantees-to-be reported that they were open and providing services. In the follow-up survey, this increased to 65 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of organisations that were partially open or not open decreased. This, combined with the findings outlined above, provides the most substantial evidence that the fund helped organisations to sustain delivery or recover their service provision. After receiving the grant, 9 percent of successful applicants had still not opened to provide services, the vast majority of these respondents (93.3 percent) were uniformed youth groups.

Figure 18 The extent to which successful grantees believed that the fund helped their organisations to sustain or recover their services for young people during the pandemic

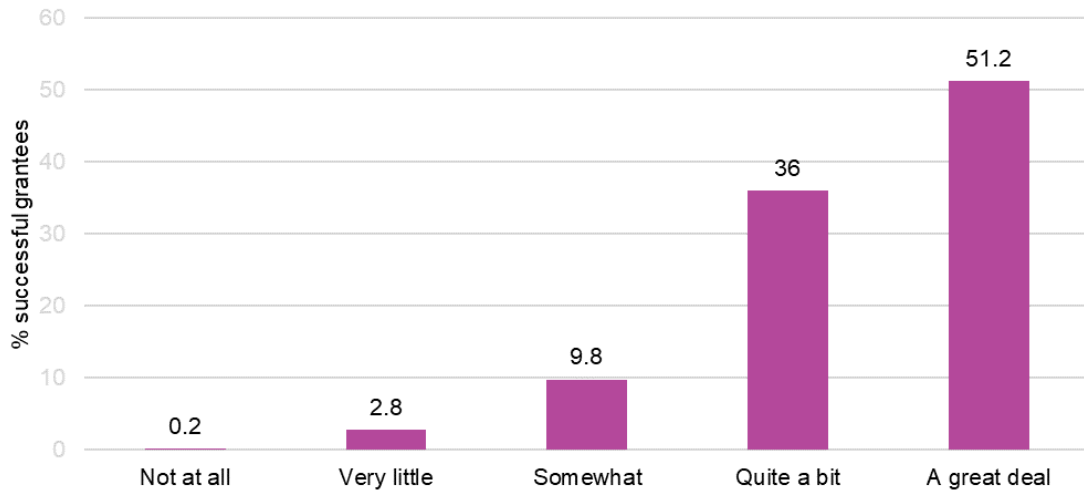
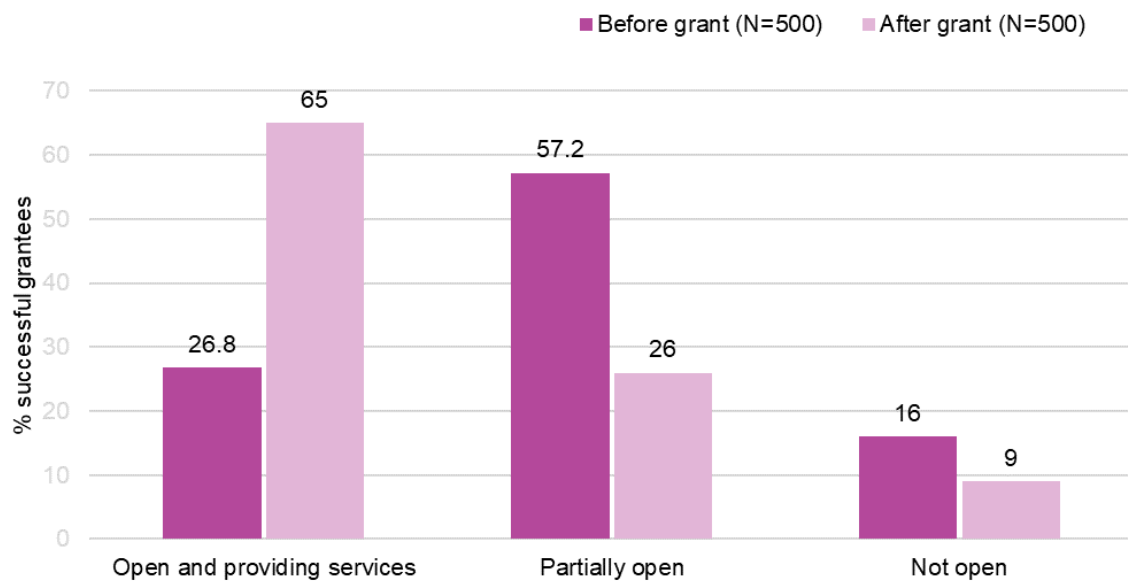


Figure 19 The percentage of successful grantees which were open and providing services, before and after receiving the grant



Case study 05: Essex Boys and Girls Club

Essex Boys and Girls Clubs (EBGC) is an umbrella youth organisation for young people aged 11-19. It supports a network of 150 youth groups in Essex and parts of East London and delivers a range of events and targeted youth projects. For example, the National Citizenship Service the Respect project and the Restart scheme for unemployed people.

Impact on the services they provide

After the first COVID-19 national lockdown in March 2020, EBGC had to move their programmes online. Their three outdoor centres also had to shut down due to lockdown restrictions and were still shut in April 2021. These outdoor centres provide residential opportunities for young people to develop life skills, such as confidence and independence, at the same time as meeting new people and having fun.

EBGC found it difficult to move their programmes online because virtual interaction hampered young people's engagement with activities. For example, some young people avoided showing their faces in meetings by switching off their camera and did not take part in discussions. It was almost as if they were 'hanging around' outside of the group. On a positive note, disabled young people used virtual activities more than they previously used EBGC's face to face activities.

Impact on the organisation's finances

Before the YCSF, the organisation was on the verge of losing five staff. Moving activities online also created a gap in the organisation's finances. Some funders allowed EBGC to 'repurpose' their funding for online activities rather than the outdoor activities the funding was initially intended to support. However, other funding sources did not allow such re-purposing, meaning there was not enough funding to overall to keep projects going.

The difference the fund has made

EBGC used their YCSF funding for staff salaries, both general and specific youth worker roles, which avoided losing staff skills developed over years. EBGC was unable to furlough these staff members as they were essential to deliver services and projects to meet the needs of young people. The YCSF funding allowed them to continue this work.

As the YCSF has maintained staffing levels, EBGC could offer the same level of service as they did before-COVID-19. EBGC described YCSF as tailor-made for their organisation as it filled their funding gap and they can continue where they left off before the crisis.

Case study 06: The PHOEBE Centre

The PHOEBE Centre is a charity founded in 2008 to support women and children from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds experiencing domestic violence, poverty, mental health issues and discrimination. Since 2008, their services have expanded to include a range of activities and projects. YCSF was used to continue provision of their Suffolk Girls Self-Esteem project, which delivers self-esteem workshops in schools with girls between the age of five to nineteen.

Impact of Covid-19 on their services

Following the first national lockdown in March 2020, staff from the PHOEBE Centre were no longer able to visit schools to deliver the Suffolk Girls Self-Esteem project. Instead, they had to move the workshops online. This required extra time, training and resource to successfully adapt the project to an online version. Moving the course online limited young people's engagement with workshop activities. Also, online activities did not work well for girls with self-esteem issues. Looking at themselves on Zoom during discussions affected their confidence.

Impact on finances

The PHOEBE Centre was at risk of closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the Centre had to adapt their programmes, they no longer met the criteria for many of their usual funding streams. For example, some funders required projects to be delivered face-to-face. At the same time, there was only limited funding available for online-only programmes at the start of the pandemic. The YCSF helped to bridge this gap in funding and enabled the Centre to continue their work.

Experiences of accessing the fund

Initially, the PHOEBE Centre didn't know if they were eligible for YCSF as they are not a dedicated youth organisation. However, after attending a Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) webinar with a lot of participants who had similar questions, the PHOEBE Centre received an email from PwC telling them they were eligible. The project found the application form a bit daunting initially, especially because the PHOEBE Centre did not have any accountancy support to complete it. However, webinars run by PwC were helpful in removing worries about the complexities of the process. PwC explained that accounts information could be quite simple, for example just an Excel sheet. PwC also said that if applicants were not sure they could just do their best to complete the application and then PwC would come back to them with any questions. And PwC very efficiently came back to the PHOEBE Centre to address a small mistake.

The difference the fund has made

Funding from the YCSF helped the PHOEBE Centre in several ways. It covered the financial gap caused by the delay in finding funding for their online Girls Self-Esteem course. It also relieved anxiety about how the project's future and allowed staff to concentrate on service delivery instead.

The Funding enabled the Centre to continue through the pandemic until lockdown and social distancing were eased, and schools re-opened. The Centre is now starting to deliver self-esteem workshops in schools again. Without the YCSF funding, they would not have been able to return to schools so quickly and their projects would likely still be on hold:

We would be there, but not quite there. Everything would be paused still, and we wouldn't be able to be delivering anything interactive with the girls. Now that schools are opening, we wouldn't have been able to go back in. We would just kind of be stationary. – The PHOEBE Centre staff member

3.4 What worked well or less well with the YCSF?

Overwhelmingly, grantees were appreciative of the YCSF and the use they were able to make of their awards.

Criticisms of the fund focused on difficulties associated with application to the fund and its administration. These were related to:

- **confusion about eligibility criteria which some felt showed poor understanding of the youth and voluntary sectors and definitions of charitable status;**
- **the application process using too much accountancy vocabulary and being too long and complex relative to the size of smaller awards;**
- **the way in which late announcement and payment of awards generated undue stress and anxiety.**

Despite these problems with the administration of the fund, DCMS, PwC, UK Youth, and national offices of uniformed services had worked together to address them.

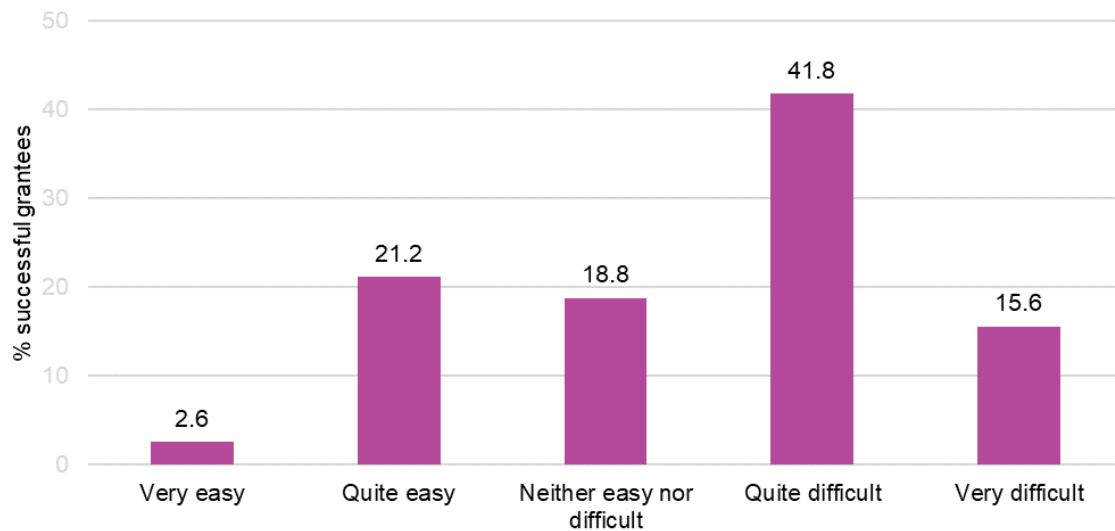
3.4.1 Experiences of applying for the YCSF

This section describes the experiences of participants in applying for and receiving funding through the YCSF, including what went well and less well. Quantitative and qualitative findings both demonstrated that there had been several difficulties with the application process, which meant organisations tended to emphasise dissatisfaction in this respect, while still being appreciative of the fund overall.

Dissatisfaction with the application process

Grantees were more dissatisfied with difficulties connected with the application process and providing financial information requested by PwC complex formats, than with the fund itself. In fact, as shown in Figure 20., the most organisations found it either 'quite difficult' (41.8 percent) or 'very difficult' (15.6 percent) to apply for the grant. The reasons why applicants and grantees found the application process difficult, and the actions taken to address these issues are discussed below.

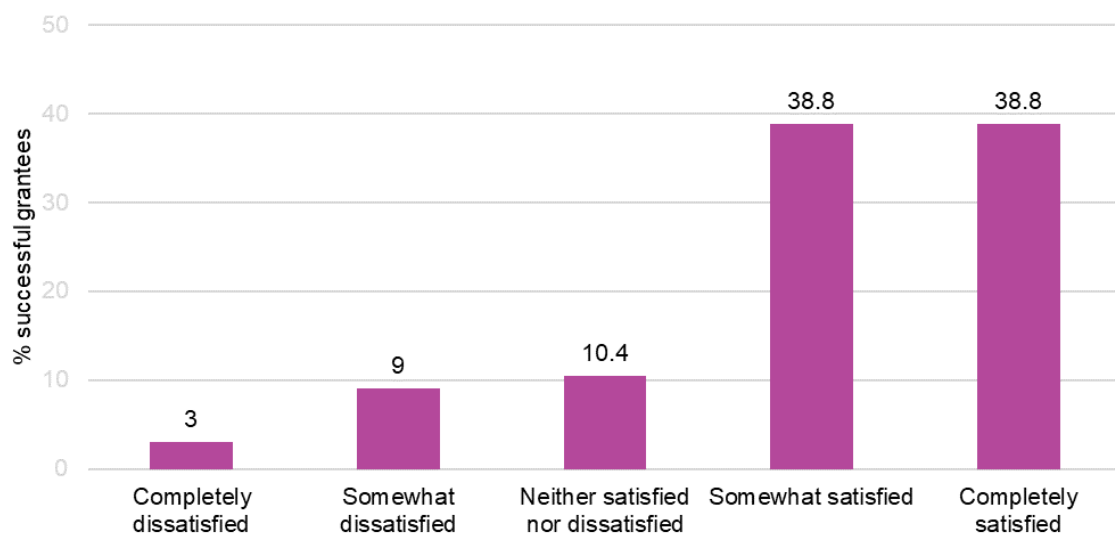
Figure 20 The extent to which successful grantees found it easy or difficult to apply for the YCSF



Levels of satisfaction with the fund among grantees

Over three-quarters of grantees were satisfied to some degree with the application process, with respondents evenly split between those saying they were either 'somewhat satisfied' (38.8 percent) or completely satisfied (38.8 percent) (see Figure 21). This reflects the receipt and usefulness of the fund to organisations in sustaining them through the pandemic. As discussed above in section 3.3, participants also spoke positively about the difference the fund had made to their organisations, once they had received the grant.

Figure 21 Successful grantees' overall satisfaction with the YCSF application process



3.4.2 Eligibility for the fund

In focus groups, participants reported confusion over which organisations were eligible for the fund. This initially put off some organisations from applying and reduced their time for application when the criteria were changed, and they found out they were eligible. However, participants also spoke positively about the support they received to deal with these challenges, and the grant delivery partner implemented a range of changes as a result.

Definitions of eligible types of organisations

There were several issues to do with the definition of eligible organisations. These were:

- **Whether organisations were the type of organisations defined in fund eligibility criteria:** Organisations could apply to the fund either as a ‘Local youth club or uniformed youth group’ or a ‘National youth and umbrella organisation’. Some organisations that were eventually included as eligible believed they did not fit the definitions for these types of organisations, which delayed their application.
- **Whether they had a physical base or centre to be defined as a ‘Local youth club or uniformed youth group’:** There were small activity-focused organisations who did not have a physical base or centre within the locality. For example, one organisation provided targeted activities in schools but did have a base of their own. They therefore thought they were ineligible, but later were told they were.
- **Whether organisations met ‘National youth and umbrella organisation criteria’:** There were three elements to this that made organisations think they were ineligible. Organisations believed that they should have:
 - **A turnover of at least £1 million** – some relatively large organisations had a turnover in the hundreds of thousands or just below £1 million.
 - **No direct local service provision to young people** – for example, one charity offered specialist activities for disadvantaged young people nationally rather than locally, and a regional umbrella organisation also delivered programmes directly to young people.
 - **National reach** – some umbrella organisations operated at a regional rather than national level.

Although participants understood that the fund had to be set up quickly in unusual circumstances, a recurring theme was that the way in which the eligibility criteria were defined showed limited understanding of the youth and voluntary sectors. For example, the CEO of a larger organisation said:

This arbitrary over/under £1 million thing was put on that was a significant barrier for many, coupled with local/national but no description of anything in between, which just didn't reflect the youth sector, at all! – National youth and umbrella organisation

Charitable registered status

Local uniform youth groups, such the Scouts or Guiding units thought they were ineligible because their unit was not a registered charity. This was because an initial UK Youth guidance webinar said they needed a charity number to apply. Participants speculated that this might have deterred other organisations from applying altogether. They also highlighted that when they had to seek and wait for clarification, this shortened the time window they had for applying.

Solutions to eligibility criteria issues

Participants discussed a range of changes and additional support that had helped to address the challenges they were facing.

First, DCMS and the grant delivery partner implemented two key changes to address the challenges:

- **Removing the £1 million turnover threshold:** the definition of a large organisation as having £1m turnover was removed, which enabled large organisations to apply who had previously been ineligible.
- **Extending the application deadline:** The initial application deadline for the fund was extended by one week, to allow more time for those whose applications had been stalled to catch up. Participants from uniformed local groups said that the extension was very helpful.

Applicants then also received additional support from the fund administrators and youth sector and partners to help clarify and address eligibility issues.

- **Support through webinars:** Participants from smaller organisations spoke about a UK Youth webinar that was helpful in clarifying their eligibility. The webinar explained that organisations not offering services to young people in a specific location could apply and that local uniform branches did not need a charity number. This webinar was part of a series of webinars delivered by UK Youth on behalf of the Fund.
- **Written confirmation of eligibility:** PwC, the grant delivery partner, e-mailed webinar attendees from youth organisations to confirm that they did not have to be a youth centre to apply. Participants found this reassuring.

3.4.3 Issues with the application form and process

In order to apply for the YCSF, applicants had to complete an application form. As mentioned in Section 3.1 and 3.2, the application form asked about the organisation's service delivery, current financial status, and the impact of the pandemic on their financial viability. Participants who had an accountancy background or accountancy support within their organisations found the form relatively easy to complete. However, those without an accountancy background or support, found it difficult and time-consuming to provide the required information.

Specific challenges

Participants from among all sizes and types of organisations found it challenging to supply the required financial information. This was for three main reasons:

- **Difficulties with accountancy vocabulary:** Participants from local uniformed youth groups found it difficult to understand the application form because of the accountancy vocabulary that was used. As a result, there were participants who did not understand what key financial information was required or how to obtain it. Uniformed youth groups were used to submitting simple accounts. They were usually completed by volunteer group leaders who only reported annually. They did not report their accounts at the level of detail requested in the application form.

So we had to create all of these documents to show what we'd spent, what we'd done in the last three months, when usually we just report annually, and it's a very simple set of accounts, ... the ... accounts take me seconds to do –
Uniformed youth group

Participants from uniformed youth groups also highlighted that to them, it seemed that the application form was written for organisations with paid employees in mind. For example, it included questions about salaries. These participants speculated that this might have deterred other uniformed youth groups from applying if they thought they needed to employ staff to apply.

- **Long, complex nature of application form disproportionate to reward for smaller organisations:** As noted in section 3.2 the size of awards from the YCSF varied from £16 to £3,600,000, with the median payment being £642. Larger organisations seeking larger amounts were used to completing complex application and found the YCSF application form very much business as usual. However, small organisations, such as uniform youth groups found the application form onerous. This was because:

- **They relied solely on volunteers** who had to complete the form in their spare time.

I have never filled in a form that is so complicated. It was so long-winded. It went on and on and on, and like the other lady, I spent hours on it. – Uniform youth group

- **The grant amount they had requested was small:** Participants reported that the form was time consuming, particularly relative to the grant amount they were seeking. As a result, there were participants who spoke of almost giving up applying.

If I hadn't had the backup of the Scout Association, I would've closed this straightaway and gone somewhere else. The overhead appeared to be enormous, for fairly modest returns, so I would definitely have gone elsewhere – Uniform youth group

Participants from uniform youth groups highlighted that they valued the support from their parent organisations such as Scout and Guiding associations. This included providing model text responses to help them complete the application more quickly, and copies of required documents for the application, for example Health and Safety and Safeguarding policies. This saved uniformed youth groups the time and effort of producing this information themselves.

Notably, there was a group of uniformed youth groups who used their grants to pay their membership fees to their national organisation. There were participants in this group who said it would have been better if their national organisations could have waived the fee for them as part of the fund and applied for a replacement for branch fees instead. This would have saved local uniformed youth groups the time and effort of applying for a small amount of funding to cover such fees.

- **Time consuming to extract information from complex accounts in the format required:** Medium to large organisations reported that it was difficult and time-consuming to extract key financial information in the format needed for the fund. In particular, it was difficult to produce information for the time periods required.

It was needing doing in a particular financial format, things needed to be said in a particular way, and that took myself and my accountant and others on the management team, quite some time to organise, and that's all money, isn't it? – Local youth club

There were three elements that participants found challenging to complete:

- **Forecasting income and expenditure for the time period of the fund from November 2020 to March 2021:** Applicants were asked to predict future income and expenditure from the time of applying to the end of March 2021. Participants from organisation of all sizes found this challenging as they did not

know what the future would bring. This was because the ongoing national lockdown was severely disrupting their normal services.

- **Demonstrating financial viability:** Applicants had to complete three tables to demonstrate their financial viability, based on accounts of the past three years' or estimates if the accounts were not available. Although there were participants who found this easy to complete, participants across all sizes of organisation found it time-consuming to extract the information into a prescribed format.
- **A balance sheet giving a snapshot of the organisation's position at 31 October 2020,** including levels of restricted and unrestricted reserves. This was also time consuming for medium to large organisations who had not yet collated this information as part of their financial year. Participants also commented that different organisations in the youth sector worked to different financial year ends, which could make extracting the required information even more difficult.

Solutions applied to application difficulties

Participants also received support from the grant delivery partners and other partners to address these challenges. Participants reported that they found the following support offers helpful:

- **Support through online portal:** The grant delivery partner, PwC, created an area in the online YCSF application portal to communicate with organisations about missing detail in their application. Participants appreciated the way in which PwC asked simple questions which helped them to respond quickly.
- **Simpler template for required information:** The grant delivery partner provided a template to local uniform youth groups who had completed the financial sections incorrectly to help them identify the information required. Participants found the template easier to complete than the tables in the application form.

They wanted very specific things. I tried to produce it, and then they sent me back a format to put my information in. They said, 'You haven't sent the right things. Put it in this format'. – Uniformed youth group

- **Enabling national organisations to support smaller organisations with application form:** PwC adjusted the online application portal to allow parent organisations to complete the application form on behalf of local branches who were struggling to provide the required financial information.
- **Support through webinars:** As with the eligibility criteria, participants from smaller organisations said the UK Youth webinars helped them understand the information required. In particular, the webinars explained that participants could:
 - submit best estimates in simple forms such as Excel spreadsheets when accounts were not yet available;
 - do their best with submitting accounts information and PwC would contact them with any questions if needed.

However, some of those who attended suggested holding smaller, regional funding surgeries instead of national webinars. This was because not all attendees in the national webinars had the opportunity to ask questions about how to present their financial information.

Suggestions for future improvements

In focus groups and interviews, grantees, DCMS and the grant delivery partners suggested a range of future improvements to address the challenges that participants faced.

- **Accountancy vocabulary and understanding of the youth and voluntary sectors:** Grantees suggested that fund administrators should have a good understanding of the youth and voluntary sector when they designed the application form. They suggested this could be achieved by researching or consulting the youth and / or voluntary sectors before creating an application. DCMS also suggested that a youth sector organisation or organisations could be invited to review and reword unfamiliar or difficult terms.
- **Length and complexity of the application form relative to the size of reward:** Participants suggested that the length of the application form should be relative to the size of the award. For example, to have a shorter application form for smaller organisations applying for small amounts of funding, and a longer, more complex form for organisations seeking larger rewards. One participant suggested a similar approach to the Big Lottery Fund who provide separate application forms for funding up to £10k and another for funding over £10k. The grant delivery partner also suggested having a simpler form and a fixed amount of funding for smaller organisations. This could save on administration costs and reduce the effort needed by small organisations in applying for a grant.
- **Extracting information from complex accounting information:** As discussed above, participants preferred the simpler template that PwC had shared with some applicants who had completed the financial information incorrectly. PwC suggested to build on this new and simpler template for future funds. However, they also noted that it was important to help organisations to understand that some level of financial was necessary for due diligence.

3.4.4 The Award Process

While there were participants who experienced a seamless and efficient service from award notification through to receiving their grant, others were critical of the award process and delivery of the money. Nevertheless, participants widely reported an overall positive experience of the way in which they were able to use the funding (as discussed in section 3.4).

Difficulties arising from the award process

Where difficulties had arisen, these were to do with:

Late notification of award which caused anxiety: A recurring view among participants was that notification of a successful applications was much later than expected. While participants described being reassured by automated emails from the grant delivery partner apologising for the delay due to a large amount of applications, others heard nothing and were anxious to know what was happening.

Where organisations had limited capacity, the request to respond quickly to notification of successful application put some under undue pressure: When participants received notification that their application was successful, they were asked to quickly return a signed document and verification checks to the grant delivery partner. All sizes of organisation were affected, including those with furloughed staff as there were limited staff in the office to respond quickly.

I think my biggest frustration in that end process was we received an email at about 9:00 at night one evening, telling us that we'd been awarded the grant. Then we were being chased the next morning to submit something by midday or we wouldn't get the money that financial year. It's like literally, you're giving us two hours to do something. That's annoying! – National youth and umbrella organisation

Late receipt of the award caused cash-flow issues: There were participants who had still not received the grant by the end of March although they had returned the acceptance documents several weeks before. While participants understood that delays are normal with large funds and managed to flex their resources to pay invoices due at the end of March, others with leaner resources experienced cash-flow issues. Although none reported being on the point of closing because of late receipt of funds, those saying it caused them cash-flow issues during March highlighted that they could not have waited much longer (e.g. beyond mid-April).

Solutions applied to award difficulties

The solutions discussed by PwC, tended to revolve around sending automated responses to emails from applicants and grantees that told them what was happening with the application and award. For instance:

- **Sending automated emails to grantees to say that the money would be with them soon:** Participants either found these reassuring or found that a lack of a definite timeframe heightened their anxiety. One grantee who was unhappy with this response said:

I've uploaded everything we've been asked for, and even if you email them, all you get back is, 'We're really busy.' There's nowhere you can go to say, 'What is happening with this?' – Uniformed youth group
- **Sending automated replies to grantees' enquiries:** There were grantees who contacted the grant delivery partner at the end of March 2021 to find out when the money would arrive, because they needed the money to pay an invoice due at the end of March 2021. Although some found the automated response frustrating, others said that the fact that the reply told them that YCSF funding could be used to restore money used for eligible expenses incurred was helpful.

Future improvements to the award process

The only suggested future improvement mentioned was that communication around award and receipt of money could be improved. Grantees suggested it would have been helpful if the grant delivery partner had sent occasional e-mails to let them know when they were likely to hear the outcome of their application or when to expect the money.

I think keeping lines of communication open would've been good. Occasional emails to say that they are working on the application, this is the timeframe they are currently working to, just so that there's a bit of expectation management going on. That would've been good. – Local youth club

Having ways of keeping lines of communication open with the delivery partner, even during busy periods, is important to reduce anxieties, frustrations, and improve perceptions of the administration of similar funds.

Case study 07: 51st Ipswich Scouts Group

The 51st Ipswich Scouts Group provides scouting activities for children aged 12 to 14. Activities include hands on learning such as cooking, life skills, woodcraft, hiking and Kayaking.

Impact on the services they provide

At the start of the pandemic the group had to adjust their outdoor activities to virtual online activities as they could no longer meet face-to-face. However, this also meant that parents were reluctant to pay the weekly subscription as the group were no longer delivering traditional scouting activities. This left a hole in the group's funds. In particular, the money needed to pay their annual membership fee for the Scouting Association. Additionally, the inability to fundraise during lockdowns impacted on funding available to pay for equipment and materials for activities.

Services they provide

Moving to the virtual world limited activities to badge work that could be done online, or activities young people could do together with their families such as cookery. Overnight stays and weekend activities also stopped during lockdowns. Overnight stays are a key part of the scouting experience and provide young people with an opportunity to develop skills for independence.

The difference the fund has made

The 51st Ipswich Scouts Group used their YCSF funding to pay their annual membership for the Scouts Association due at the end of March 2021. The YCSF grant restored the group to where they were before the pandemic. It filled the hole in their finances caused by reduced subscriptions during lockdown as the group were unable to meet face-to-face.

As soon as the lockdown restrictions ended at the start of April 2021, the group were in a position to return to delivering a range of face-to-face activities for young people, including outdoor activities, weekend activities and overnight stays.

Case study 08: Our Barn

Our Barn is a small charity that runs activities for young people with learning disabilities and autism to help them prepare for leaving school and starting adult life. Activities include an employability project called 'Our Futures' for young people who are not in education, employment or training, a kitchen garden project and a social enterprise project called Buddy Bicycles, which provides disability cycling in a nearby park.

Impact on the services they provide

During lockdown restrictions, services working with disabled young people were still able to deliver face-to-face activities. However, lockdown restrictions also caused the closure of the community centre venue for Our Barn's employability project. This meant that Our Barn had to move the programme online and change its emphasis to mental wellbeing. This was because it was not possible to deliver employability activities such as work experience over Zoom software. Consequently, some participants left the programme as it was no longer meeting their needs. The programme also lost its funding as a result of moving on-line and changing its emphasis.

There were other young people who were reluctant to take part in face-to-face activities during lockdown such as Buddy Bicycles and the gardening project. This was because these young people were becoming more anxious about socialising during lockdown as they were not getting out and meeting people as much as usual.

The difference the fund has made

Our Barn mainly used YCSF funding to retain two members of staff with expertise in working with young people with autism and learning disabilities. Prior to YCSF, Our Barn were going to have to make these two members of staff redundant when the employability project lost its funding. Our Barn were also unable to furlough these staff as they are a small team and both staff members were needed to run the project. The YCSF helped Our Barn to cover the staffing shortfall. As a result, the fund also helped Our Barn to keep the employability project going, maintaining some form of provision for the young people it served.

I can see how much the young people appreciate my youth leaders, have a really good connection with them, admire, look up to them, want to be them, really. – Our Barn staff member

3.5 What were the perceived impacts for organisations and young people?

Grantees said the fund helped maintain access to support and safe spaces for young people. It provided uninterrupted services and allowed young people to continue to have fun in the unusual and difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

The fund also helped alleviate pressures on parents by making sure young people were looked after and entertained, and meant staff were less anxious or more motivated once the funding was received.

During the focus groups and interviews, participants discussed the perceived impacts of the fund for their organisations as well as their young people, parents and staff. In particular, they highlighted how an increase in their financial sustainability had made a positive difference for the people they worked with (see section 3.3).

3.5.1 Impacts for organisations

When discussing impacts for organisations, participants spoke primarily about service delivery. In section 3.3. above, we explored how the fund enabled organisations to cover key costs. In turn, this improved organisations' financial sustainability, at least in the short term. As a result, organisations were able to continue service delivery throughout the pandemic or reopen their services sooner. In particular, the fund enabled organisations to:

Continue to offer services throughout pandemic: Participants reported that the fund allowed them to continue to offer services throughout the pandemic. They emphasised that without the YCSF funding, they would have had to consider temporary or even permanent closure of their services. For example, one organisation explained the fund allowed them to maintain staffing levels. As a result, they were able to offer the same level of services as they had pre-pandemic and they did not have to close any services.

However, there were also participants who highlighted that because the funding was awarded only retrospectively, it had not impacted on their decision to stay open or closed. Instead, they had already decided to keep their services open and incur a deficit. The fund helped these organisations to cover this deficit and prevent financial issues that might well have caused service closures in the future.

Reopen their services sooner than anticipated: Other participants had to close their services temporarily, however, the fund enabled them to reopen sooner than expected. This was because the fund successfully stabilised their finances.

We would be there [without the fund], but not quite there. Everything would be paused still, and we wouldn't be able to be delivering anything interactive with the girls. – Local youth club

Participants in this group worked for a wide range of organisations including uniformed youth groups, umbrella organisations offering support to other youth clubs and organisations delivering school-based work. There were also participants who said that it was helpful that the YCSF funding was not activity based like a lot of other, similar funding. This helped participants to recover their already existing services that they were struggling to sustain.

It [YCSF] got us to that reset bit, so it covered us for that, and then the other funds can let us proceed on. – Local youth club

Expand or improve their services: In some cases, the fund had enabled organisations to expand or improve their services. This included organisations who reported that they were able to provide new and additional services. For example, one organisation was able to deliver additional welfare work. Another participant described how their organisation had been able to start a new project and continue to grow their team. There were also participants who felt that the quality of their service provision would improve as a result of the grant.

3.5.2 Outcomes for young people

As described above, the YCSF enabled a group of organisations to continue offering their services throughout the pandemic or to re-open their services sooner. Other organisations were also able to expand or improve their services (see 3.6.1). This had a positive impact on young people, in particular given the rise in mental health issues amongst young people during the pandemic:

- **Access to support and safe spaces:** Organisations described how being able to continue to offer services to young people meant that young people had access to crucial support and safe spaces during the pandemic. For example, one organisation was able to continue face to face sessions for young people that were at risk / vulnerable. Another participant described how school closures had been very challenging for their young people and their regular online sessions provided them with a space to share their thoughts and feelings.
- **‘Uninterrupted’ experience for young people:** There were organisations who reported that the YCSF funding enabled them to continue ‘business as usual’. As a result, they did not need to discuss potential changes to the services with the young people. This meant that young people did not have to worry about, or deal with, the uncertainty around potential service closures.
- **Having fun:** Other participants described how the fund allowed them to adapt activities and still provide young people with enjoyable experiences. For example, one Scout unit created new activity packs for young people and their families that they could do together at home.

I think the key here is the young people had fun. They discovered new things. – Uniformed youth group

3.5.3 Impacts for parents

During focus groups and interviews, we did not ask explicitly about impacts for parents. However, participants mentioned at least one positive outcome for parents, which was reducing financial burdens on them at a time when their finances may be tighter due to redundancy or being furloughed. For instance, some uniformed youth groups were able to waive subscription fees as a result of receiving the grant. They described that this came as a relief for parents.

3.5.4 Impacts for staff

The key outcomes for staff were that they were not made redundant and that key staff were not furloughed (see section 3.3). However, other positive impacts on staff were:

Less anxiety about the future of the organisation. There were participants who described that their staff had been anxious about the future of their organisations, their young people and their own job security given difficult financial situations. The grant funding alleviated these fears and gave staff much needed ‘piece of mind’:

I guess it's just given everyone a bit of peace of mind that we can carry on. It's just given us that kind of breath of relief. Just being like, 'Okay, it's fine, we can carry on'. We can be there for them still, and especially for the staff, just to know that okay, we can still carry on – Local youth club

Feeling more motivated. Participants reported that staff could feel more motivated as a result of their organisation receiving YCSF funding. This was because they felt their work was being recognised by DCMS.

I think it's been a great initiative. It's great to have a government department involved. [It] gives you recognition, validation if you like, that the work you're doing is worth it and well recognised. I think it's been a real boost to have it. – Local youth club

3.5.5 Outcomes for the youth sector

During focus groups and interviews, we asked participants about the impact of the YCSF on the youth sector as a whole. However, participants felt unable to comment on the youth sector as a whole and did not believe they had the necessary overview. There were participants, however, who reported that other organisations in their areas who had not applied to the fund or were not successful, were now struggling as a result.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

The Youth COVID-19 Support Fund (YCSF) was set up to support organisations in the youth and voluntary sectors that were struggling financially due to the pandemic and the measures put in place by government to try to control the spread of the virus. Most significantly, its aim was to improve the financial sustainability of the sector so that it remained viable after the pandemic.

The significance of the fund can be seen in that 1,171 organisations of greatly varying sizes and incomes applied to the fund. In total 555 organisations were successful in their applications, with £12,571,730 being provided to the sector. Although a few larger organisations received payments in the hundreds of thousands, it was smaller and micro organisations that benefitted the most with the mean payment being £642.

The principal achievement of the fund can be seen in that, for grantees, it met the objective of improving the financial sustainability and viability of organisations. It did this by covering their key costs that would not have been covered otherwise (such as rent on buildings, staffing costs, and the cost of adapting spaces and services to make them COVID-19 safe). Indeed, 51.2 percent of grantees said the fund had helped them a 'great deal' and a further 36 percent said it helped them 'quite a bit'. There was a considerable improvement in the number of organisations fully open, or at least partially open, after payments from the fund. For most organisations, they were able to remain open or resume services earlier, although there were still concerns about the future given the pandemic and measures were still in place at the time of data collection.

A particularly important outcome from the fund was that it allowed organisations to avoid making experienced staff redundant or having to place them on furlough. Without essential frontline staff, managers or volunteer coordinators being at work, smaller projects would not have been able to deliver services at all. Grantees also told us that the fund reduced anxieties about the future - for them and the services they delivered - and helped maintain paid staff and volunteer morale. In providing as little interruption to services or activities as possible, children and young people were able to continue to learn, receive support and have fun in what were already challenging circumstances for them.

Although, grantees were invariably appreciative of the funding they received, the speed with which the fund had to be set up to meet the urgent need led to some problems in the application process and administration of the fund. It was here that criticisms were made and where there are most lessons for the future. For instance, grantees told us that better consultation with, and knowledge of the youth and voluntary sectors, would have: avoided some of the confusion that arose around eligibility for the fund; reduced the amount and complexity of the financial information requested; and improved communication to do with the timing of payments. One area of improvement suggested for similar future funds, was to have different length application forms for larger and smaller (e.g. under £10,000) application amounts. Nonetheless, considerable efforts were made by DCMS, the administrative partner PwC, and other sector partners to find solutions to problems as they were identified.

One limitation of the study that it is important to acknowledge, is that evidence was not collected on the reasons why some organisations were unsuccessful in their application for funding, or on the effects this was perceived to have on their financial viability or continuity. DCMS may want to consider this a part of a future evaluation design in order to give as rounded and balanced view as possible.

Appendix A. Topic Guide – Focus groups with grantees

Evaluation of the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund

Topic guide for Grantee Case Studies

The Youth Covid-19 Support Fund was set up by the DCMS in November 2020. The Fund is delivered by PwC. The evaluation seeks to provide evidence on the reach and delivery of the Fund and the extent to which the Fund meets its objectives. Research questions are:

- Who applied for the Fund?
- Who was the Fund provided to and what was the reach?
- How far and in what ways did the Fund meet its objectives?
- What worked well/not well with the fund?
- What were the perceived impacts for young people?

This topic guide is for focus groups with grantees. The focus groups will be conducted in April 2021 and last around 1 hour. The topics covered in the interview include:

- Grantees' experiences of accessing the Fund
- What went well and less well
- Perceived benefits of receiving the grant
- Suggestions for Improvements

Background information on the Fund

Why was the Fund set up?

The Fund is aimed to help to mitigate the impact of lost income during the winter period due to the coronavirus pandemic, and ensure services providing vital support can remain viable. The Fund will focus on enabling youth organisations to continue operating, where they may have scaled back service provision or temporarily closed due to reductions in their income.

Who is eligible?

Focused on the struggling, but most impactful, youth organisations, it's open to grassroots youth clubs, uniformed youth groups, and national youth and umbrella organisations.

What is eligible?

Costs incurred between 1 November 2020 and 31 March 2021 that enable the organisation to remain viable, open, reopen or partially reopen, where this represents a value for money approach and where their service delivery is in line with Government Covid-19 guidance. The funding can be applied retrospectively to eligible expenses already incurred during this period that have not been funded by another external source.

The topic guide

This guide sets out topics and questions to cover during the focus groups. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the 60-minute group discussion. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

- Caveats to anonymity: If organisation has very specific profile, then it might be possible for others who are familiar with the organisation to identify the organisation.
- Data protection – data kept securely in accordance with GDPR.
- *Any questions/concerns?*

- Reminder of group discussion length - will last around an hour. Check OK.
- *Any questions/concerns?*

- Permission to start recording.

TURN ON RECORDER

1. Introductions and background [10 min]

Aim: To gather background information on the participants and ease them into the group discussion.

Note to facilitator: Ask each participant.

- Introduce self
- Brief overview of organisation
 - Main services they provide
 - Young people they work with
- Brief overview of their role within organisation

2. Impact of Covid-19 [5 min]

Aim: To understand impact that Covid-19 has had on the organisations.

- Impact of Covid-19 on their organisation
 - *Prompt if necessary:* Impact on
 - Services they provide
 - Finances
 - Young people

2. Application process [10 min]

Aim: To gain insight into the application process, including any challenges, what worked well, and what worked less well.

- Decision to apply
 - How they heard about the Fund
 - Reasons for applying
- Clarity of eligibility criteria
 - Criteria for organisations

-
- Costs that could be covered
 - Time period covered
 - Process of applying to the Fund
 - Application form
 - Any additional documents
 - Time period to apply
 - Any support they accessed
 - Within their own organisation
 - From DCMS / PwC
 - From other external organisations
 - Experiences of applying for the Fund
 - General reflections on process
 - In comparison to other funding applications
 - What went well
 - What made it difficult or didn't go well
 - Solutions to any challenges

3. Receiving the grant [10 min]

Aim: To gain insight into the process of receiving/accessing the grant, including any challenges, what worked well, and what worked less well.

- Outcome of application
 - Timeframe: from application to notification of outcome
 - Amount of grant different to what they applied for
- Process of receiving the grant
 - Timeframe: from notification to receiving grant
 - How payment was received
 - Any support accessed / received from PwC / DCMS
- Experiences of grant notification and payment process
 - General reflections on process
 - What went well
 - What made it difficult or didn't go well
 - Solutions to any challenges

4. Use and outcomes of the Fund [10 min]

Aim: To gather basic details about the ways in which the Youth Covid Support Fund (YCSF) did or did not contribute to the organisation.

- Costs grant was used to cover (*prompt if necessary*)
 - Ongoing essential costs e.g. rent, staffing

-
- PPE or any other equipment to keep organisation Covid-secure
 - Retaining specialist skills and expertise, e.g. expertise around MH, disability etc.
 - Any other costs
 - Extent to which the Fund improved organisation's financial sustainability
 - In short term
 - In medium to long-term
 - What this meant for their organisation
 - For staff
 - For support and services provided
 - For young people they support
 - *Prompt if necessary*: Difference between having received YCSF grant and no grant

5. Suggestions for improvements [5 min]

Aim: To explore ways in which the YCSF could be improved.

- Suggestions for improvements (*prompt if necessary*)
 - Eligibility criteria
 - Application process
 - Receiving the grant
 - Support offered
- Things to keep the same
- Any other key learning for future delivery of similar funds

7. Concluding remarks [5 min]

Aim: To give participants an opportunity to add any final comments or thoughts.

- Any concluding/ final remarks

TURN OFF RECORDER

- Thank them for their time and for the helpful discussion
- Stress the value of discussion in helping us understand how well the Fund has worked and met its aims
- Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity
- Next steps:
 - We will be inviting a small number of the organisations involved to become case studies for the YCSF, which will involve an additional follow-up interview.

-
- We will be in touch by email/phone about this if your organisation is selected.
 - Taking part is completely voluntary.
 - No reflection on your organisation if you are not selected – we will only interview a small number of organisations and we want to ensure we include different types.
- We expect that the report from our evaluation will be published in the summer. We will share a copy of the report with everyone who has taken part.

Appendix B. Topic guide – Case study interviews with grantees

Evaluation of the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund

Topic guide for Grantee Case Study Interviews

The Youth Covid-19 Support Fund was set up by the DCMS in November 2020. The Fund is delivered by PwC. The evaluation seeks to provide evidence on the reach and delivery of the Fund and the extent to which the Fund meets its objectives. Research questions are:

- Who applied for the Fund?
- Who was the Fund provided to and what was the reach?
- How far and in what ways did the Fund meet its objectives?
- What worked well/not well with the fund?
- What were the perceived impacts for young people?

This topic guide is for one-on-one case study interviews with grantees. The topics covered in the interview include:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the organisation's finances and ability to continue its activities
- What help was provided by the YCSF
- What went well / less well from the YCSF
- Implications of COVID-19 and the YCSF in the future

Background information on the Fund

Why was the Fund set up?

The Fund is aimed to help to mitigate the impact of lost income during the winter period due to the coronavirus pandemic, and ensure services providing vital support can remain viable. The Fund will focus on enabling youth organisations to continue operating, where they may have scaled back service provision or temporarily closed due to reductions in their income.

Who is eligible?

Focused on the struggling, but most impactful, youth organisations, it's open to grassroots youth clubs, uniformed youth groups, and national youth and umbrella organisations.

What is eligible?

Costs incurred between 1 November 2020 and 31 March 2021 that enable the organisation to remain viable, open, reopen or partially reopen, where this represents a value for money approach and where their service delivery is in line with Government Covid-19 guidance. The funding can be applied retrospectively to eligible expenses already incurred during this period that have not been funded by another external source.

The topic guide

This guide sets out topics and questions to cover during the interviews. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the 60-minute group discussion. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

1. Background and context [5 min]

Aim: To gather background information on the participant, ease them into the interview and to establish what sources of funding they relied on before COVID.

- Overview of the organisation
 - Main services they provide
 - Young people they work with
 - *Any clarification questions from background research*
- Participant's role in the organisation
- Thinking back to before COVID-19
 - Main challenges the organisation faced (*prompt if necessary*)
 - Financial
 - Other challenges
 - Sources of funding they mainly relied on

2. Impact of COVID-19 [10 min]

Aim: To understand impact that COVID-19 has had on the organisation and the services it provides.

- What COVID-19 has meant for the organisation (*open question first, then prompt as necessary*):
 - Impact(s) on services
 - Impact(s) on young people they work with
 - Impact(s) on organisation finances
 - costs
 - income
 - financial sustainability in short, medium and long-term
- Support accessed or received other than the YCSF
 - Financial (*prompt if necessary*)
 - Fundraising
 - Increased funding from usual donors
 - Other one-off Funds
 - Government schemes (e.g. furlough)
 - Any other external support received to help sustain provision during COVID-19

3. YCSF's contribution to the organisation [15 min]

Aim: explore how the YCSF helped the organisation, and what it enabled them to do.

- Costs grant was used to cover (*prompt if necessary*)
 - Ongoing essential costs e.g. rent, staffing
 - PPE or any other equipment to keep organisation COVID-secure

-
- Retaining specialist skills and expertise
 - Any other costs
 - Extent to which the Fund improved organisation's financial sustainability
 - In short-term
 - In medium to long-term
 - Adequacy of grant
 - Whether received funding in time
 - Whether the grant was sufficient for their organisation's needs
 - Additional funding that would have been helpful
 - What this meant for their organisation
 - For staff
 - For support and services provided
 - Sustaining provision
 - Recovering provision
 - Adapting provision
 - For young people they support

4. Experiences of YCSF [10 min]

Aim: Explore what worked well and less well about the YCSF, and what they would improve.

- Things that worked well / less well in the application process
 - Information about how to apply
 - Clarity of eligibility criteria
 - Submitting an application
 - Support from DCMS/PwC
 - Anything else
- Things that worked well / less well in the award process
 - Notification of award
 - Conditions of grant
 - Timing of payments
 - Communication with DCMS/PwC
 - Anything else
- Recommendations for improvements for future delivery of similar Funds

5. Looking to the future [5 min]

Aim: Explore post-COVID outlook for the organisation, and the long-term effects of the YCSF, both for them and the whole sector

- Anticipated challenges in coming months/years

-
- Financial
 - Other challenges
 - Financial sustainability in short, medium and long-term
 - Comparison to where organisation would be without the grant
 - Plans to ensure financial viability going forward
 - Future of the youth sector
 - Main challenges facing the sector in coming months and years
 - Difference made by the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund
 - Sustaining the sector
 - Long-term effects on provision available for young people
 - What this means for young people

6. Final reflections [5 min]

Aim: To give participant an opportunity to add any final comments or thoughts

- Anything else they wanted to feedback about the Fund
- Any concluding/ final remarks

TURN OFF RECORDER

- Thank them for their time and for their contribution to the evaluation.
- Reminder of plan to use organisation as a named “case study” in the final report - Check they are happy for everything in the interview to be included in the final report.
- Next steps:
 - We expect that the report will be published in the summer. We will share a copy of the report with everyone who has taken part.